

# An Introduction to BigQuery

(in less than 10 minutes)

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## The ISB Cancer Genomics Cloud



The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. At the top, there are three tabs: "Home - ISB-CGC-04", "Google BigQuery", and "Google Cloud DataLab". The main content area is titled "Welcome to BigQuery!". It explains that BigQuery is a web service for interactive analysis of massive datasets. Below this, it says "To get started, try one of the following options:" and lists three items:

- Read our [BigQuery Browser Tool tutorial](#)
- Run a query against our sample data by clicking "Compose Query"
- Create a new dataset and load some of your own data into a table using the  menu on the left

On the left side, there is a sidebar with three buttons: "COMPOSE QUERY" (highlighted in red), "Query History", and "Job History". Below these buttons is a section for the project "ISB-CGC-04-0003", which shows "No datasets found in this project." and a note to "Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.". Under "Public Datasets", there is a list of available datasets:

- ▶ [bigquery-public-data:hacker\\_news](#)
- ▶ [bigquery-public-data:noaa\\_gsod](#)
- ▶ [bigquery-public-data:samples](#)
- ▶ [bigquery-public-data:usa\\_names](#)
- ▶ [gdelt-bq:hathitrustbooks](#)
- ▶ [gdelt-bq:internetarchivebooks](#)
- ▶ [lookerdata:cdc](#)
- ▶ [nyc-tlc:green](#)
- ▶ [nyc-tlc:yellow](#)

This is what you should see the first time you go to the BigQuery Web UI at [bigquery.cloud.google.com](https://bigquery.cloud.google.com)

At the top of the left panel are three buttons:

- Compose Query
- Query History
- Job History

Beneath these buttons is your project space. Since it's your first visit, there are no datasets.

Finally you'll see public datasets that you may have access to. Initially you will see a few datasets that Google has made public.

Next, we'll show you how to make the ISB-CGC datasets appear here for easy access.

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The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery interface. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Home - ISB-CGC-04', 'Google BigQuery', and 'Google Cloud Data...'. The main content area is titled 'Welcome to BigQuery!'. It explains that BigQuery is a web service for interactive analysis of massive datasets. Below this, it says 'To get started, try one of the following options:' and lists 'Create new dataset', 'Switch to project', and 'Refresh'. A dropdown menu is open next to 'Switch to project', showing 'ISB-CGC workshop' and 'ISB-CGC-04-0003' (which is checked). Other options in the dropdown include 'Display project...' and 'Manage projects...'. On the left sidebar, there's a red button labeled 'COMPOSE QUERY', followed by 'Query History' and 'Job History'. Below that is a section for the project 'ISB-CGC-04-0003', which states 'No datasets found in this project. Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.' Under 'Public Datasets', there's a list of publicly available datasets.

ISB-CGC-04-0003

No datasets found in this project.  
Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.

Public Datasets

- ▶ bigquery-public-data:hacker\_news
- ▶ bigquery-public-data:noaa\_gsod
- ▶ bigquery-public-data:samples
- ▶ bigquery-public-data:usa\_names
- ▶ gdelt-bq:hathitrustbooks
- ▶ gdelt-bq:internetarchivebooks
- ▶ lookerdata:cdc
- ▶ nyc-tlc:green
- ▶ nyc-tlc:yellow

Welcome to BigQuery!

Google BigQuery is a web service that lets you do interactive analysis of massive datasets—up to billions of rows. Scalable and easy to use, BigQuery lets developers and businesses tap into powerful data analytics on demand.

To get started, try one of the following options:

- Create new dataset
- Switch to project
- Refresh

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mple data by clicking "Compose Query"

ing the ☰ menu on the

- ISB-CGC workshop
- ✓ ISB-CGC-04-0003

Display project...  
Manage projects...

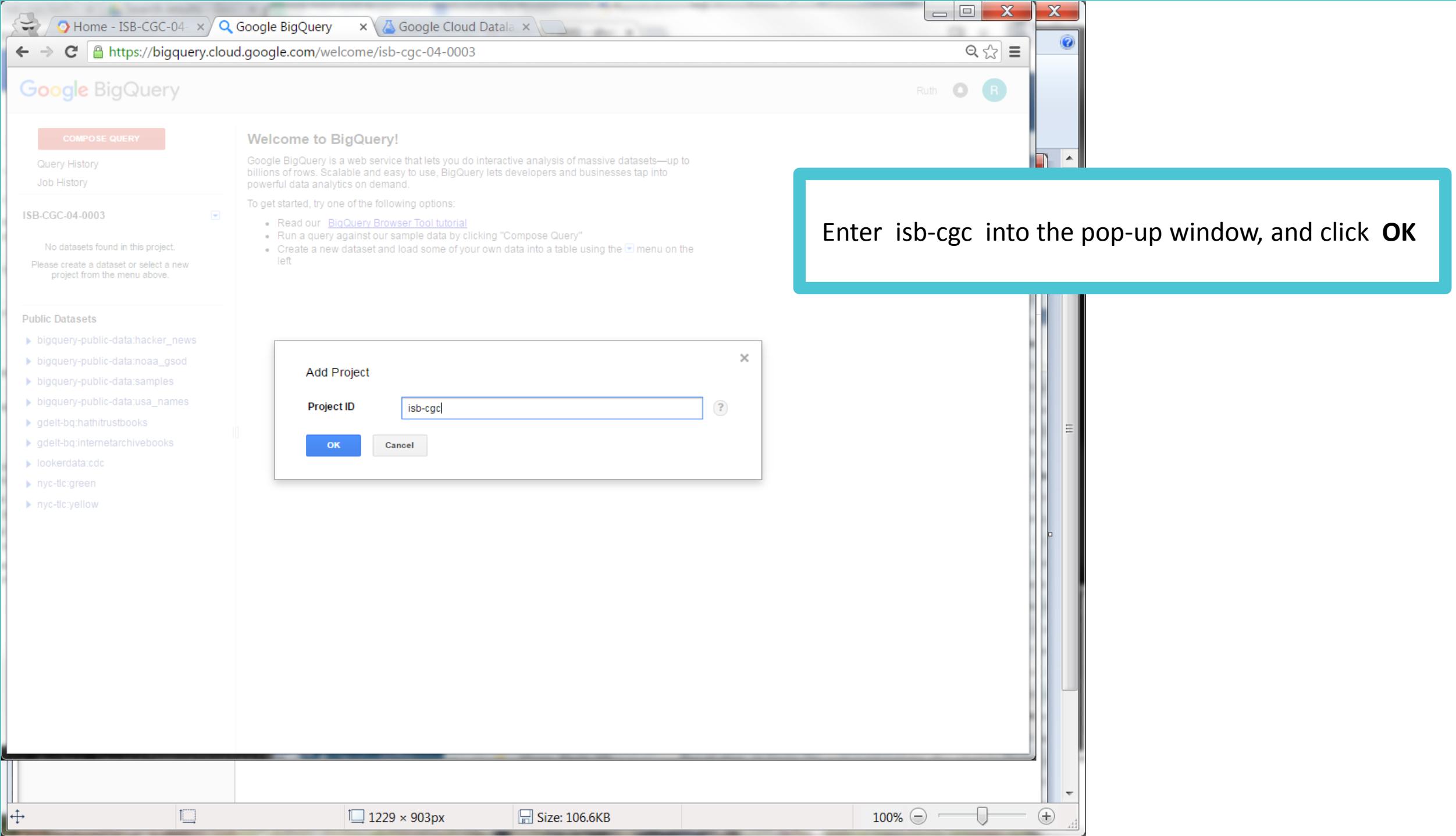
Ruth R

1229 × 903px Size: 106.6KB 100%

In this screen-shot, this particular project has no datasets of its own. Your project might look different.

In order to see datasets that are owned by another project but might be publicly-accessible, you need to “add” that project to your BigQuery view. (You’ll only need to do this once – next time you come back to BigQuery they will already be there.)

Click the down arrow icon next to your project name, select “Switch to project”, and then “Display project...”



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- Read our [BigQuery Browser Tool tutorial](#)
- Run a query against our sample data by clicking "Compose Query"
- Create a new dataset and load some of your own data into a table using the  menu on the left

**ISB-CGC-04-0003**

No datasets found in this project.  
Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.

▶ isb-cgc:cclle\_201602\_alpha  
▶ isb-cgc:genome\_reference  
▶ isb-cgc:platform\_reference  
▶ isb-cgc:tcga\_201510\_alpha  
▶ isb-cgc:tcga\_cohorts  
▶ isb-cgc:tcga\_seq\_metadata

**Public Datasets**

▶ bigquery-public-data:hacker\_news  
▶ bigquery-public-data:noaa\_gsod  
▶ bigquery-public-data:samples  
▶ bigquery-public-data:usa\_names  
▶ gdebt-bq:hathitrustbooks  
▶ gdebt-bq:internetarchivebooks  
▶ lookerdata:cde  
▶ nyc-tlc:green  
▶ nyc-tlc:yellow

Ruth R

Now you can see six ISB-CGC datasets (arranged alphabetically):

- cclle\_201602\_alpha
- genome\_reference
- platform\_reference
- tcga\_201510\_alpha
- tcga\_cohorts
- tcga\_seq\_metadata

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To get started, try one of the following options:

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- Run a query against our sample data by clicking "Compose Query"
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**You can expand any of the datasets by clicking on the right arrow icon next to the dataset name, to see a list of tables in that dataset.**

For example, the ISB-CGC “genome\_reference” dataset currently contains the following tables:

- GENCODE\_r19
- GO\_Annotations
- GO\_Ontology
- Kaviar\_160113\_Public\_hg19
- miRBase\_v20
- miRTarBase

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**Let's take a closer look at the GENCODE\_r19 table.**

Select it from the left panel and click.

**ISB-CGC-04-0003**

No datasets found in this project.  
Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.

isb-cgc:ccle\_201602\_alpha

isb-cgc:genome\_reference

- GENCODE\_r19
- GO\_Annotations
- GO\_Ontology
- Kaviar\_160113\_Public\_hg19
- miRBase\_v20
- miRTarBase

isb-cgc:platform\_reference

- methylation\_annotation

isb-cgc:tcga\_201510\_alpha

- Annotations
- Biospecimen\_data
- Clinical\_data
- Copy\_Number\_segments
- DNA\_Methylation\_betas
- miRNA\_expression
- mRNA\_BCGSC\_HiSeq\_RPKM
- mRNA\_UNC\_HiSeq\_RSEM
- Protein\_RPPA\_data
- Somatic\_Mutation\_calls

isb-cgc:tcga\_cohorts

1229 × 903px   Size: 106.6KB   100%

**Table Details: GENCODE\_r19**

**Schema** Details Preview

Field	Type	Mode	Description
seqname	STRING	NULLABLE	name of the chromosome or scaffold chromosome names can be given with or without a coordinate. seqname must be one used within Ensembl, i.e. a standard chromosome name without any additional content such as species or assembly. See the example Gencode v19 genome database.
source	STRING	NULLABLE	name of the program that generated this feature, or the data source (database)
feature	STRING	NULLABLE	feature type name, e.g. Gene, Variation, Similarity
start	INTEGER	NULLABLE	Start position of the feature, with sequence numbering starting at 1.
end	INTEGER	NULLABLE	End position of the feature, with sequence numbering starting at 1.
strand	STRING	NULLABLE	defined as + (forward) or - (reverse).
frame	STRING	NULLABLE	One of '0', '1' or '2'. '0' indicates that the first base of the feature is the first base base of a codon, and so on..
gene_id	STRING	NULLABLE	ENSGXXXXXXXXXX.X
transcript_id	STRING	NULLABLE	ENSTXXXXXXXXXX.X
gene_type	STRING	NULLABLE	<a href="http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_biotypes.html">http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_biotypes.html</a>
gene_status	STRING	NULLABLE	{KNOWN, NOVEL, PUTATIVE}
gene_name	STRING	NULLABLE	string
transcript_type	STRING	NULLABLE	<a href="http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_biotypes.html">http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_biotypes.html</a>
transcript_status	STRING	NULLABLE	{KNOWN, NOVEL, PUTATIVE}
transcript_name	STRING	NULLABLE	string
exon_number	INTEGER	NULLABLE	indicates the biological position of the exon in the transcript
exon_id	STRING	NULLABLE	ENSEXXXXXXXXXX
level	STRING	NULLABLE	1 (verified loci), 2 (manually annotated loci), 3 (automatically annotated loci)
tag	STRING	NULLABLE	part of a special set: <a href="http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_tags.html">http://www.gencodegenes.org/gencode_tags.html</a>
ccdsid	STRING	NULLABLE	official CCDS id; CCDS
havana_gene	STRING	NULLABLE	gene-id in the havana db; OTTHUMGXXXXXXXXXX.X
havana_transcript	STRING	NULLABLE	transcript-id in the havana db ; OTTHUMTXXXXXXXXXX.X
protein_id	STRING	NULLABLE	ENSPXXXXXXXXXX.X

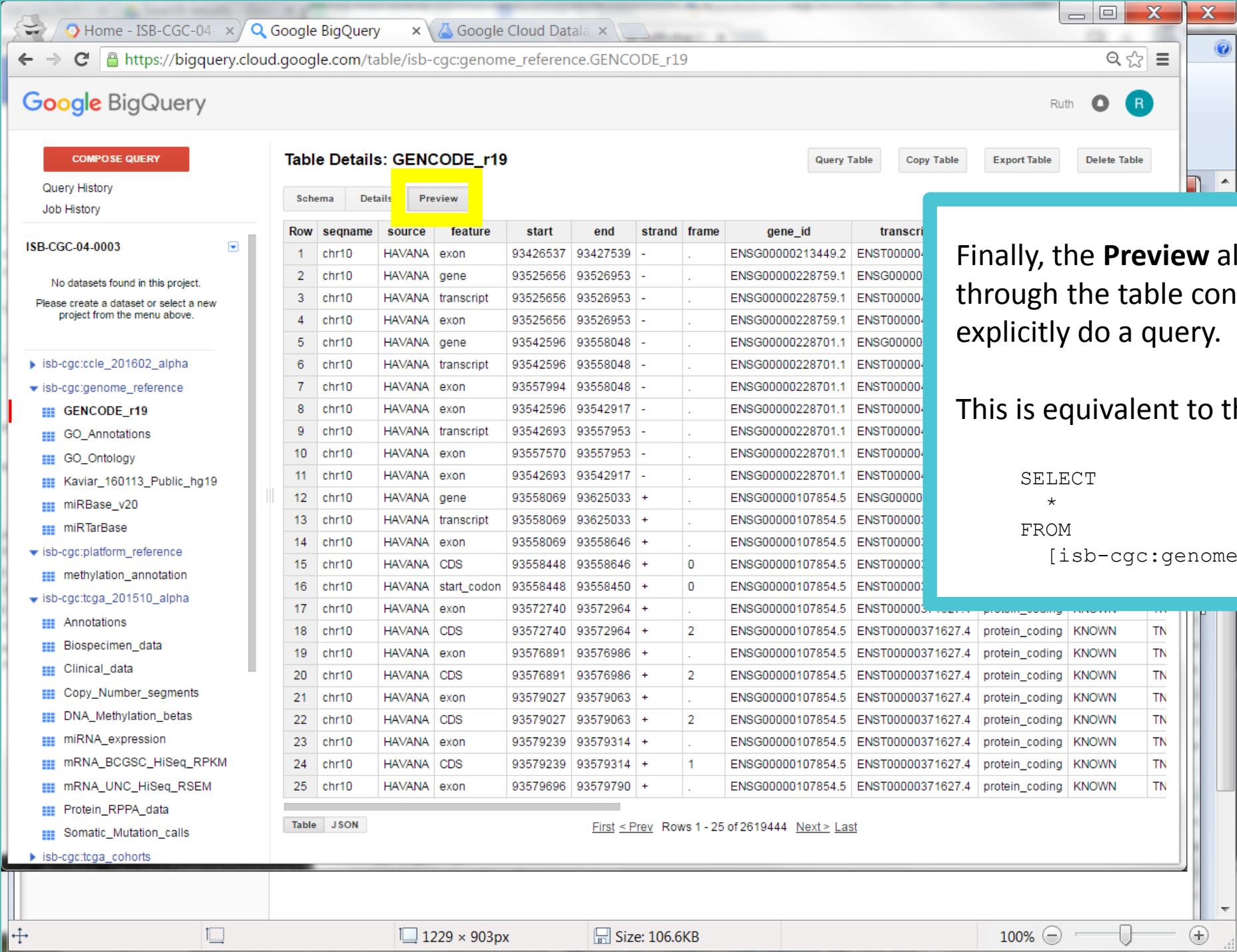
In the main “workspace” portion of the BigQuery Web UI you will see the “Table Details” for the table you just selected.

The table **Schema** shows the name of each field (column) in the table, the data type (STRING, INTEGER, etc), mode (REQUIRED or NULLABLE), and the field description.

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with project navigation and a list of datasets. The main area displays 'Table Details' for the 'GENCODE\_r19' table. The 'Details' tab is selected, highlighted with a yellow box. Other tabs include 'Schema' and 'Preview'. The table description states: 'GENCODE release 19 (the final build of GENCODE geneset mapped to GRCh37, released December 2013)' and provides a link to 'http://www.gencodegenes.org/releases/19.html'. It also mentions a license from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5. A table info section shows the following details:

Table ID	Value
Table ID	isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19
Table Size	593 MB
Number of Rows	2,619,444
Creation Time	Jan 10, 2016, 11:33:31 AM
Last Modified	Jan 10, 2016, 11:37:31 AM
Data Location	US

The table **Details** shows you the table Description and additional information including the table ID (this is how you will refer to it in a SQL query), the table size, number of rows, creation- and last-modified-times, and data location.



Finally, the **Preview** allows you see to see and scroll through the table contents without having to explicitly do a query.

This is equivalent to the following SQL query:

```
SELECT
  *
FROM
  [isb-cgc:genome reference.GENCODE r19]
```

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with project navigation and dataset lists. The main area has a "New Query" button highlighted in yellow. Below it, a SQL query is displayed:

```
2 feature,
3 gene_type,
4 COUNT(*) AS n
5 FROM
6 [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
7 GROUP BY
8 feature,
9 gene_type
10 ORDER BY
11 n DESC
```

Below the query are buttons for "RUN QUERY", "Save Query", "Save View", "Format Query", and "Show Options". The results section is titled "Table Details: GENCODE\_r19" and shows a table with 14 rows of genomic data. A "Query Table" button is also highlighted in yellow.

Now let's try a query. You can click on the “**Query Table**” button in the main panel or in the “**Compose Query**” button in the upper left corner.

If you're following on in your own browser, cut and paste this SQL into the **New Query** text area:

```
SELECT
    feature,
    gene_type,
    COUNT(*) AS n
FROM
    [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
GROUP BY
    feature,
    gene_type
ORDER BY
    n DESC
```

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with 'COMPOSE QUERY' and 'Query History' sections. Below that is a tree view of datasets: 'ISB-CGC-04-0003' (No datasets found), 'isb-cgc:ccle\_201602\_alpha', 'isb-cgc:genome\_reference' (selected), containing 'GENCODE\_r19', 'GO\_Annotations', 'GO\_Ontology', 'Kaviar\_160113\_Public\_hg19', 'miRBase\_v20', 'miRTarBase', 'isb-cgc:platform\_reference' (selected), containing 'methylation\_annotation', 'isb-cgc:tcga\_201510\_alpha' (selected), containing 'Annotations', 'Biospecimen\_data', 'Clinical\_data', 'Copy\_Number\_segments', 'DNA\_Methylation\_betas', 'miRNA\_expression', 'mRNA\_BCGSC\_HiSeq\_RPKM', 'mRNA\_UNC\_HiSeq\_RSEM', 'Protein\_RPPA\_data', 'Somatic\_Mutation\_calls', and 'isb-cgc:tcga\_cohorts'. At the bottom, there are tabs for 'Table' and 'JSON'. In the main area, a 'New Query' window is open with the following SQL code:

```
1 SELECT
2   feature,
3   gene_type,
4   COUNT(*) AS n
5 FROM
6   [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
7 GROUP BY
8   feature,
9   gene_type
10 ORDER BY
11   n DESC
```

The interface has several UI elements highlighted with yellow boxes and numbers:

- (1) A green checkmark icon in the top right corner of the query editor.
- (2) The 'Format Query' button.
- (3) The 'Query Editor' tab in the top right of the query editor window.
- (4) The 'Show Options' button.
- (5) The 'Table' and 'JSON' tabs at the bottom of the results pane.
- (6) The 'RUN QUERY' button.

Before we continue, we'd like to highlight *some* of the features in the BigQuery Web UI:

1. As you type your query into the **Query Editor**, the “query validator” is automatically running, and will show you either a green check mark or a red exclamation point. You can click on either of these to see more information about your query.
2. **Format Query** will “pretty print” your SQL.
3. To go beyond SQL, power users can toggle between the **Query Editor** and the **UDF Editor** and write custom [user-defined functions](#) in JavaScript.
4. The panes are resizable, so if want to be able to see more of a long query you can drag the sash handle down.
5. You can toggle between a **Table**-view or **JSON** when viewing results.
6. Once you have the green light from the query validator, click the red **Run Query** button.

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. On the left, a sidebar lists datasets: ISB-CGC-04-0003 (No datasets found), isb-cgc:ccle\_201602\_alpha, isb-cgc:genome\_reference (GENCODE\_r19, GO\_Annotations, GO\_Ontology, Kaviar\_160113\_Public\_hg19, miRBase\_v20, miRTarBase), isb-cgc:platform\_reference (methylation\_annotation), isb-cgc:tcga\_201510\_alpha (Annotations, Biospecimen\_data, Clinical\_data, Copy\_Number\_segments, DNA\_Methylation\_betas, miRNA\_expression, mRNA\_BCGSC\_HiSeq\_RPKM, mRNA\_UNC\_HiSeq\_RSEM, Protein\_RPPA\_data, Somatic\_Mutation\_calls), and isb-cgc:tcga\_cohorts.

In the main area, a "New Query" window is open with the following SQL code:

```
1 SELECT
2   feature,
3   gene_type,
4   COUNT(*) AS n
5 FROM
6   [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
7 GROUP BY
8   feature,
9   gene_type
10 ORDER BY
11   n DESC
```

The "Query running (1.5s)..." status bar is highlighted with a yellow box. A tooltip box on the right contains the following text:

When you click the **Run Query** button, your query is submitted to a massively parallel engine (and the Run Query button becomes a **Cancel Query** button.)

A timer will indicate how long the query has been running, until it completes (or until it encounters an error that the query validator was not able to catch).

Row	seqname	source	feature	start	end	strand	frame	gene_id	transc...
1	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93426537	93427539	-	.	ENSG00000213449.2	ENST00000...
2	chr10	HAVANA	gene	93525656	93526953	-	.	ENSG00000228759.1	ENSG00000...
3	chr10	HAVANA	transcript	93525656	93526953	-	.	ENSG00000228759.1	ENST00000...
4	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93525656	93526953	-	.	ENSG00000228759.1	ENST00000...
5	chr10	HAVANA	gene	93542596	93558048	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENSG00000...
6	chr10	HAVANA	transcript	93542596	93558048	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
7	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93557994	93558048	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
8	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93542596	93542917	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
9	chr10	HAVANA	transcript	93542693	93557953	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
10	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93557570	93557953	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
11	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93542693	93542917	-	.	ENSG00000228701.1	ENST00000...
12	chr10	HAVANA	gene	93558069	93625033	+	.	ENSG00000107854.5	ENSG00000...
13	chr10	HAVANA	transcript	93558069	93625033	+	.	ENSG00000107854.5	ENST00000371627.4
14	chr10	HAVANA	exon	93558069	93558646	+	.	ENSG00000107854.5	ENST00000371627.4

Bottom status bar: 1229 x 903px, Size: 106.6KB, 100%

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. In the top navigation bar, there are tabs for 'Home - ISB-CGC-04' (selected), 'Google BigQuery' (active), and 'Google Cloud Data...'. The URL in the address bar is [https://bigquery.cloud.google.com/results/isp-cgc-04-0003:bquijob\\_3713aa11\\_15477715b12](https://bigquery.cloud.google.com/results/isp-cgc-04-0003:bquijob_3713aa11_15477715b12). The main area is titled 'Google BigQuery' and contains a 'COMPOSE QUERY' button, 'Query History', and 'Job History' sections. A project dropdown shows 'ISB-CGC-04-0003' with a note: 'No datasets found in this project. Please create a dataset or select a new project from the menu above.' On the left sidebar, there are several dataset entries under 'isb-cgc:genome\_reference' and 'isb-cgc:tcga\_201510\_alpha'. The central pane displays a 'New Query' window with the following SQL code:

```
1 SELECT
2   feature,
3   gene_type,
4   COUNT(*) AS n
5 FROM
6   [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
7 GROUP BY
8   feature,
9   gene_type
10 ORDER BY
11   n DESC
```

Below the query editor are buttons for 'RUN QUERY', 'Save Query', 'Save View', 'Format Query', and 'Show Options'. A status message says 'Query complete (4.0s elapsed, 55.2 MB processed)' with a green checkmark icon. The results pane shows a table with columns 'Row', 'feature', 'gene\_type', and 'n'. The data is as follows:

Row	feature	gene_type	n
1	exon	protein_coding	1070777
2	CDS	protein_coding	722014
3	UTR	protein_coding	284046
4	transcript	protein_coding	145641
5	start_codon	protein_coding	83823
6	stop_codon	protein_coding	76072
7	exon	pseudogene	39909
8	exon	lincRNA	33455
9	exon	antisense	26981
10	gene	protein_coding	20345
11	transcript	pseudogene	17149
12	gene	pseudogene	13931
13	transcript	lincRNA	11324
14	exon	processed_transcript	10846
15	transcript	antisense	9213
16	gene	lincRNA	7114

At the bottom of the results pane, there are buttons for 'Table' and 'JSON', and links for 'First', '< Prev', 'Rows 1 - 16 of 121', 'Next >', and 'Last'.

Once the query completes successfully, the results are immediately shown in the lower pane.

55.2 MB of data were processed in 4 seconds, and we can see that the most common type of feature in GENCODE is “exon”, followed by “CDS” etc

The screenshot shows the Google BigQuery web interface. On the left, a sidebar lists datasets under 'ISB-CGC-04-0003'. The main area displays a 'New Query' window with the following SQL code:

```
1 SELECT
2   source,
3   seqname,
4   start,
5   END,
6   strand,
7   gene_type,
8   gene_status,
9   gene_name
10 FROM
11   [isb-cgc:genome_reference.GENCODE_r19]
12 WHERE
13   feature="gene"
14   AND seqname="chr17"
15   AND start>=7000000
16   AND END<=8000000
17 ORDER BY
18   start ASC
```

Below the code are buttons for 'RUN QUERY', 'Save Query', 'Save View', 'Format Query', and 'Show Options'. A status message says 'Query complete (2.2s elapsed, 176 MB)'. The results table has columns: Row, source, seqname, start, END, strand, gene\_type, gene\_status, gene\_name. Rows 56-66 are shown, with 89 total rows.

Table of results (partial view):

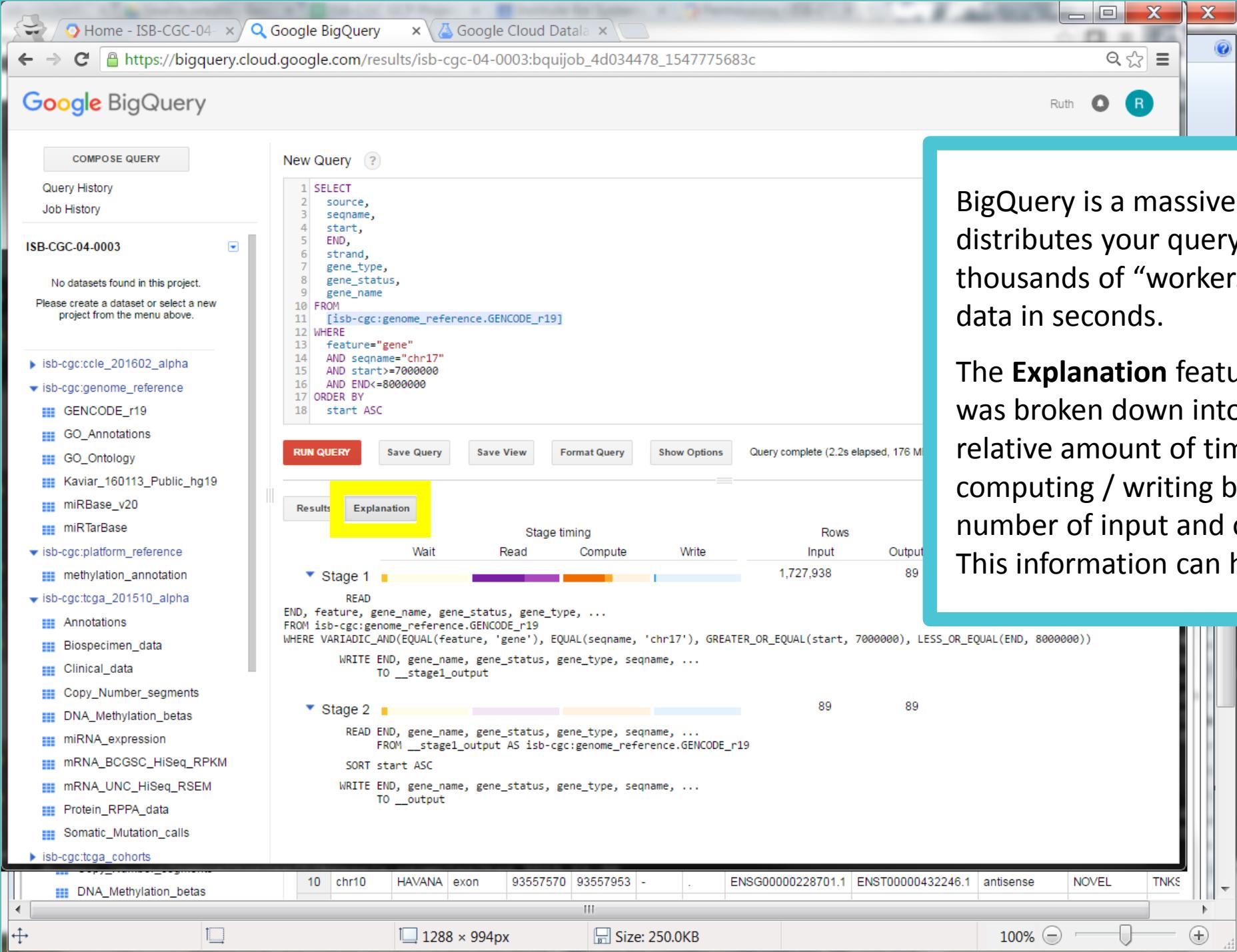
Row	source	seqname	start	END	strand	gene_type	gene_status	gene_name
56	HAVANA	chr17	7485282	7487390	-	antisense	NOVEL	AC113189.5
57	HAVANA	chr17	7486847	7496107	+	protein_coding	KNOWN	MPDU1
58	HAVANA	chr17	7491496	7493488	-	protein_coding	KNOWN	SOX15
59	HAVANA	chr17	7494548	7518189	-	protein_coding	KNOWN	FXR2
60	ENSEMBL	chr17	7514499	7514591	+	snoRNA	NOVEL	snoU13
61	ENSEMBL	chr17	7517264	7517427	+	protein_coding	NOVEL	AC007421.1
62	HAVANA	chr17	7517382	7536700	+	protein_coding	KNOWN	SHBG
63	HAVANA	chr17	7529552	7531194	-	protein_coding	KNOWN	SAT2
64	HAVANA	chr17	7549945	7561086	+	protein_coding	KNOWN	ATP1B2
65	HAVANA	chr17	7565097	7590856	-	protein_coding	KNOWN	TP53
66	HAVANA	chr17	7588578	7589689	-	sense_intronic	NOVEL	RP11-199F11.2

Text on the right side of the interface:

Here is another example query, which asks for information about genes on chr17 between positions 7000000 and 8000000.

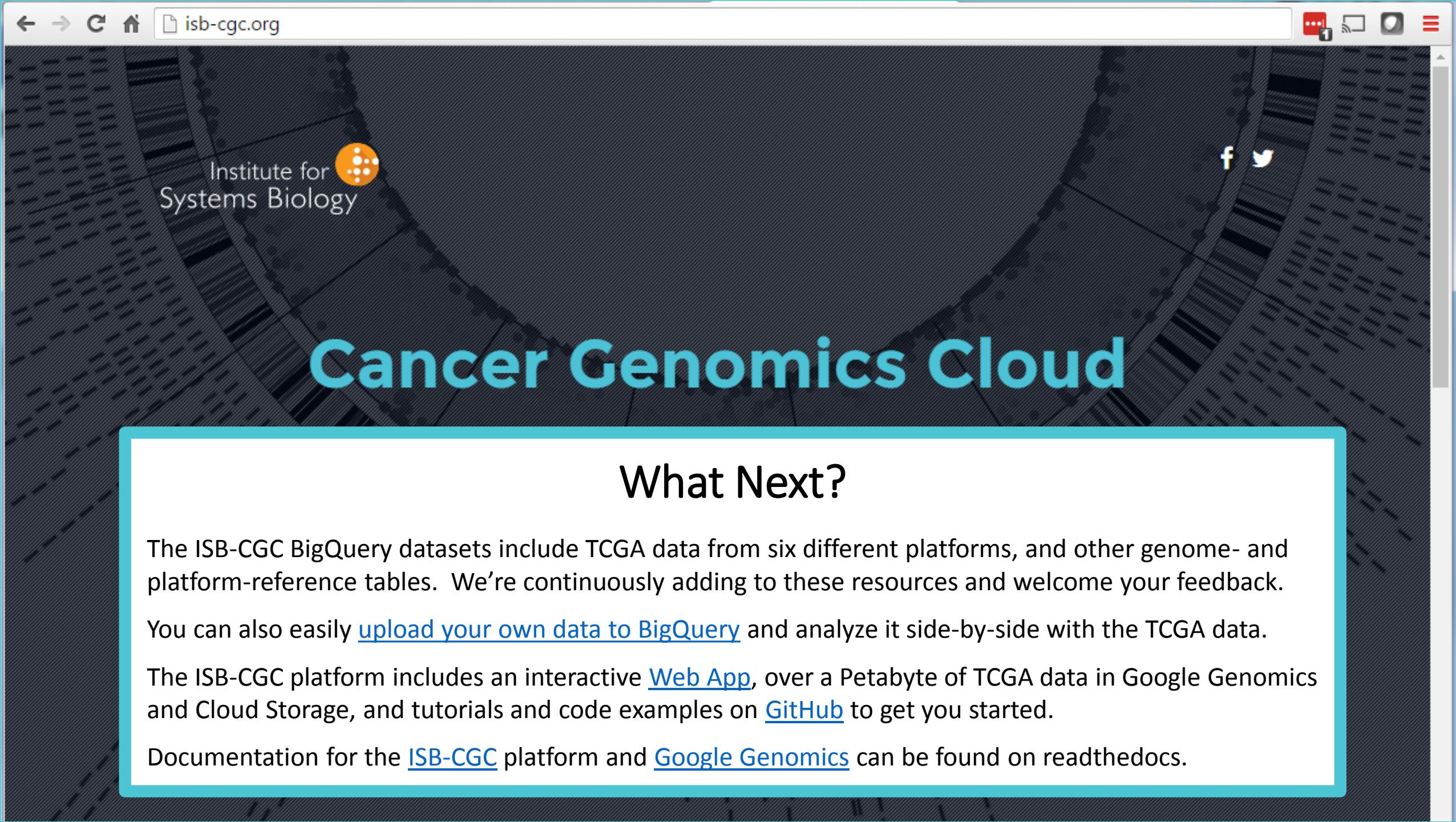
This query processed 176 MB in just 2.2 seconds, returning 89 genes.

A word about BigQuery costs. The owner of a table is charged for the cost of the storage, and this GENCODE table costs about 7 cents per year to store. The person who runs a query gets charged the cost of the query. For most queries, this charge is based on how much data is “scanned” to respond to the query. This means only columns that are directly referenced in the query count towards the cost. This particular query, which processed 176 MB of data would cost less than one cent (if you’ve already used up your free \$5 worth of queries this month).



BigQuery is a massively parallel engine which distributes your query across hundreds or thousands of “workers” and can scan terabytes of data in seconds.

The **Explanation** feature shows you how your query was broken down into a series of stages, the relative amount of time spent waiting / reading / computing / writing by the “workers”, and the number of input and output rows at each stage. This information can help you optimize your query.



## What Next?

The ISB-CGC BigQuery datasets include TCGA data from six different platforms, and other genome- and platform-reference tables. We're continuously adding to these resources and welcome your feedback.

You can also easily [upload your own data to BigQuery](#) and analyze it side-by-side with the TCGA data.

The ISB-CGC platform includes an interactive [Web App](#), over a Petabyte of TCGA data in Google Genomics and Cloud Storage, and tutorials and code examples on [GitHub](#) to get you started.

Documentation for the [ISB-CGC](#) platform and [Google Genomics](#) can be found on [readthedocs](#).