

Working with the DICOM and NIfTI Data Standards in R

March 1, 2011

Reviewer #1

We would like to thank the reviewer for all his/her comments and suggestions.

Main Remarks

- The paper clearly describes what the packages can do. However, some questions raised my mind while reading the paper. How should you describe the users that are going to use the packages? And how did you implement their specific needs?
- For example 1: Suppose I am a practical researcher, which acquires imaging data to support a research question. Which functions would mostly provide in my needs?
- For example 2: Suppose I am a statistician that wants to use your package to enhance the statistical data analysis of imaging data. What are the main functionalities of header manipulation that I can use?
- Above questions are more or less addressed in the paper, but I think it should be better specified what the specific purposes of the packages are. I would like to suggest a description of the intended users in the introduction of the paper. Additionally, some clear examples that are specifically intended for the described users would be highly beneficial for the clearness of the paper.

Minor Remarks

- section 2, 1st paragraph: DICOM abbreviation is already defined in the introduction
- section2, 2nd paragraph: At the end you say that the fourth column of the DICOM format is not implemented. Why is this the case?
- subsection 2.2: last sentence: `extractHeader`

Reviewer #2

We would like to thank the reviewer for all his/her comments and suggestions.

Major Points

- This brings me directly to the main criticism regarding this manuscript: There is no application of a statistical test or a linear modeling on imaging data. Instead, pre-calculated maps are loaded in chapter 3.7 to present overlay capabilities. One may ask why these libraries were just added to R? Furthermore, the authors stated in chapter 3.6, that (interactive) visualization is “however best performed outside of R”. Again: Where is then the benefit of the library, when these things can be done outside of R more fluidly?

- I therefore strongly suggest adding at least a (real world) statistical example with image data, where R can show its outstanding performance in its field. This could convince the reader from the benefit they would have when using this library in R. The increased space requirements for that can then be saved at the expense of the detailed description of some (binary) internals of DICOM and ANALYZE/NIFTI.

Minor Points

- Page 2, Chapter 2, line 1: The first sentence is (somehow) redundant.
Re-worded.
- Page 2, chapter 2, line 4: There are two two-byte (or 16 bit integer) sequences, not “two four-byte sequences” as mentioned, which form a tag.
Changed.
- Page 2, chapter 2, line 7: Please, use “pixel data” instead of “data” enclosed in quotation marks. Besides that, this tag is not necessarily found (but surely most often) only at the end. There could be e.g. two of them: One with the data itself (at the end) and another one containing a thumbnail and embedded in a sequence (somewhere in the header).
Changed.
- Page 2, chapter 2, line 12: The value representation string is only available when explicit encoding is used. Please reword.
Re-worded.
- Page 2, chapter 2, line 14 and Table 1: Please use “Unlimited” or similar instead of “0”.
Added text in the table and body to emphasize this point.
- Page 5, chapter 2.1: The authors should clearly point out here, which kinds of DICOM objects can be accessed. I suppose that only monochrome images with 16 bit depth are supported. But the DICOM standard defines a lot more (RGB-colored, JPEG- or JPEG2000-packed, .).
Text has been added.
- Page 5, chapter 2.1, line 10: DICOM headers are encoded explicitly or implicitly, which is stated in the appropriate transfer syntax in the meta header. A strategy as “If the character string in bytes four and five do not correspond .” sounds to me a little bit too heuristic, but can be accepted, if the meta header is not available..
You make an interesting point, but I am not familiar with the meta header field that signifies “explicit” or “implicit” encoding. Could you please provide the (group,element) values for this field?
- Page 8, chapter 2.2, line 9: Typo: Write “extractHeader” instead of “extratHeader”.
Changed.

- Page 9, chapter 2.2, line 7: Because in MRI slices are not acquired at once, they also cannot have the same repetition time (TR). I suggest to change it to “. in a single repetition time (TR) frame .”.

Changed.

- Page 10, chapter 3, line 4: Analyze 7.5 might be the last known version of this file format, but “most recent” sounds like “actual”, which is not true here: For Mayo Clinics, the developer of the software ANALYZE, it is an obsolete format, superseded by AnalyzeAVW, which is much more flexible. It has survived in the scientific community for practical reasons and by early adoptions by SPM. Please, use another wording here, like “last available” or similar.

Text has been added and modified.

- Page 12, chapter 3.2, line 1: The voxel offset is already known for Analyze 7.5. It was possible (but only rarely used) to start with image information not from the beginning of the .img-file.

TO DO!

- Page 13, chapter 3.2, line 3 and page 14, chapter 3.3, line 8: This is not right. Following the radiological convention the radiologist looks into the brain from below, because the patient or volunteer is usually scanned lying head first and in supine position, and the feet point towards the radiologist. From this point of view, left and right are flipped. The neurological convention instead is oriented on the anatomy “as is” and uses therefore not a mirrored visualization.

Thank-you for pointing this out, it appears that I have reversed my definitions. This has been corrected.

- Page 17, chapter 3.5, line 4: What does “ecode = 6” mean?

Text has been added.

- Page 19, chapter 3.7, line 6 and Figure 7: The center of the crosshair does not point at the thalamus in the proper sense, because the thalamus is a paired structure and the main functional groups are situated left and right from the displayed mid-sagittal position.

Modified.

- Page 22, chapter 4.1, line 5: “list(dcm =, datatype = 4, .” is truncated after “DIM =”

TO DO!

- Page 27: There is no URL for Mr. Thornton.

TO DO!