

← Tweet



Jenny Bryan ✓
@JennyBryan

...

I'm seeking TRUE, crazy spreadsheet stories. Happy to get the actual sheet or just a description of the crazy. Also: I can keep a secret.

8:05 PM · Apr 20, 2016 · Tweetbot for Mac

40 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 49 Likes



Tweet your reply

Reply



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan So often I get spreadsheets where different patches of cells have different rounding conventions, due to cut-and-paste. >

1



2



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @kwbroman

@JennyBryan In one such instance, parts had been rounded *too* much. Investigator said "We've decided to leave it as it is b/c..." >

1



1



Show replies



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan The col of dates where blanks corresponded to the last date above, but then someone sorted the rows, so that column was jst crap



↻ 2

♡ 3



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan “Why does this mouse have ID ‘7’ while all others have IDs like ‘Mouse5395’?” Turned out, someone accid’yly typed over that cell.



↻ 1

♡ 2



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan The column of dates that included some ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’,... b/c we don’t know all dates, but those groups were at the same time.



↻

♡ 1



Jenny Bryan 📍 @JennyBryan · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @bearloga

@bearloga anecdotes are good too!



↻

♡ 1



Jenny Bryan 📍 @JennyBryan · Dec 21, 2016

...

Replying to @jeff__benzos and @pedram_navid

the replies to that tweet hold lots of goodies! is there a specific type of thing you're looking for?



↻



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 22, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan This:

11.711813	8.25471115		2/10/10
12.0106173	8.35625839		2/10/10
11.667429	8.14113808	!!!!OMG!!!!!!!!!!!!	2/10/10
11.1724443	8.0037899		2/10/10
11.319068	8.04070473		2/10/10

11.3929195	8.26475048	ID CONFUSION 911	2/10/10
11.6430368	8.74525642		2/12/10
12.0537376	7.98749352		2/12/10

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12



Ethan White @ethanwhite · Apr 22, 2016



Replying to @kwbroman

@kwbroman @JennyBryan Metadata: "Note that the # of !'s indicates the severity of the data issue. Analysis of data w/<10 ! is recommended"

1



6



Show replies



Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel @minebocek · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan someone once came to the UCLA stat consulting room w/ a physical paper spreadsheet, so large it was folded up to fit into a bag



10



Karl Broman @kwbroman · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan The damn gene identifier 1e5 that was supposed to be 100000 & kept reappearing 'cause ppl opened file in excel & resaved

2

2

8



Aimee T Broman @atbroman · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @kwbroman

@kwbroman But tell us how you really feel! @JennyBryan

1



3



Show replies



Kara Woo @kara_woo · Apr 20, 2016





Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan All in the same sheet: duplicated column names with completely different values in the columns; half a dozen columns with 1/n



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Kara Woo @kara_woo · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @kara_woo

@JennyBryan single-letter column names (“a”, “o”, “n”, etc.) with no explanation; columns with no name whatsoever; 2/n



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Show replies



Claus Wilke @ClausWilke · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I assigned incorrect final grades in a class. One-off error, final grade was pulling in info from student one row up.



2



Jenny Bryan 🌟 @JennyBryan · Apr 20, 2016



@xaranke interesting! one of my deepest fears is that a spreadsheet is somehow involved in flying an airplane I am in



1



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David Holstius 🙄 @holstius · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan @xaranke Spreadsheets are almost certainly implicated in the maintenance scheduling and/or the fleet planning, so, yes



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Jenny Bryan 🌟 @JennyBryan · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

I've never felt more connected to my followers than I do today. Actual spreadsheets? I know! They're totally insane!



Jenny Bryan 🌟 @JennyBryan · Apr 20, 2016

I'm seeking TRUE, crazy spreadsheet stories. Happy to get the actual sheet or just a description of the crazy. Also: I can keep a secret.

💬 2

↻ 1

♥ 5

📌



RotoViz Dynasty @RotoVizDynasty · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan we did a podcast on spreadsheets and talked to the spreadsheet inventor @danb m.soundcloud.com/rotoviz/fantas...

💬

↻ 3

♥ 6

📌



Timothée Poisot, Ph.D. @tpoi · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I once used a spreadsheet to register applicants to a class. Copied the emails in the selected cells. Didn't know excel would

💬 1

↻

♥ 2

📌



Timothée Poisot, Ph.D. @tpoi · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @tpoi

@JennyBryan copy the whole column. Didn't double check. 45 people showed up to what was supposed to be a 12 person class.

💬

↻

♥ 3

📌



Timothée Poisot, Ph.D. @tpoi · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan oh another one from 2 years ago: one sheet was a photo of a printout of the original file that they lost.

💬 1

↻ 1

♥ 7

📌



Timothée Poisot, Ph.D. @tpoi · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @tpoi

@JennyBryan Im not even sure it qualifies as a spreadsheet horro story. Though I did shutdown my laptop and walked away.

💬 1

↻ 1

♥ 3

📌

Show replies

Some of your mutual follows often like this Tweeter



Schotz @schotz · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan Received a spreadsheet where the most important variable (group membership) was not in a column. It had been color-coded by row.



Some of your mutual follows often like this Tweeter



Ross Gayler @RossGayler@aus.social @ross_gayler · Apr 22, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan are the EUSPRIG horror stories of any use?
eusprig.org/horror-stories...



Jenny Bryan @JennyBryan · Apr 22, 2016

...

Replying to @ross_gayler

@ross_gayler yes those are good



You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



Alex Whan @alexwhan · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

Hi my name's Alex, it's 3 years since I've entered/colour-coded/sorted data in a spreadsheet @JennyBryan #excelaholicsanonymous



Jenny Bryan @JennyBryan · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @alexwhan

@alexwhan I too have done some spreadsheet things I'm not proud of: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."



You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



...

...



David Smith @rowndavid · Apr 21, 2016

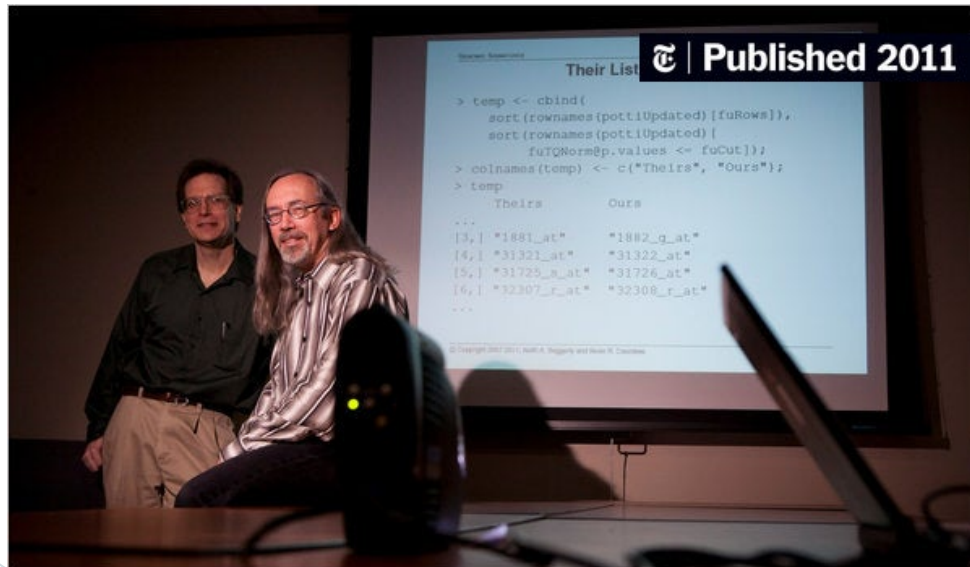
Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan nytimes.com/2011/07/08/hea...](#) . Inneffective cancer drug used in trial thanks to off-by-one error in spreadsheet formula

The New York Times

How Bright Promise in Cancer Testing Fell Apart (Published 2011)

nytimes.com



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Matt Davis @jiffyclub · Apr 20, 2016

Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) aerospace eng classmate built orbital dynamics programs in excel. Used it a lot for calcs in aircraft design too.

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Jenny Bryan @JennyBryan · Apr 20, 2016

Replying to @jiffyclub

[@jiffyclub](#) this is seriously my deepest fear -- I'll be taking the train, thankyouverymuch

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You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



James Curran @ProfJamesCurran · Apr 20, 2016

[@brendonbrewer](#) [@JennyBryan](#) [@hadleywickham](#) perverse was the phrase I

chose. I did it during useR in UCLA



@mat4nier@fosstodon.org / Mat Fourn... @mat4ni... · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I have one where I've hit the memory limit on rows. They are blank. Attempting to insert/delete crashes excel.



@mat4nier@fosstodon.org / Mat Fourn... @mat4ni... · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan downside? Data was a \$20M proposal with financials and staffing and a bad deadline. Thanks finance dept.



Some accounts you've liked often like this Tweeter



Jessica Logan @jarlogan · Apr 21, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan my fave hashtag for this sort of thing is #otherpeoplesdata - sometimes that other person is past me.



You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



Martin Monkman @monkmanmh@mast... @monk... · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan From our national statistics agency; requires secret decoder PDF to make sense of it statcan.gc.ca/access_acces/a...



Martin Monkman @monkmanmh@mast... @monk... · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @monkmanmh

@JennyBryan Secret decoder PDF on page 31: statcan.gc.ca/access_acces/a...





David LeBauer @dlebauer · Feb 3, 2020

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

Regarding crazy spreadsheet stories... Just ran across this!

pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bbcc/cb5a0e6f4...

A Faulty Computational Tool

In the methods section of the article, Wax and coworkers state that the random effects analyses were performed with "an online meta-analysis calculator from the University of Pittsburgh (<http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec1171/meta5.doc>)." This is a mischaracterization. Visiting this Web address results in a download of a Microsoft® Word document containing an embedded spreadsheet. The file is distributed as part of an online course in epidemiology.

Close inspection of the spreadsheet (retrieved on January 28, 2011), however, reveals several serious errors within the spreadsheet. The consequences of these errors are that:

- The CI provided most likely underestimates the true CI, often dramatically;
- The summary OR is in general incorrect;
- The results of the analysis can appear to provide a statistically significant positive or negative result when it should not (this has in fact occurred in Wax and colleagues' article in at least 1 outcome); and
- The calculated results depend on the *order* in which the studies are entered into the spreadsheet.

These errors have been confirmed by the spreadsheet's creator.^[20] Refer to the appendix for details.

This spreadsheet appears to have been used to calculate results for 13 of the 21 outcomes in the paper (the investigators fail to state whether it was used for electronic fetal monitoring... but it does appear to have been



1



Jenny Bryan @JennyBryan · Feb 3, 2020

...

Replying to @dlebauer



rogier kievit @rogierK · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan this makes me giggle:



Schotz @schotz · Mar 10, 2016

Replying to @saraannhart

@saraannhart @rogierK @yaacovp @jarlogan Had an excel file where there was no group variable. They had color coded the rows to indicate group



1




5



Jessica Logan @jarlogan · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @rogierK

 [@rogierK](#) [@JennyBryan](#) [@schotz](#) [@saraannhart](#) [@yaacovp](#) me too. The only way to know if the kids were in the treatment group was the cell color.



 1

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 You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



gwynn sturdevant [@nzgwynn](#) · Apr 21, 2016

...

[@brendonbrewer](#) [@JennyBryan](#) [@hadleywickham](#) [@ProfJamesCurran](#) don't think I'd expect anything less from him



 You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



Richie Cotton [@richierocks](#) · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to [@JennyBryan](#)

[@JennyBryan](#) A colleague spent a week solving a system of differential eq'ns in Excel. Answer was wrong, as confirmed by a page of [#rstats](#).



 1



Jonathan Goodwin [@joncgoodwin](#) · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to [@JennyBryan](#)


[@JennyBryan](#) I saw something called a "pivot table" once. Does that count?

 1



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Jenny Bryan  [@JennyBryan](#) · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to [@joncgoodwin](#)

[@joncgoodwin](#) it depends ;) when I visit places, ppl bring me their craziest spreadsheets so now I'm curious to see more

 1



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Stephen Floor [@stephenfloor](#) · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to [@JennyBryan](#)

[@JennyBryan](#) my personal favorite is the conversion of gene names to dates. Genes like MARCH5, SEPT9 are doomed.
bmcbioinformatics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.11...





Dr. Liana Lareau @lianafaye · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @stephenfloor

@stephenfloor @JennyBryan yeah! Labmate was studying stem cells, couldn't figure out where important stem cell gene Oct4 went.



4



Riinu Pius @_Riinu_ · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan me: "how are we going to analyse all this new data in time?!", colleague: "well, I'm pretty good in Excel" #oldjob



Some of your mutual follows often like this Tweeter



Lex Nederbragt @lexnederbragt · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I taught myself Visual Basic for Appl and wrote Bioinformatics code in Excel. %GC, DNA reverse complement



Some of your mutual follows often like this Tweeter



Lex Nederbragt @lexnederbragt · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I had a sheet that for each GenBank ID would download the (small) genome into a cell



Michael Lange @DingoEatingFuzz · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I was once tasked to rebuild an internal tool, which seemed fine, there wasn't much there. @arnicas



1



Michael Lange @DingoEatingFuzz · Apr 20, 2016

...



Replying to @DingoEatingFuzz

[@JennyBryan](#) But the team using the tool had been cobbling together new features via dozens of spreadsheets. Made the rebuild 10x the size.



Margaret Kosmala @margaretkosmala · Apr 22, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) Received Excel spreadsheet from British collaborators. Opened it up in US Excel. Excel switched all months/days. 1/2



Margaret Kosmala @margaretkosmala · Apr 22, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) I didn't save the spreadsheet. But Excel switched all the months/days in my saved file anyway. [#bewareExcel](#)



You and this Tweeter share some mutual follows



Peter Hickey @PeteHaitch · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) This is not too crazy a story, but it sucked and was discouraging 1/5



Peter Hickey @PeteHaitch · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @PeteHaitch

[@JennyBryan](#) Spent time carefully making google sheet with sane & standardised column names, data validation, etc. for complex metadata 2/5



Show replies



Tim Phan @timothy_phan · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) I'm imagining everyone in this post huddled around a fire,

sharing war stories "if I didn't have TidyR we would have been dead"



↻ 2

♡ 13



Michael Hoffman @michaelhoffman@m... @micha... · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan marcottelab.org/users/CH391L_2...

💬 1

↻ 1

♡ 6



james thompson @jmichaethompson · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @michaelhoffman

@michaelhoffman @JennyBryan I never would have guessed this

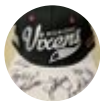
💬 1

↻

♡ 1



Show replies



Steve Lane @stephenelane · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan cell in date column: 'About 2 yrs previous'...



↻



Earl F Glynn @EarlGlynn · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

.@JennyBryan While converting Excel to R helping friend of friend found that $\exp(+1^2)$ and $\exp(-1^2)$ gives same value in Excel, but not R.



↻

♡ 1



Earl F Glynn @EarlGlynn · Apr 20, 2016 ...

Replying to @JennyBryan

.@JennyBryan Gene name errors can be introduced inadvertently when using Excel in bioinformatics

bmcbioinformatics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.11...



↻

♡ 1





Earl F Glynn · Apr 20, 2016

Replying to @JennyBryan

.@JennyBryan Microsoft mea culpa: Floating-point arithmetic may give inaccurate results in Excel support.microsoft.com/en-us/kb/78113



1



Earl F Glynn @EarlGlynn · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

.@JennyBryan Don't use Excel for biological data



1



dontuseexcel.wordpress.com

Don't use Excel for biological data

Why? Because it quietly modifies your data. How? Excel auto-reformats the contents of cells it ...



james thompson @jmichaethompson · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan the craziest ones are probably true.



1



Alan Nichol @alanmnichol · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan colleague would spend 20 minutes to highlight 15k rows by clicking and dragging. Twice a week



1



5



rogier kievit @rogierK · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @alanmnichol

@alanmnichol @JennyBryan *snorts coffee*



2



Matt Baggott @mattbagg · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) Aside from Reinhart and Rogoff's famous error?
bloomberg.com/news/articles/...



Catherine Collingwood Estes @collingwest · Aug 23, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

it took me 20 min to convince someone that Excel can add. He thought the numbers would be off his manuals. They were. By \$0.05.



Jeffrey Ross-Ibarra @jrossibarra · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) Had to redo a paper after it was accepted when first author revealed his "simulated" errors had autosaved over raw data in excel



Excelmathart @devan__matthews · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) check out my range of excelmathart that has been generated using excel :)



Joe Hilgard, data guy @JoeHilgard · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) SubjectID value changes for a person from Time1 to Time2 because column indicates ID, condition, and timepoint.



Victor Ordu @BroVic · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

[@JennyBryan](#) You just touched a raw nerve... you're 'in the spirit' [#horror](#)



Victor Ordu @BroVic · Apr 18, 2016

Excel can really be a bitch -just turning large integer values into [#dates](#). Even when you export as CSV. It's nightmarish. Grr! [#rstats](#)



Neil Saunders @neilfws · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan just talk to any data analyst who works with biologists



3



rogier kievit @rogierK · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan values in columns meant something different dependent on which subgroup you were in (coded in yet a different column)



1



Jeff Arnold @jrnld · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I would guess that modeloff.com has some



1



Christoffer Flensburg @CFlensburg · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan Wasn't the SEPT7 gene supposed to be in this gene set you sent me? And since when is there a gene called 9/7?



Krista Nichols @charrgirl · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan a ton of crazy vlookup functions in several tabs and thousands of rows? Until I (shhhh) learned WAY more efficient and easy in R



David Holstius 🙄 @holstius · Apr 20, 2016

...



Replying to @JennyBryan



dilbert.com

Does It Matter If The Spreadsheet Is Wrong
Alice: What are the odds that you made this
complicated spreadsheet without any critical ...



1



Joanne Ocock @jo_ockock · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan @hadleywickham given an xls file with 8yrs of multi species-site data across 10 tabs, the fish one max'd at 89K rows, nightmare



Adrian Png 🧡💡 @fuzziebrain · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan Spent an hour preaching & much more to create an environment at my last job so that researchers would do the right thing. Alas!



Jake Tolbert @crazybilly · Apr 22, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan not really data, but... A coworker had an idea for a web application. So he mocked it up with "live" links in Excel.



Aaron Hall ♥️'s 🇺🇦 @aaronchall · Apr 21, 2016



Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan European Spreadsheets Risk Interest Group Horror Stories: eusprig.org/horror-stories... Big Reputation & Money at risk





Nick Tett · Apr 20, 2016

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan Dzens o tabs, cols past 'bz', circ links to other xls - reqs all files open and hit f9 to calc. Sad what this is responsible for.



MWR DBM 🇺🇦 @mwr_dbm · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan I trued to recreate in Tableau a simple summary chart I had created in 5 mins in Excel. Took three days and help of two people.



MWR DBM 🇺🇦 @mwr_dbm · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan You have to know how to open csv files with numbers longer than 15 digits. It's an architecture problem in PCs and Macs.



Matt Shirley @mdshw5 · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan FASTA string matching in excel. This is how bioinformatics works: biostars.org/p/187535/#1876...



Greg Baute @gregbaute · Apr 21, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan @rgfitzjohn I saw this: Build a 512gb ram desktop to open huge SNP data sets. Select wanted samples/SNPs with a mouse. [#cringe](#)



Ant O'Feaghail @aofarre · Apr 20, 2016

...

Replying to @JennyBryan

@JennyBryan Colleague, Excel whizz but no coding or comp.sci knowledge, was frustrated cos his spreadsheets kept crashing...





Ant O'Feaghail @aofarre · Apr 20, 2016



Replying to @aofarre

[@JennyBryan](#) ...not v lrg data, say $n=10k$, $p=50$. But he had so many formulas and Excel (by design) calcs everything on the fly, so...



1



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Show replies