

Overview of `ensemblVEP`

Lori Shepherd and Valerie Obenchain

April 27, 2020

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Results as R objects	1
3	Write results to a file	4
4	Configuring runtime options	5
5	<code>sessionInfo()</code>	5

1 Introduction

Ensembl provides the facility to predict functional consequences of known and unknown variants using the Variant Effect Predictor (VEP). The `ensemblVEP` package wraps Ensembl VEP and returns the results as R objects or a file on disk. To use this package the Ensembl VEP perl script must be installed in your path. See the package README for details.

NOTE: As of Ensembl version 88 the VEP script has been renamed from `variant_effect_predictor.pl` to `vep`. The `ensemblVEP` package code and documentation have been updated to reflect this change.

Downloads: <http://uswest.ensembl.org/info/docs/tools/vep/index.html>

Complete documentation for runtime options: http://uswest.ensembl.org/info/docs/tools/vep/script/vep_options.html

To test that Ensembl VEP is properly installed, enter the name of the script from the command line:

```
vep
```

2 Results as R objects

```
> library(ensemblVEP)
```

The `ensemblVEP` function can return variant consequences from Ensembl VEP as R objects (`GRanges` or `VCF`) or write them to a file. The default behavior returns a `GRanges`. Runtime options are stored in a `VEPFlags` object and allow a great deal of control over the content and format of the results. See the man pages for more details.

```
> ?ensemblVEP
```

```
> ?VEPFlags
```

The default runtime options can be inspected by creating a `VEPFlags`.

```
> param <- VEPFlags()
```

```
> param
```

```
class: VEPFlags
```

```
flags(1): database
```

```
version: 99
```

```
scriptPath:
```

```
> flags(param)
```

```
$database
[1] TRUE
```

```
$vcf
[1] FALSE
```

Of note is the 'host'. The default 'host' for queries is character() and therefore is set to the vep default of 'ensembl.org'. Users in the US may find connection and transfer speeds quicker using our East coast mirror, 'useastdb.ensembl.org'.

```
> param <- VEPFlags(flags=list(host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
```

Using a vcf file from VariantAnnotation as input, we query Ensembl VEP with the default runtime parameters. Consequence data are parsed into the metadata columns of the GRanges. To control the type and amount of data returned see the output options at http://uswest.ensembl.org/info/docs/tools/vep/script/vep_options.html.

```
> fl <- system.file("extdata", "gl_chr1.vcf", package="VariantAnnotation")
> gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
> head(gr, 3)
```

GRanges object with 3 ranges and 23 metadata columns:

seqnames	ranges	strand	Allele	Consequence
<Rle>	<IRanges>	<Rle>	<character>	<character>
rs58108140	1	10583	*	A upstream_gene_variant
rs58108140	1	10583	*	A upstream_gene_variant
rs58108140	1	10583	*	A downstream_gene_variant
IMPACT	SYMBOL	Gene	Feature_type	
<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	
rs58108140	MODIFIER	DDX11L1	ENSG00000223972	Transcript
rs58108140	MODIFIER	DDX11L1	ENSG00000223972	Transcript
rs58108140	MODIFIER	WASH7P	ENSG00000227232	Transcript
Feature	BIOTYPE	EXON		
<character>	<character>	<character>		
rs58108140	ENST00000450305	transcribed_unprocessed_pseudogene		<NA>
rs58108140	ENST00000456328	processed_transcript		<NA>
rs58108140	ENST00000488147	unprocessed_pseudogene		<NA>
INTRON	HGVSc	HGVSp	cDNA_position	CDS_position
<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
Protein_position	Amino_acids	Codons	Existing_variation	
<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
DISTANCE	STRAND	FLAGS	SYMBOL_SOURCE	HGNC_ID
<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>
rs58108140	1427	1	<NA>	HGNC HGNC:37102
rs58108140	1286	1	<NA>	HGNC HGNC:37102
rs58108140	3821	-1	<NA>	HGNC HGNC:38034

```
-----
seqinfo: 1 sequence from genome; no seqlengths
```

Next we request that a VCF object be returned by setting the *vcf* option in the *flags* slot to TRUE.

```
> param <- VEPFlags(flags=list(vcf=TRUE, host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
> vep <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
```

Success! When a VCF is returned, consequence data are included as an unparsed INFO column labeled *CSQ*.

```
> info(vep)$CSQ
```

```
CharacterList of length 3
```

```
[[1]] A|upstream_gene_variant|MODIFIER|DDX11L1|ENSG00000223972|Transcript|ENS...
[[2]] T|non_coding_transcript_exon_variant|MODIFIER|DDX11L1|ENSG00000223972|T...
[[3]] T|downstream_gene_variant|MODIFIER|FAM138A|ENSG00000237613|Transcript|E...
```

The `parseCSQtoGRanges` function parses these data into a `GRanges`. When the rownames of the original VCF are provided as `VCFRowID` a metadata column of the same name is included in the output.

```
> vcf <- readVcf(fl, "hg19")
> csq <- parseCSQtoGRanges(vep, VCFRowID=rownames(vcf))
> head(csq, 3)
```

```
GRanges object with 3 ranges and 24 metadata columns:
```

seqnames	ranges	strand	VCFRowID	Allele	
<Rle>	<IRanges>	<Rle>	<integer>	<character>	
rs58108140	1	10583	*	1	A
rs58108140	1	10583	*	1	A
rs58108140	1	10583	*	1	A
	Consequence	IMPACT	SYMBOL	Gene	
	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	
rs58108140	upstream_gene_variant	MODIFIER	DDX11L1	ENSG00000223972	
rs58108140	upstream_gene_variant	MODIFIER	DDX11L1	ENSG00000223972	
rs58108140	downstream_gene_variant	MODIFIER	WASH7P	ENSG00000227232	
	Feature_type	Feature	BIOTYPE		
	<character>	<character>	<character>		
rs58108140	Transcript	ENST00000450305	transcribed_unprocessed_pseudogene		
rs58108140	Transcript	ENST00000456328	processed_transcript		
rs58108140	Transcript	ENST00000488147	unprocessed_pseudogene		
	EXON	INTRON	HGVSc	HGVSp	cDNA_position
	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>
	CDS_position	Protein_position	Amino_acids	Codons	
	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	
rs58108140	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	<NA>	
	Existing_variation	DISTANCE	STRAND	FLAGS	
	<character>	<character>	<character>	<character>	
rs58108140	<NA>	1427	1	<NA>	
rs58108140	<NA>	1286	1	<NA>	
rs58108140	<NA>	3821	-1	<NA>	
	SYMBOL_SOURCE	HGNC_ID			
	<character>	<character>			
rs58108140	HGNC	HGNC:37102			
rs58108140	HGNC	HGNC:37102			
rs58108140	HGNC	HGNC:38034			

```
-----
seqinfo: 1 sequence from genome; no seqlengths
```

The `VCFRowID` columns maps the expanded `CSQ` data back to the rows in the `VCF` object. This index can be used to subset the original VCF.

```
> vcf[csq$"VCFRowID"]
```

```
class: CollapsedVCF
dim: 13 85
```

```

rowRanges(vcf):
  GRanges with 5 metadata columns: paramRangeID, REF, ALT, QUAL, FILTER
info(vcf):
  DataFrame with 22 columns: LDAF, AVGPOST, RSQ, ERATE, THETA, CIEND, CIPOS,...
info(header(vcf)):
  Number Type      Description
LDAF      1      Float      MLE Allele Frequency Accounting for LD
AVGPOST   1      Float      Average posterior probability from MaCH/Thunder
RSQ       1      Float      Genotype imputation quality from MaCH/Thunder
ERATE     1      Float      Per-marker Mutation rate from MaCH/Thunder
THETA     1      Float      Per-marker Transition rate from MaCH/Thunder
CIEND     2      Integer     Confidence interval around END for imprecise var...
CIPOS     2      Integer     Confidence interval around POS for imprecise var...
END       1      Integer     End position of the variant described in this re...
HOMLEN    .      Integer     Length of base pair identical micro-homology at ...
HOMSEQ    .      String      Sequence of base pair identical micro-homology a...
SVLEN     1      Integer     Difference in length between REF and ALT alleles
SVTYPE    1      String      Type of structural variant
AC        .      Integer     Alternate Allele Count
AN        1      Integer     Total Allele Count
AA        1      String      Ancestral Allele, ftp://ftp.1000genomes.ebi.ac.u...
AF        1      Float      Global Allele Frequency based on AC/AN
AMR_AF    1      Float      Allele Frequency for samples from AMR based on A...
ASN_AF    1      Float      Allele Frequency for samples from ASN based on A...
AFR_AF    1      Float      Allele Frequency for samples from AFR based on A...
EUR_AF    1      Float      Allele Frequency for samples from EUR based on A...
VT        1      String      indicates what type of variant the line represents
SNPSOURCE .      String      indicates if a snp was called when analysing the...
geno(vcf):
  List of length 3: GT, DS, GL
geno(header(vcf)):
  Number Type      Description
GT 1      String      Genotype
DS 1      Float      Genotype dosage from MaCH/Thunder
GL .      Float      Genotype Likelihoods

```

3 Write results to a file

In the previous section we saw Ensembl VEP results returned as R objects in the workspace. Alternatively, these results can be written directly to a file. The flag that controls how the data are returned is the *output_file* flag.

When *output_file* is NULL (default), the results are returned as either a *GRanges* or *VCF* object.

```
> flags(param)$output_file
```

```
NULL
```

To write results directly to a file, specify a file name for the *output_file* flag.

```
> flags(param)$output_file <- "/mypath/myfile"
```

The file can be written as a *vcf* or *gvf* by setting the options of the slot to TRUE. If neither of *vcf* or *gvf* are TRUE the file is written out as tab delimited.

```

> ## Write a vcf file to myfile.vcf:
> myparam <- VEPFlags(flags=list(vcf=TRUE,
+                               output_file="/path/myfile.vcf"))
> ## Write a gvf file to myfile.gvf:
> myparam <- VEPFlags(flags=list(gvf=TRUE,
+                               output_file="/path/myfile.gvf"))
> ## Write a tab delimited file to myfile.txt:
> myparam <- VEPFlags(flags=list(output_file="/path/myfile.txt"))

```

4 Configuring runtime options

The Ensembl VEP web page has complete descriptions of all runtime options. http://uswest.ensembl.org/info/docs/tools/vep/script/vep_options.html Below are examples of how to configure the runtime options in the *VEPFlags* for specific situations. Investigate the differences in results using a sample file from *VariantAnnotation*.

```
> fl <- system.file("extdata", "ex2.vcf", package="VariantAnnotation")
```

- Add regulatory region consequences:

```
> param <- VEPFlags(flags=list(regulatory=TRUE, host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
> gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
```

- Specify input file format as VCF, add HGNC gene identifiers, output SO consequence terms:

```
> param <- VEPFlags(flag=list(format="vcf",
+                             terms="SO",
+                             symbol=TRUE, host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
> gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
```

- Check for co-located variants, output only coding sequence consequences, output HGVS names:

```
> param <- VEPFlags(flags=list(coding_only=TRUE,
+                               check_existing=TRUE,
+                               symbol=TRUE, host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
> gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
```

- Add SIFT score and prediction, PolyPhen prediction only, output results as VCF:

```
fl <- system.file("extdata", "chr22.vcf.gz", package="VariantAnnotation")
param <- VEPFlags(flags=list(sift="b", polyphen="p",
                             vcf=TRUE, host="useastdb.ensembl.org"))
vcf <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
csq <- parseCSQToGRanges(vcf)

> head(levels(mcols(csq)$SIFT))
[1] "deleterious(0.01)" "deleterious(0.02)" "deleterious(0.03)"
[4] "deleterious(0.04)" "deleterious(0.05)" "deleterious(0)"

> levels(mcols(csq)$PolyPhen)
[1] "benign"           "possibly_damaging" "probably_damaging"
[4] "unknown"
```

5 sessionInfo()

```
> sessionInfo()
```

```
R version 4.0.0 (2020-04-24)
```

```
Platform: x86_64-pc-linux-gnu (64-bit)
```

```
Running under: Ubuntu 18.04.4 LTS
```

```
Matrix products: default
```

```
BLAS: /home/biocbuild/bbs-3.11-bioc/R/lib/libRblas.so
```

```
LAPACK: /home/biocbuild/bbs-3.11-bioc/R/lib/libRlapack.so
```

```
locale:
```

```
[1] LC_CTYPE=en_US.UTF-8      LC_NUMERIC=C
[3] LC_TIME=en_US.UTF-8      LC_COLLATE=C
[5] LC_MONETARY=en_US.UTF-8  LC_MESSAGES=en_US.UTF-8
[7] LC_PAPER=en_US.UTF-8     LC_NAME=C
[9] LC_ADDRESS=C             LC_TELEPHONE=C
```

[11] LC_MEASUREMENT=en_US.UTF-8 LC_IDENTIFICATION=C

attached base packages:

[1] stats4 parallel stats graphics grDevices utils datasets
[8] methods base

other attached packages:

[1] ensemblVEP_1.30.0 VariantAnnotation_1.34.0
[3] Rsamtools_2.4.0 Biostrings_2.56.0
[5] XVector_0.28.0 SummarizedExperiment_1.18.0
[7] DelayedArray_0.14.0 matrixStats_0.56.0
[9] Biobase_2.48.0 GenomicRanges_1.40.0
[11] GenomeInfoDb_1.24.0 IRanges_2.22.0
[13] S4Vectors_0.26.0 BiocGenerics_0.34.0

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):

[1] progress_1.2.2 tidyselect_1.0.0 purrr_0.3.4
[4] lattice_0.20-41 vctrs_0.2.4 BiocFileCache_1.12.0
[7] rtracklayer_1.48.0 GenomicFeatures_1.40.0 blob_1.2.1
[10] XML_3.99-0.3 rlang_0.4.5 pillar_1.4.3
[13] glue_1.4.0 DBI_1.1.0 rappdirs_0.3.1
[16] BiocParallel_1.22.0 bit64_0.9-7 dbplyr_1.4.3
[19] GenomeInfoDbData_1.2.3 lifecycle_0.2.0 stringr_1.4.0
[22] zlibbioc_1.34.0 memoise_1.1.0 biomaRt_2.44.0
[25] curl_4.3 AnnotationDbi_1.50.0 Rcpp_1.0.4.6
[28] BSgenome_1.56.0 openssl_1.4.1 bit_1.1-15.2
[31] hms_0.5.3 askpass_1.1 digest_0.6.25
[34] stringi_1.4.6 dplyr_0.8.5 grid_4.0.0
[37] tools_4.0.0 bitops_1.0-6 magrittr_1.5
[40] RCurl_1.98-1.2 RSQLite_2.2.0 tibble_3.0.1
[43] crayon_1.3.4 pkgconfig_2.0.3 ellipsis_0.3.0
[46] Matrix_1.2-18 prettyunits_1.1.1 assertthat_0.2.1
[49] httr_1.4.1 R6_2.4.1 GenomicAlignments_1.24.0
[52] compiler_4.0.0