Overview of ensemblVEP

Valerie Obenchain

Last modified: December 2012; Compiled: June 1, 2015

Contents

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 Robjects 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.
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:
variant_effect_predictor.pl

2 Results as R objects

```
> library(ensemblVEP)
```

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

```
> ?ensemblVEP
> ?VEPParam
```

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

```
> param <- VEPParam()
> param
```

```
class: VEPParam78
identifier(0):
colocatedVariants(0):
dataformat(0):
basic(0):
input(1): species
cache(3): dir, dir_cache, dir_plugins
output(1): terms
```

```
filterqc(0):
database(2): host, database
advanced(1): buffer_size
version: 78,80
scriptPath:
```

```
> basic(param)

$verbose
[1] FALSE

$quiet
[1] FALSE

$no_progress
[1] FALSE

$config
character(0)

$everything
[1] FALSE

$fork
numeric(0)
```

Using a vcf file from VariantAnnotation as input, we query Ensembl VEP with the default runtime parameters.

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

Consequence data are parsed into the metadata columns of the GRanges. To control the type and amount of data returned see the options in output(VEPParam()).

```
> head(gr, 3)

GRanges object with 3 ranges and 22 metadata columns:
             seqnames         ranges strand |   Allele             Consequence
                <Rle>      <IRanges>  <Rle> | <factor>               <factor>
  rs58108140        1 [10583, 10583]      * |        A   upstream_gene_variant
  rs58108140        1 [10583, 10583]      * |        A downstream_gene_variant
  rs58108140        1 [10583, 10583]      * |        A   upstream_gene_variant
              IMPACT   SYMBOL            Gene Feature_type         Feature
             <factor> <factor>        <factor>     <factor>        <factor>
  rs58108140 MODIFIER  DDX11L1 ENSG00000223972   Transcript ENST00000456328
  rs58108140 MODIFIER   WASH7P ENSG00000227232   Transcript ENST00000488147
  rs58108140 MODIFIER  DDX11L1 ENSG00000223972   Transcript ENST00000450305
                                     BIOTYPE     EXON   INTRON    HGVSc
                                    <factor> <factor> <factor> <factor>
  rs58108140               processed_transcript     <NA>     <NA>     <NA>
  rs58108140             unprocessed_pseudogene     <NA>     <NA>     <NA>
  rs58108140 transcribed_unprocessed_pseudogene     <NA>     <NA>     <NA>
               HGVSp cDNA_position CDS_position Protein_position Amino_acids
             <factor>      <factor>     <factor>         <factor>    <factor>
  rs58108140     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>             <NA>        <NA>
  rs58108140     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>             <NA>        <NA>
  rs58108140     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>             <NA>        <NA>
              Codons Existing_variation DISTANCE   STRAND SYMBOL_SOURCE
             <factor>           <factor> <factor> <factor>      <factor>
  rs58108140     <NA>               <NA>     1286        1          HGNC
```

```
  rs58108140     <NA>               <NA>     3821       -1          HGNC
  rs58108140     <NA>               <NA>     1427        1          HGNC
               HGNC_ID
              <factor>
  rs58108140 HGNC:37102
  rs58108140 HGNC:38034
  rs58108140 HGNC:37102
  -------
  seqinfo: 1 sequence from  genome; no seqlengths
```

Next we use a vcf of structural variants as input

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

and request that a VCF object be returned by setting the *vcf* option in the *dataformat* slot to TRUE.

```
> param <- VEPParam(dataformat=c(vcf=TRUE))
```

An call to ensemblVEP results in an error.

```
> vcf <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
2012-12-03 16:40:55 - Starting...
ERROR: Could not detect input file format
```

In most situations Ensembl VEP can auto-detect the input format. In this case, however, it cannot so we explicitly set the *format* option to 'vcf'.

```
> input(param)$format <- "vcf"
```

Try again.

```
> 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 5
[[1]] deletion|intron_variant&non_coding_transcript_variant&feature_truncatio...
[[2]] -|intergenic_variant||||||||||||||||||||
[[3]] insertion|intron_variant&non_coding_transcript_variant&feature_elongati...
[[4]] duplication|upstream_gene_variant|MODIFIER|RAF1|ENSG00000132155|Transcr...
[[5]] -|intergenic_variant||||||||||||||||||||
```

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 23 metadata columns:
                            seqnames              ranges strand |  VCFRowID
                               <Rle>           <IRanges>  <Rle> | <integer>
          2:321682_T/<DEL>        2 [  321682,   321682]      * |         3
          2:321682_T/<DEL>        2 [  321682,   321682]      * |         3
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>       2 [14477084, 14477084]      * |         4
                             Allele
                            <factor>
          2:321682_T/<DEL> deletion
          2:321682_T/<DEL> deletion
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>      -
                                                                  Consequence
                                                                     <factor>
```

```
         2:321682_T/<DEL> intron_variant&non_coding_transcript_variant&feature_truncation
         2:321682_T/<DEL> intron_variant&non_coding_transcript_variant&feature_truncation
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>                                                 intergenic_variant
                              IMPACT     SYMBOL            Gene Feature_type
                            <factor>   <factor>        <factor>     <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL> MODIFIER AC079779.6 ENSG00000233684   Transcript
         2:321682_T/<DEL> MODIFIER AC079779.6 ENSG00000233684   Transcript
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>     <NA>       <NA>            <NA>         <NA>
                                   Feature  BIOTYPE     EXON   INTRON    HGVSc
                                  <factor> <factor> <factor> <factor> <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL> ENST00000430529  lincRNA     <NA>      1/1     <NA>
         2:321682_T/<DEL> ENST00000436808  lincRNA     <NA>      1/3     <NA>
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>            <NA>     <NA>     <NA>     <NA>     <NA>
                              HGVSp cDNA_position CDS_position
                            <factor>      <factor>     <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL>     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>
         2:321682_T/<DEL>     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>     <NA>          <NA>         <NA>
                            Protein_position Amino_acids   Codons
                                    <factor>    <factor> <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL>             <NA>        <NA>     <NA>
         2:321682_T/<DEL>             <NA>        <NA>     <NA>
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>             <NA>        <NA>     <NA>
                            Existing_variation DISTANCE   STRAND
                                      <factor> <factor> <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL>               <NA>     <NA>        1
         2:321682_T/<DEL>               <NA>     <NA>        1
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>               <NA>     <NA>     <NA>
                                   SYMBOL_SOURCE  HGNC_ID
                                        <factor> <factor>
         2:321682_T/<DEL> Clone_based_vega_gene     <NA>
         2:321682_T/<DEL> Clone_based_vega_gene     <NA>
  2:14477084_C/<DEL:ME:ALU>                  <NA>     <NA>
  -------
  seqinfo: 3 sequences 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: 22 1
rowRanges(vcf):
  GRanges with 5 metadata columns: paramRangeID, REF, ALT, QUAL, FILTER
info(vcf):
  DataFrame with 10 columns: BKPTID, CIEND, CIPOS, END, HOMLEN, HOMSEQ, IMPR...
info(header(vcf)):
             Number Type    Description
   BKPTID    .      String  ID of the assembled alternate allele in the asse...
   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...
   IMPRECISE 0      Flag    Imprecise structural variation
   MEINFO    4      String  Mobile element info of the form NAME,START,END,P...
   SVLEN     .      Integer Difference in length between REF and ALT alleles
   SVTYPE    1      String  Type of structural variant
```

```
geno(vcf):
  SimpleList of length 4: GT, GQ, CN, CNQ
geno(header(vcf)):
       Number Type    Description
   GT  1      String  Genotype
   GQ  1      Float   Genotype quality
   CN  1      Integer Copy number genotype for imprecise events
   CNQ 1      Float   Copy number genotype quality for imprecise events
```

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 in the *input* options.

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

```
> input(param)$output_file
```

```
character(0)
```

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

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

The file can be written as a *vcf* or *gvf* by setting the options in the *dataformat* 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 <- VEPParam(dataformat=c(vcf=TRUE),
+                     input=c(output_file="/path/myfile.vcf"))
> ## Write a gvf file to myfile.gvf:
> myparam <- VEPParam(dataformat=c(gvf=TRUE),
+                     input=c(output_file="/path/myfile.gvf"))
> ## Write a tab delimited file to myfile.txt:
> myparam <- VEPParam(input=c(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 *VEPParam* 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 <- VEPParam(output=c(regulatory=TRUE))
  > gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
  ```

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

  ```
  > param <- VEPParam(input=c(format="vcf"),
  +                   output=c(terms="so"),
  +                   identifiers=c(symbol=TRUE))
  > gr <- ensemblVEP(fl, param)
  ```

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

  ```
  > param <- VEPParam(filterqc=c(coding_only=TRUE),
  +                   colocatedVariants=c(check_existing=TRUE),
  +                   identifiers=c(symbol=TRUE))
  > 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 <- VEPParam(output=c(sift="b", polyphen="p"),
                  dataformat=c(vcf=TRUE))
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 3.2.0 (2015-04-16)
Platform: x86_64-w64-mingw32/x64 (64-bit)
Running under: Windows Server 2008 R2 x64 (build 7601) Service Pack 1

locale:
[1] LC_COLLATE=C
[2] LC_CTYPE=English_United States.1252
[3] LC_MONETARY=English_United States.1252
[4] LC_NUMERIC=C
[5] LC_TIME=English_United States.1252

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

other attached packages:
 [1] ensemblVEP_1.8.1         VariantAnnotation_1.14.1 Rsamtools_1.20.4
 [4] Biostrings_2.36.1        XVector_0.8.0            GenomicRanges_1.20.4
 [7] GenomeInfoDb_1.4.0       IRanges_2.2.3            S4Vectors_0.6.0
[10] BiocGenerics_0.14.0

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):
 [1] AnnotationDbi_1.30.1    zlibbioc_1.14.0         GenomicAlignments_1.4.1
 [4] BiocParallel_1.2.2      BSgenome_1.36.0         tools_3.2.0
 [7] Biobase_2.28.0          DBI_0.3.1               lambda.r_1.1.7
[10] futile.logger_1.4.1     rtracklayer_1.28.4      futile.options_1.0.0
[13] bitops_1.0-6            RCurl_1.95-4.6          biomaRt_2.24.0
[16] RSQLite_1.0.0           GenomicFeatures_1.20.1  XML_3.98-1.2
```