

Package ‘Macarron’

May 9, 2026

Version 1.17.0

Title Prioritization of potentially bioactive metabolic features from epidemiological and environmental metabolomics datasets

Depends R (>= 4.5.0), SummarizedExperiment

Imports BiocParallel, DelayedArray, WGCNA, ff, data.table, dynamicTreeCut, Maaslin2, plyr, stats, psych, logging, methods, utils

Suggests knitr, BiocStyle, optparse, testthat (>= 2.1.0), rmarkdown, markdown

Description Macarron is a workflow for the prioritization of potentially bioactive metabolites from metabolomics experiments. Prioritization integrates strengths of evidences of bioactivity such as covariation with a known metabolite, abundance relative to a known metabolite and association with an environmental or phenotypic indicator of bioactivity. Broadly, the workflow consists of stratified clustering of metabolic spectral features which co-vary in abundance in a condition, transfer of functional annotations, estimation of relative abundance and differential abundance analysis to identify associations between features and phenotype/condition.

VignetteBuilder knitr

License MIT + file LICENSE

URL <http://huttenhower.sph.harvard.edu/macarron>

Encoding UTF-8

biocViews Sequencing, Metabolomics, Coverage, FunctionalPrediction, Clustering

BugReports <https://forum.biobakery.org/c/microbial-community-profiling/macarron>

RoxygenNote 7.3.3

git_url <https://git.bioconductor.org/packages/Macarron>

git_branch devel

git_last_commit 9abb534

git_last_commit_date 2026-04-28

Repository Bioconductor 3.24

Date/Publication 2026-05-08

Author Amrisha Bhosle [aut],
Ludwig Geistlinger [aut],
Sagun Maharjan [aut, cre]

Maintainer Sagun Maharjan <sagunmaharjann@gmail.com>

Contents

calAVA	2
calES	3
calQval	4
chem_taxonomy	5
decorateID	6
findMacMod	7
Macarron	8
makeDisMat	10
prepInput	11
prioritize	12
showBest	13
Index	15

calAVA	<i>Calculate abundance versus anchor (AVA) of metabolic features.</i>
--------	---

Description

AVA of a feature is the ratio of its abundance and the most abundant metabolite in the same module i.e. the "anchor". Anchor is an annotated/known feature if available or just the most abundant metabolic feature. For every feature, mean abundance in each phenotype or condition is calculated and the maximum is considered for AVA calculation. Singletons are assigned an AVA of 1.

Usage

```
calAVA(se, mod.assn, metadata_variable = 1, anchor_annotation = 2)
```

Arguments

se	SummarizedExperiment object created using Macarron::prepInput().
mod.assn	the output of Macarron::findMacMod().
metadata_variable	name or index of metadata column identifying phenotypes/conditions to be used for evaluating AVA. Default: Column 1 of metadata dataframe. Note: metadata_variable must be consistent across distance matrix, ava, q-value and effect-size calculations.
anchor_annotation	name or index of column containing common names of the annotated metabolite. Default: Column 2 of annotation dataframe.

Value

mac.ava abundance versus anchor values of metabolic features

Examples

```

prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                          input_annotations = annotations_df,
                          input_metadata = metadata_df)

w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
modules.assign <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                       w = w,
                                       input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)

mets.ava <- Macarron::calAVA(se = mbx,
                             mod.assign = modules.assign)

```

calES

*Calculate effect size of differential abundance of metabolic features.***Description**

Effect size of a metabolic feature is the difference in mean log₂ transformed abundances in test and control (reference) samples. For the specified metadata variable, effect size is calculated for all test categories against the reference category.

Usage

```
calES(se, mac.qval)
```

Arguments

se	SummarizedExperiment object created using Macarron::prepInput().
mac.qval	the output of Macarron::calQval().

Value

mac.es effect sizes of metabolic features in phenotypes of interest.

Examples

```

prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,

```

```

        input_annotatons = annotations_df,
        input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
modules.assn <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                   w = w,
                                   input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)
mets.qval <- Macarron::calQval(se = mbx,
                              mod.assn = modules.assn)
mets.es <- Macarron::calES(se = mbx,
                          mac.qval = mets.qval)

```

calQval

Calculate q-value of differential abundance of metabolic features.

Description

This function uses the MaAsLin2 package for estimating q-value of differential abundance. Multiple fixed and random effects can be specified for fitting the multiple regression model. Default analysis method is "LM". Can be run on multiple cores. `metadata_variable` and `ref` (reference group) should be the same as the one specified for effect size calculation.

Usage

```

calQval(
  se,
  mod.assn,
  metadata_variable = 1,
  fixed_effects = NULL,
  random_effects = NULL,
  reference = NULL,
  output_folder = NULL,
  cores = 1,
  plot_heatmap = FALSE,
  plot_scatter = FALSE,
  heatmap_first_n = 50
)

```

Arguments

<code>se</code>	SummarizedExperiment object created using <code>Macarron::prepInput()</code> .
<code>mod.assn</code>	the output of <code>Macarron::findMacMod()</code> .
<code>metadata_variable</code>	name or index of metadata column identifying phenotypes/conditions to be used for differential abundance testing. Default: Column 1 of metadata dataframe Note: <code>metadata_variable</code> must be consistent across <code>ava</code> , <code>q-value</code> and <code>effect-size</code> calculations.
<code>fixed_effects</code>	fixed effects, comma delimited e.g. <code>c("metadata1","metadata2")</code> . Default: all columns in metadata.
<code>random_effects</code>	random effects, comma delimited. Default: NULL.

reference	a reference level/group in each metadata column with more than 3 levels, semi-colon delimited for multiple variables e.g. c("metadata1,ref1";"metadata2,ref2"). Default: alphabetically first phenotype/condition will be used as reference. Note: Reference must be specified for metadata with more than 2 levels.
output_folder	the name of the output folder where all MaAsLin2 results will be written. Default: maaslin2_output
cores	the number of R processes to run in parallel.
plot_heatmap	Maaslin2 option-Generate a heatmap for the significant associations. Default: TRUE
plot_scatter	Maaslin2 option-Generate scatter plots for the significant associations. Default: FALSE
heatmap_first_n	Maaslin2 option-Generate heatmap for top n significant associations. Default: 50

Value

mac.qval q-value of metabolic features in phenotypes of interest.

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                          input_annotations = annotations_df,
                          input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
modules.assign <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                     w = w,
                                     input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)
mets.qval <- Macarron::calQval(se = mbx,
                              mod.assign = modules.assign)
```

chem_taxonomy

Chemical taxonomy lookup table

Description

A dataset mapping metabolite IDs (HMDB or PubChem) to chemical subclass and class, used by decorateID().

Usage

```
data(chem_taxonomy)
```

Format

A data frame with 145837 rows and 4 variables:

hmdb_id HMDB accession

pubchem_compound_id PubChem CID (character, may be NA if only HMDB is known)

sub_class Chemical subclass (character, may be NA)

class Chemical class (character, may be NA)

decorateID	<i>Create a chemical taxonomy table for annotated metabolic features. Uses a pregenerated chemical taxonomy table shipped with the package to assign chemical subclass and class to annotated features.</i>
------------	---

Description

Create a chemical taxonomy table for annotated metabolic features. Uses a pregenerated chemical taxonomy table shipped with the package to assign chemical subclass and class to annotated features.

Usage

```
decorateID(input_annotations, chemical_taxonomy = NULL)
```

Arguments

input_annotations

a dataframe (features x annotations) containing the available feature annotations. ^{^^}Column 1 must contain standard annotations such as HMDB ID or PubChem CID for the subset of identified/annotated metabolic features.

chemical_taxonomy

Optional data frame with columns `hmdb_id`, `pubchem_compound_id`, `sub_class`, and `class`. If NULL (default), the built-in `chem_taxonomy` dataset is loaded via `data()`.

Value

A data frame with three columns: `ID` (same type as the first column of `input_annotations`), `Sub_Class` and `Class`, for the subset of features whose IDs are present in `chemical_taxonomy`.

Examples

```
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
input_taxonomy <- decorateID(annotations_df)
```

findMacMod	<i>Cluster metabolic features based on covarying abundances into modules</i>
------------	--

Description

Cluster metabolic features based on covarying abundances into modules

Usage

```
findMacMod(  
  se,  
  w,  
  input_taxonomy,  
  standard_identifier = 1,  
  min_module_size = NULL,  
  evaluateMOS = TRUE  
)
```

Arguments

se	SummarizedExperiment object created using <code>Macarron::prepInput()</code> .
w	distance matrix from function <code>Macarron::makeDisMat()</code> .
input_taxonomy	chemical taxonomy file with 3 columns specifying annotation, subclass and class of annotated features. Can be created using the <code>decorateID.R</code> utility of <code>Macarron</code> . Annotation specified with "standard_identifier" and annotation in the first column of the chemical taxonomy file must match.
standard_identifier	name or index of column containing HMDB or PubChem IDs. Default: Column 1 in annotation dataframe.
min_module_size	minimum module size to be used for module identification with <code>dynamicTreeCut::cutreeDynamic()</code> . Default is cube root of number of prevalent features.
evaluateMOS	examine measure of success for modules identified using <code>min_module_size</code> , <code>min_module_size + 5</code> , <code>min_module_size + 10</code> , <code>min_module_size - 5</code> , <code>min_module_size - 10</code>

Value

mod.assn metabolic features clustered into "modules" based on covarying abundances and measures of success.

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")  
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)  
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")  
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)  
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")  
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)  
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
```

```
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                           input_annotations = annotations_df,
                           input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
modules.assign <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                       w = w,
                                       input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)
```

Macarron

Macarron

Description

Macarron

Usage

```
Macarron(
  input_abundances,
  input_annotations,
  input_metadata,
  input_taxonomy,
  output = "Macarron_output",
  metadata_variable = 1,
  min_prevalence = 0.7,
  execution_mode = "serial",
  standard_identifier = 1,
  anchor_annotation = 2,
  min_module_size = NULL,
  fixed_effects = NULL,
  random_effects = NULL,
  reference = NULL,
  cores = 1,
  plot_heatmap = FALSE,
  plot_scatter = TRUE,
  heatmap_first_n = 50,
  show_best = TRUE,
  priority_threshold = 0.9,
  per_module = 10,
  per_phenotype = 1000,
  only_characterizable = TRUE
)
```

Arguments

input_abundances

a comma-delimited file or dataframe (features x samples) containing metabolic feature intensities (abundances).

input_annotiations	a comma-delimited file or dataframe (features x annotations) containing available feature annotations.
input_metadata	a comma-delimited file or dataframe (samples x metadata) containing sample metadata.
input_taxonomy	a comma-delimited file or dataframe containing the chemical class and subclass information of annotated features.
output	name of the folder where Macarron output files will be written. Default: "Macarron_output".
metadata_variable	Name or index of the column that identifies the phenotypes/conditions in the study. Default: Column 1 of metadata dataframe.
min_prevalence	prevalence threshold (percentage). Default = 0.7.
execution_mode	BiocParallel execution mode. Options: "serial" or "multi" Default = "serial".
standard_identifier	Name or index of column containing HMDB or PubChem IDs. Default: Column 1 in annotation dataframe.
anchor_annotation	Name or index of column containing common names of the annotated metabolite. Default: Column 2 of annotation dataframe.
min_module_size	Integer that defines the size of the smallest covariance module. Default: Cube root of number of prevalent metabolic features.
fixed_effects	Covariates for linear modeling with MaAsLin2. Default: All columns of metadata dataframe.
random_effects	Random effects for linear modeling with MaAsLin2. Default: NULL.
reference	Reference category (factor) in categorical metadata covariates containing three or more levels. Must be provided as a string of 'covariate,reference' semi-colon delimited for multiple covariates.
cores	MaAsLin2 option-The number of R processes to be run in parallel.
plot_heatmap	MaAslin2 option-Generate a heatmap for the significant associations. Default: TRUE
plot_scatter	MaAslin2 option-Generate scatter plots for the significant associations. Default: FALSE
heatmap_first_n	MaAslin2 option-Generate heatmap for top n significant associations. Default = 50
show_best	write 1000 or fewer highly prioritized metabolic features into a separate file. Default: TRUE
priority_threshold	cut-off of priority score for showing highly prioritized features. Default = 0.9
per_module	show first n highly prioritized features in a module. Default = 10
per_phenotype	show highly prioritized n features per phenotype/condition. Default = 1000
only_characterizable	show highly prioritized features in modules which contain at least one annotated metabolite. Default = TRUE

Value

mac.result dataframes containing metabolic features listed according to their priority (potential bioactivity) in a phenotype of interest.

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
mets.prioritized <- Macarron::Macarron(input_abundances = prism_abundances,
                                       input_annotations = prism_annotations,
                                       input_metadata = prism_metadata,
                                       input_taxonomy = met_taxonomy)
```

makeDisMat

Create a biweight midcorrelation (WGCNA::bicor()) based distance matrix.

Description

Create a biweight midcorrelation (WGCNA::bicor()) based distance matrix.

Usage

```
makeDisMat(
  se,
  metadata_variable = 1,
  min_prevalence = 0.7,
  nthreads = 0,
  execution_mode = "serial",
  optimize.for = c("runtime", "memory")
)
```

Arguments

se	SummarizedExperiment object created using Macarron::prepInput().
metadata_variable	metadata column identifying phenotypes/conditions to be used to evaluate prevalence of features. Default = Column 1 of metadata dataframe.
min_prevalence	prevalence threshold (percentage). Default = 0.7.
nthreads	number of processors
execution_mode	"serial" or "multi" processing with BiocParallel. Default: "serial" (recommended for laptops). "multi" may be used when running Macarron on a cluster.
optimize.for	runtime or memory. Features present (i.e. not NA) in "min_prevalence" of samples in each category of a "metadata_variable" will be considered e.g. if min_prevalence is 0.7 and metadata_variable has 2 categories A and B, union of (i) features present in at least 70 and (ii) features present in at least 70 Correlation between feature abundances are is calculated using WGCNA::bicor().

Value

w distance matrix where distance = $1 - \text{bcor}^3$

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                          input_annotations = annotations_df,
                          input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
```

prepInput

Create a SummarizedExperiment object

Description

Create a SummarizedExperiment object

Usage

```
prepInput(input_abundances, input_annotations, input_metadata)
```

Arguments

input_abundances

a dataframe (features x samples) containing metabolic feature intensities (abundances).

input_annotations

a dataframe (features x annotations) containing the available feature annotations. ^^Column 1 must contain standard annotations such as HMDB ID or Pubchem CID for the subset of identified/annotated features. ^^Column 2 must contain metabolite name. ^^Column 3 must contain a continuous numeric chemical property such as m/z or shift/ppm.

input_metadata

a dataframe (samples x metadata) containing sample metadata. ^^Row names must identify samples. ^^Column 1 must identify phenotypes or conditions (categorical metadata) associated with the samples. Must not contain NA. Rows with no specified phenotype/condition will be removed.

Value

SummarizedExperiment object

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                           input_annotations = annotations_df,
                           input_metadata = metadata_df)
```

prioritize

Rank metabolic features and prioritize based on predicted bioactivity.

Description

Metabolic features are ranked based on AVA, and q-value and effect size of differential abundance. The harmonic mean of these three ranks is calculated and used as the meta-rank to prioritize potentially bioactive features in a phenotype (or condition). Top-ranked features have good relative abundance, and are significantly perturbed in the specified environment/phenotype.

Usage

```
prioritize(se, mod.assn, mac.ava, mac.qval, mac.es)
```

Arguments

se	SummarizedExperiment object created using Macarron::prepInput()
mod.assn	the output of Macarron::findMacMod()
mac.ava	the output of Macarron::calAVA()
mac.qval	the output of Macarron::calQval()
mac.es	the output of Macarron::calES()

Value

mac.result - metabolic features listed according to priority

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                           input_annotations = annotations_df,
                           input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
```

```

modules.assn <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                   w = w,
                                   input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)
mets.ava <- Macarron::calAVA(se = mbx,
                            mod.assn = modules.assn)
mets.qval <- Macarron::calQval(se = mbx,
                              mod.assn = modules.assn)
mets.es <- Macarron::calES(se = mbx,
                          mac.qval = mets.qval)
mets.prioritized <- Macarron::prioritize(se = mbx,
                                         mod.assn = modules.assn,
                                         mac.ava = mets.ava,
                                         mac.qval = mets.qval,
                                         mac.es = mets.es)

```

showBest

View highly prioritized bioactives grouped by modules.

Description

Modules are listed in the order of priority. Only the top-ranked *n* features in each module are shown. The priority of a module is the ratio of number of features in it that are ranked higher than the cut-off and the size of the module. This utility function makes it easier to understand default prioritization results of large datasets where a few hundred metabolic features are highly-prioritized.

Usage

```

showBest(
  mac.result,
  priority_threshold = 0.9,
  per_module = 10,
  per_phenotype = 1000,
  only_characterizable = TRUE
)

```

Arguments

mac.result the output of `Macarron::Macarron()` or `Macarron::prioritize()`.

priority_threshold cut-off of priority score. Default = 0.9.

per_module show first *n* highly prioritized features in a module. Default = 10

per_phenotype show highly prioritized *n* features per phenotype/condition. Default = 1000

only_characterizable show highly prioritized features in modules which contain at least one annotated metabolite. Default = TRUE

Value

best.mets -highly-prioritized bioactives in each module in each phenotype

Examples

```
prism_abundances = system.file("extdata", "demo_abundances.csv", package="Macarron")
abundances_df = read.csv(file = prism_abundances, row.names = 1)
prism_annotations = system.file("extdata", "demo_annotations.csv", package="Macarron")
annotations_df = read.csv(file = prism_annotations, row.names = 1)
prism_metadata = system.file("extdata", "demo_metadata.csv", package="Macarron")
metadata_df = read.csv(file = prism_metadata, row.names = 1)
met_taxonomy = system.file("extdata", "demo_taxonomy.csv", package="Macarron")
taxonomy_df = read.csv(file = met_taxonomy)
mbx <- Macarron::prepInput(input_abundances = abundances_df,
                          input_annotations = annotations_df,
                          input_metadata = metadata_df)
w <- Macarron::makeDisMat(se = mbx)
modules.assign <- Macarron::findMacMod(se = mbx,
                                       w = w,
                                       input_taxonomy = taxonomy_df)
mets.ava <- Macarron::calAVA(se = mbx,
                            mod.assign = modules.assign)
mets.qval <- Macarron::calQval(se = mbx,
                              mod.assign = modules.assign)
mets.es <- Macarron::calES(se = mbx,
                          mac.qval = mets.qval)
mets.prioritized <- Macarron::prioritize(se = mbx,
                                         mod.assign = modules.assign,
                                         mac.ava = mets.ava,
                                         mac.qval = mets.qval,
                                         mac.es = mets.es)
best.mets <- Macarron::showBest(mac.result = mets.prioritized)
```

Index

* datasets

chem_taxonomy, 5

calAVA, 2

calES, 3

calQval, 4

chem_taxonomy, 5

decorateID, 6

findMacMod, 7

Macarron, 8

makeDisMat, 10

prepInput, 11

prioritize, 12

showBest, 13