

ChromHeatMap

Tim F. Rayner

May 26, 2026

Cambridge Institute of Medical Research

1 Introduction

The **ChromHeatMap** package provides functions for visualising expression data in a genomic context, by generating heat map images in which data is plotted along a given chromosome for all the samples in a data matrix.

These functions rely on the existence of a suitable **AnnotationDbi** package which provides chromosome location information for the probe- or gene-level identifiers used in your data set. The data themselves must be in either an **ExpressionSet**, or a data matrix with row names corresponding to probe or gene identifiers and columns corresponding to samples. While the **ChromHeatMap** package was originally designed for use with microarray data, given an appropriate **AnnotationDbi** package it can also be used to visualise data from next-generation sequencing experiments.

The output heatmap can include sample clustering, and data can either be plotted for each strand separately, or both strands combined onto a single heat map. An idiogram showing the cytogenetic banding pattern of the chromosome will be plotted for supported organisms (at the time of writing: *Homo sapiens*, *Mus musculus* and *Rattus norvegicus*; please contact the maintainer to request additions).

Once a heat map has been plotted, probes or genes of interest can be identified interactively. These identifiers may then be mapped back to gene symbols and other annotation via the **AnnotationDbi** package.

2 Data preparation

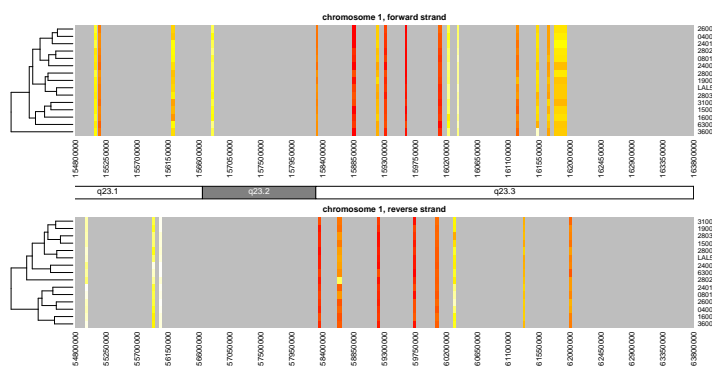
Expression data in the form of a data matrix must initially be mapped onto its corresponding chromosome coordinates. This is done using the `makeChrStrandData`:

```
> library('ALL')
> data('ALL')
> selSamples <- ALL$mol.biol %in% c('ALL1/AF4', 'E2A/PBX1')
> ALLs <- ALL[, selSamples]
> library('ChromHeatMap')
> chrdata<-makeChrStrandData(exprs(ALLs), lib='hgu95av2')
```

3 Plotting the heat map

```
> groupcol <- ifelse( ALLs$mol.biol == 'ALL1/AF4', 'red', 'green' )
> plotChrMap(chrdata, 19, strands='both', RowSideColors=groupcol)
```

```
> plotmap<-plotChrMap(chrdata, 1, cytoband='q23', interval=50000, srtCyto=0, cexCyto=1.2)
```



Other options include subsetting of samples, adding a color key to indicate sample subsets, deactivating the sample-based clustering and so on. See the help pages for `plotChrMap` and `drawMapDendro` for details.

Note that the default colors provided by the `heat.colors` function are not especially attractive or informative; consider using custom-defined colors, for example by using the **RColorBrewer** package.

The output of the `plotChrMap` function can be subsequently used with the `grabChrMapProbes` function which enables the user to identify the probes or genes responsible for heatmap bands of interest.

Note that the `layout` and `par` options for the current graphics device are *not* reset following generation of the image. This is so that the `grabChrMapProbes` function can accurately identify the region of interest when the user interactively clicks on the diagram.

4 Interactive probe/gene identification

Often it will be of interest to determine exactly which probes or genes are shown to be up- or down-regulated by the `plotChrMap` heat map. This can be done using the `grabChrMapProbes` function. This takes the output of the `plotChrMap` function, asks the user to mouse-click the heatmap on either side of the bands of interest and returns a character vector of the locus identifiers in that region. These can then be passed to the **AnnotationDbi** function `mget` to identify which genes are being differentially expressed.

```
> probes <- grabChrMapProbes( plotmap )
> genes <- unlist(mget(probes, envir=hgu95av2SYMBOL, ifnotfound=NA))
```

Note that due to the way the expression values are plotted, genes which lie very close to each other on the chromosome may have been averaged to give a signal that could be usefully plotted at screen resolution. In such cases the locus identifiers will be returned concatenated, separated by semicolons (e.g. “37687_i_at;37688_f_at;37689_s_at”). Typically this is easily solved by zooming in on a region of interest, using either the “cytoband” or “start” and “end” options to `plotChrMap`. See also the “interval” option for another approach to this problem.

5 Session information

The version number of R and packages loaded for generating the vignette were:

R version 4.6.0 (2026-04-24)

Platform: x86_64-pc-linux-gnu

Running under: Ubuntu 24.04.4 LTS

Matrix products: default

BLAS: /usr/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/openblas-pthread/libblas.so.3

LAPACK: /usr/lib/x86_64-linux-gnu/openblas-pthread/libopenblas-r0.3.26.so; LAPACK versio

locale:

```

[1] LC_CTYPE=en_US.UTF-8      LC_NUMERIC=C
[3] LC_TIME=en_US.UTF-8       LC_COLLATE=en_US.UTF-8
[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

```

```

time zone: Etc/UTC
tzcode source: system (glibc)

```

attached base packages:

```

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

```

other attached packages:

```

[1] hgu95av2.db_3.13.0    org.Hs.eg.db_3.23.1  ChromHeatMap_1.67.0
[4] annotate_1.91.0        XML_3.99-0.23        AnnotationDbi_1.75.0
[7] IRanges_2.47.1        S4Vectors_0.51.2     ALL_1.55.0
[10] Biobase_2.73.1        BiocGenerics_0.59.3  generics_0.1.4

```

loaded via a namespace (and not attached):

```

[1] SparseArray_1.13.2      bitops_1.0-9
[3] lattice_0.22-9          RSQLite_3.53.1
[5] grid_4.6.0              evaluate_1.0.5
[7] fastmap_1.2.0           blob_1.3.0
[9] Matrix_1.7-5            cigarillo_1.3.0
[11] restfulr_0.0.16         DBI_1.3.0
[13] httr_1.4.8              Biostrings_2.81.2
[15] codetools_0.2-20        abind_1.4-8
[17] cli_3.6.6               rlang_1.2.0
[19] crayon_1.5.3            XVector_0.53.0
[21] bit64_4.8.2             DelayedArray_0.39.2
[23] cachem_1.1.0            yaml_2.3.12
[25] BiocBaseUtils_1.15.1    S4Arrays_1.13.0
[27] tools_4.6.0             parallel_4.6.0
[29] BiocParallel_1.47.0     memoise_2.0.1
[31] Rsamtools_2.29.0        SummarizedExperiment_1.43.0
[33] curl_7.1.0              buildtools_1.0.0
[35] vctrs_0.7.3             R6_2.6.1
[37] png_0.1-9               matrixStats_1.5.0
[39] BiocIO_1.23.3           rtracklayer_1.73.0
[41] KEGGREST_1.53.0         Seqinfo_1.3.0
[43] bit_4.6.0               pkgconfig_2.0.3
[45] xfun_0.57               GenomicRanges_1.65.0
[47] GenomicAlignments_1.49.0 MatrixGenerics_1.25.0
[49] sys_3.4.3               knitr_1.51
[51] xtable_1.8-8            rjson_0.2.23
[53] maketools_1.3.2         compiler_4.6.0
[55] RCurl_1.98-1.18

```