Protein Microarray Data Analysis using the *PAA* Package

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1 Introduction

1.1 General information

Protein Array Analyzer (*PAA*) is a package for protein microarray data analysis (esp., *ProtoArray* data). It imports single color (protein) microarray data that has been saved in 'gpr' file format. After pre- processing (background correction, batch filtering, normalization) univariate feature pre-selection is performed (e.g., using the "minimum M statistic" approach - hereinafter referred to as "mMs", [1]). Subsequently, a multivariate feature selection is conducted to discover biomarker candidates. Therefore, either a frequency-based backwards elimination approach or ensemble feature selection can be used. *PAA* provides a complete toolbox of analysis tools including several different plots for results examination and evaluation

In this vignette the general workflow of *PAA* will be outlined by analyzing an exemplary data set that accompanies this package.

1.2 Installation

The recommended way to install PAA is to type the commands described below in the R console comment: (note: an active internet connection is needed):

- > # only if you install a Bioconductor package for the first time
- > source("http://www.bioconductor.org/biocLite.R")
- > # else
- > library("BiocInstaller")
- > biocLite("PAA", dependencies=TRUE)

This will install PAA including all dependencies.

Furthermore, *PAA* has an external dependency that is needed to provide full functionality. This external dependency is the free *C++* software package "Random Jungle" that can be downloaded from http://www.randomjungle.de/. comment: Note: *PAA* will be usable without Random Jungle. However, it needs this package for random jungle recursive feature elimination (RJ-RFE) provided by the function selectFeatures(). Please follow the instructions for your OS in the README file to install Random Jungle properly on your machine.

2 Loading PAA and importing data

After launching R, the first step of the exemplary analysis is to load PAA.

```
> library(PAA)
```

New microarray data should be imported using the function loadGPR() which is mainly a wrapper to *limma*'s function read.maimages() featuring optional duplicate aggregation for *ProtoArray* data. *PAA* supports the import of files in 'gpr' file format. The imported data is stored in an expression list object (*EList*, respectively, *EListRaw*, see Bioconductor package *limma*). Paths to a targets file and to a folder containing 'gpr' files (all 'gpr' files in this folder that are listed in the targets file will be read) are mandatory arguments. The folder that can be obtained by the command system.file("extdata", package = "PAA") contains an exemplary targets file that can be used as a template. Below, the first 3 rows of this targets file are shown.

```
> targets <- read.table(file=list.files(system.file("extdata", package="PAA"),</pre>
+ pattern = "^targets", full.names = TRUE), header=TRUE)
> print(targets[1:3,])
  ArrayID
                             FileName Group Batch
                                                          Date Array SerumID
1
      AD1 GSM734833_PA41992_-_AD1.gpr
                                         AD Batch1 10.11.2010 41992
2
      AD2 GSM734834_PA41994_-_AD2.gpr
                                         AD Batch2 10.11.2010 41994
                                                                         AD2
      AD3 GSM734835_PA42006_-AD3.gpr
                                         AD Batch1 12.11.2010 42006
                                                                         AD3
```

The columns "ArrayID", "FileName", and "Group" are mandatory. "Batch" is mandatory for microarray data that has been processed in batches. The remaining three columns as well as custom columns containing further information (e.g., clinical data) are optional.

If array.type is set to "ProtoArray" (default) duplicate spots will be aggregated. After importing, the object can be saved in a '.RData' file for further sessions. In the following code chunk, loadGPR() is demonstrated using a exemplary dummy data set that comes with PAA and has been created from the real data described below.

```
> gpr <- system.file("extdata", package="PAA")
> targets <- list.files(system.file("extdata", package="PAA"),
+ pattern = "dummy_targets", full.names=TRUE)
> dummy.elist <- loadGPR(gpr.path=gpr, targets.path=targets)
> save(dummy.elist, file=paste(gpr, "/DummyData.RData",
+ sep=""))
```

PAA comes with an exemplary protein microarray data set. This 20 Alzheimer's disease serum samples vs. 20 controls data is a subset of a publicly available ProtoArray data set. It can be downloaded from the repository "Gene Expression Omnibus" (GEO, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/, record "GSE29676"). It has been contributed by Nagele E et al. [2] (note: Because a data set stored in 'gpr' files would be too large to accompany this package the exemplary data is stored as an '.RData' file).

In the following code chunk, the *PAA* installation path (where exemplary data is located) is localized, the new folder 'demo_output' (where all output of the following analysis will be saved) is created, and the exemplary data set is loaded (note: exceptionally not via loadGPR()).

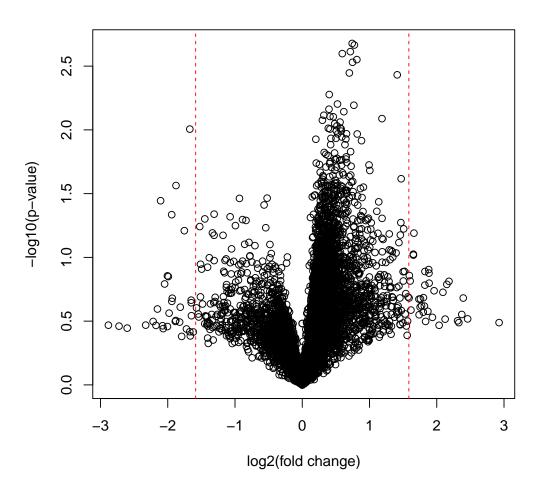
```
> cwd <- system.file(package="PAA")
> dir.create(paste(cwd, "/demo/demo_output", sep=""))
> output.path <- paste(cwd, "/demo/demo_output", sep="")
> load(paste(cwd, "/extdata/Alzheimer.RData", sep=""))
```

3 Pre-processing

If the microarrays were manufactured or processed in lots/batches, data analysis will suffer from batch effects resulting in wrong results. Hence, the elimination of batch effects is a crucial step of data pre-processing. A simple method to remove the most obvious batch effects is to find features that are extremely differential in different batches. In *PAA* this can be done for two batches using the function batchFilter(). This function takes an *EList* or *EListRaw* object and the batch-specific column name vectors lot1 and lot2 to find differential features regarding batches/lots. For this purpose, thresholds for p-values (Student's t-test) and fold changes can be defined. To visualize the differential features a volcano plot is drawn. Finally, the differential features are removed and the remaining data is returned.

- > lot1 <- elist\$targets[elist\$targets\$Batch=='Batch1','ArrayID']</pre>
- > lot2 <- elist\$targets[elist\$targets\$Batch=='Batch2','ArrayID']</pre>
- > elist <- batchFilter(elist=elist, lot1=lot1, lot2=lot2, p.thresh=0.001,
- + fold.thresh=3)

batch filter volcano



For background correction *limma*'s function backgroundCorrect() can be used:

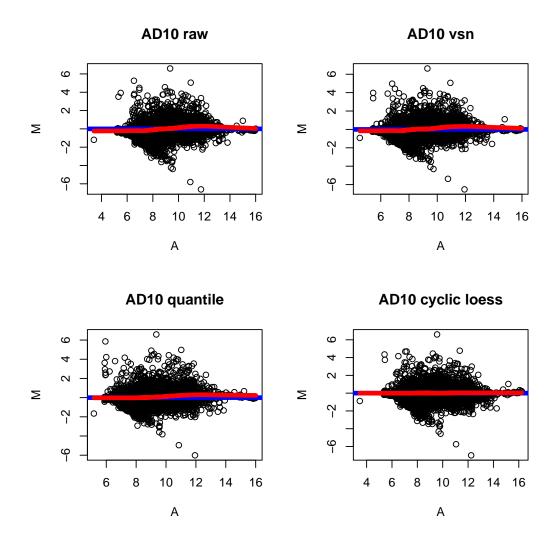
- > library(limma)
- > elist <- backgroundCorrect(elist, method="normexp",</pre>
- + normexp.method="saddle")

Another important step in pre-processing is normalization. To assist in choosing an appropriate normalization method for a given data set, *PAA* provides two functions: plotNormMethods() and plotMAPlots(). plotNormMethods() draws boxplots (one boxplot per sample) of raw data and data after all kinds of normalization provided by *PAA*. For each normalization approach sample-wise boxplots are created. All boxplots will be saved as a high-quality 'tiff' file, if an output path is specified.

> plotNormMethods(elist=elist)

plotMAPlots() draws MA plots of raw data and data after applying all kinds of normalization methods provided by *PAA*. If idx="all" and an output path is defined (default), for each microarray one 'tiff' file containing MA plots will be created. If idx is an integer indicating the column index of a particular sample, MA plots only for this sample will be created.

> plotMAPlots(elist=elist, idx=10)



After choosing a normalization method, the function normalizeArrays() can be used in order to normalize the data. normalizeArrays() takes an *EListRaw* object, normalizes the data, and returns an *EList* object containing normalized data in log2 scale. As normalization methods "cyclicloess", "quantile" or "vsn" can be chosen. Furthermore, for *ProtoArrays* robust linear normalization ("rlm", see *Shoner A. et al.* [3]) is provided.

> elist <- normalizeArrays(elist=elist, method="cyclicloess",

⁺ cyclicloess.method="fast")

In addition to batchFilter(), the function batchAdjust() can be used after normalization via normalizeArrays() to adjust the data for batch effects. This is a wrapper to sva's function ComBat() for batch adjustment using the empirical Bayes approach [4]. To use batchAdjust() the targets file information of the EList object must contain the columns "Batch" and "Group".

> elist <- batchAdjust(elist=elist, log=TRUE)</pre>

Found 2 batches
Found 1 categorical covariate(s)
Standardizing Data across genes
Fitting L/S model and finding priors
Finding parametric adjustments
Adjusting the Data

Since for further analysis also data in original scale will be needed, a copy of the *EList* object containing unlogged data should be created.

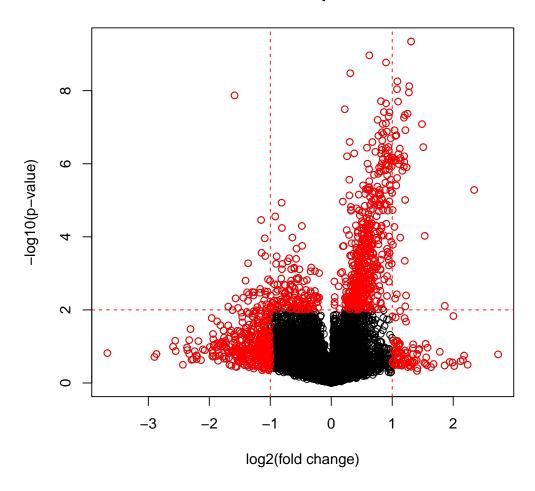
```
> elist.unlog <- elist
> elist.unlog$E <- 2^(elist$E)</pre>
```

4 Differential analysis

The goal of univariate differential analysis is to detect relevant differential features. Therefore, statistical measures such as t-test p-values or mMs as well as fold changes are considered. PAA provides plotting functions in order to depict the number and the quality of the differential features in the data set. Accordingly, the function volcanoPlot() draws a volcano plot to visualize differential features. Therefore, thresholds for p-values and fold changes can be defined. Furthermore, the p-value computation method ("mMs" or "tTest") can be set. When an output path is defined (via output.path) the plot will be saved as a 'tiff' file. In the next code chunk, an example with method="tTest" is given.

```
> c1 <- paste(rep("AD",20), 1:20, sep="")
> c2 <- paste(rep("NDC",20), 1:20, sep="")
> volcanoPlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="tTest",
+ p.thresh=0.01, fold.thresh=2)
```

volcano plot

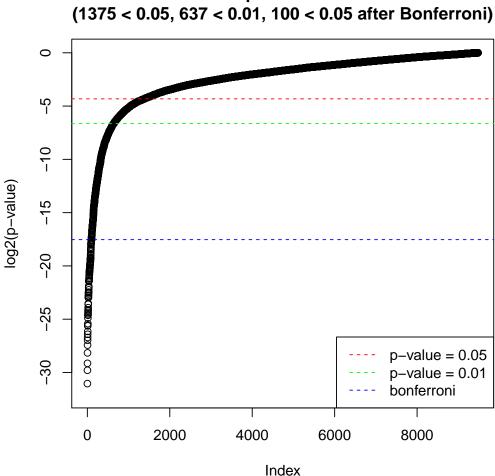


Here, an example with method="mMs" is given:

- > mMs.matrix1 <- mMs.matrix2 <- mMsMatrix(x=20, y=20)</pre>
- > volcanoPlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="mMs",
- + p.thresh=0.01, fold.thresh=2, mMs.matrix1=mMs.matrix1,
- + mMs.matrix2=mMs.matrix2, above=1500, between=400)

Another plotting function is pvaluePlot() which draws a plot of p-values for all features in the data set (sorted in increasing order and in log2 scale). The p-value computation method ("tTest" or "mMs") can be set via the argument method. Furthermore, when adjust=TRUE adjusted p-values (method: Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995, computed via p.adjust()) will be used. For a better orientation, horizontal dashed lines indicate which p-values are smaller than 0.05 and 0.01. If adjust=FALSE, additionally, the respective Bonferroni significance threshold (to show p-values that would be smaller than 0.05 after a possible Bonferroni correction) for the given data is indicated by a third dashed line. comment: Note: Bonferroni is not used for the adjustment. The dashed line is for better orientation only. When an output path is defined (via output.path) the plot will be saved as a 'tiff' file. In the next code chunk, an example with method="tTest" is given.

> pvaluePlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="tTest")



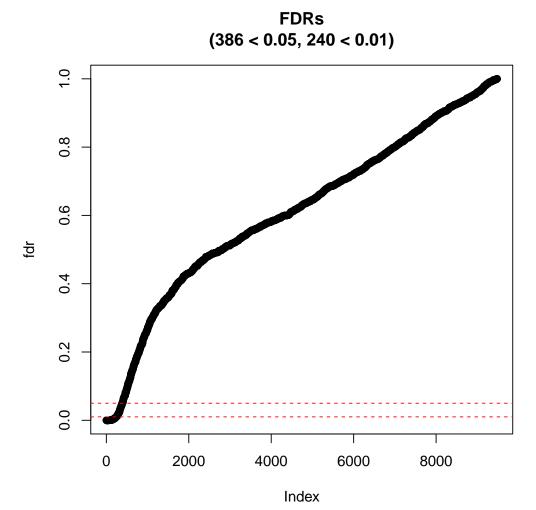
p-values

Here, an example with method="mMs" is given:

- > mMs.matrix1 <- mMs.matrix2 <- mMsMatrix(x=20, y=20)</pre>
- > pvaluePlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="mMs",
- + mMs.matrix1=mMs.matrix1, mMs.matrix2=mMs.matrix2, above=1500,
- + between=400)

Here, an example with method="tTest" and adjust=TRUE is given:

> pvaluePlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="tTest", adjust=TRUE)



Here, an example with method="mMs" and adjust=TRUE is given:

- > mMs.matrix1 <- mMs.matrix2 <- mMsMatrix(x=20, y=20)</pre>
- > pvaluePlot(elist=elist.unlog, group1=c1, group2=c2, method="mMs",
- + mMs.matrix1=mMs.matrix1, mMs.matrix2=mMs.matrix2, above=1500,
- + between=400, adjust=TRUE)

Finally, diffAnalysis() performs a detailed univariate differential analysis. This function takes an EList\$E- or EListRaw\$E- matrix (e.g., temp <- elist\$E) extended by row names comprising "BRC"-IDs of the corresponding features. The BRC-IDs can be created via:

brc <- paste(elist\$genes[,1], elist\$genes[,3], elist\$genes[,2]).</pre>

Next, the row names can be assigned as follows: rownames(temp) <- brc. Furthermore, the corresponding column name vectors, group labels and mMs- parameters are needed to perform the univariate differential analysis. This analysis covers inter alia p-value computation, p-value adjustment (method: Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995), and fold change computation. Since the results table is usually large, a path for saving the results should be defined via output.path. Optionally, a vector of row indices (features) and additionally (not mandatory for subset analysis) a vector of corresponding feature names (feature.names) can be forwarded to perform the analysis for a feature subset.

- > E <- elist.unlog\$E
- > rownames(E) <- paste(elist.unlog\$genes[,1], elist.unlog\$genes[,3],</pre>
- + elist.unlog\$genes[,2])
- > write.table(x=cbind(rownames(E),E), file=paste(cwd,"/demo/demo_output/data.txt",

```
sep=""), sep="\t", eol="\n", row.names=FALSE, quote=FALSE)
> mMs.matrix1 <- mMs.matrix2 <- mMsMatrix(x=20, y=20)</pre>
    diff.analysis.results <- diffAnalysis(input=E, label1=c1, label2=c2,
                class1="AD", class2="NDC", output.path=output.path,
                mMs.matrix1=mMs.matrix1, mMs.matrix2=mMs.matrix2, above=1500,
                between=400)
> print(diff.analysis.results[1:10,])
                BRC
                                                            t.test
                                                                                                           FDR.t. min..M.stat...mMs.
                                                                                                                                                                                                      FDR.mMs.
1
       1 2 11
                               0.351983694209677 0.653973479313352 0.243589743589744 0.830359859486074
2
       1 2 13
                              0.151259072141879 \ 0.503022336421492 \ 0.0241860325286354 \ 0.330856548876571
       1 2 15
                              1 2 17
                               0.178148370508752 \ 0.526723457826063 \ \ 0.150422391245528 \ 0.830359859486074
5
       1 2 19
                               0.271037416339296 \ 0.598295359038278 \ \ 0.243589743589744 \ 0.830359859486074
6
       1 2 21
                               0.069361853035849 \ 0.391110753434364 \ 0.0457380457380457 \ 0.483713149738174
          1 3 1 0.0282571557303619 0.267877836323831
7
                                                                                                                                                                          1
          1 3 3 0.00910966767019882 0.14042219433087
8
                                                                                                                                                                    0.5 0.908394020697585
9
          1 3 5 0.00601881506586275 0.107860806851378 0.053014553014553 0.483713149738174
10 1 3 7
                               0.805098309573945 \ 0.916151278840529 \ \ 0.302494802494803 \ \ 0.908394020697585
                        fold.change
                                                                              mean.AD
                                                                                                                        mean.NDC
                                                                                                                                                                 median.AD
                                                                                                                                                                                                            median.NDC
          1.36310218942116\ 1387.24857612588\ 1017.71428942901\ 842.099704479647\ 859.416057239667
1
2
       0.260164203455032\ 2189.81022237882\ 8417.03121835251\ 1306.14075983065\ 2551.86979248348
         1.10246479498723 451.984655028113 409.976497284295 415.049207136642 418.503234905461
3
      0.595242176244782 1520.86202090465 2555.03067759637 1215.58374522395 1690.44497083082
4
5
       0.453628378851133 \ 2531.33318363501 \ 5580.19141140576 \ 1827.95965127254 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547798 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.4247954798 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.42479547998 \ 1867.4247998 \ 1867.4247998 \ 1867.42479999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.4247999 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.424799 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479 \ 1867.42479
     0.757716282697657 2637.13557152232 3480.37336895211 2249.79121136307 2928.81612007343
7
        1.26296277410803 486.300802717053 385.047613980944 447.78689939818 350.215519118426
8
          1.47980349935485 \ 693.646150408692 \ 468.742066572421 \ 557.911640592165 \ 456.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.690818828797 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.69081882879 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.6908188289 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.690818888889 \ 469.690818888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.69081888889 \ 469.6908888889 \ 469.6908888889 \ 469.6908888889 \ 469.6908888889
9
          1.35894544224916 1993.46155077708 1466.91801510276 1874.0807319835 1440.05368538955
sd.AD
                                                                              sd.NDC
       1646.15876708672 564.287945192393
1
2
       2967.05315916364 18425.3711275158
     165.941695749469 82.1672930729294
3
      1062.94977081863 3156.77911820629
5
       2444.53642628691 11805.2557183832
6
      1276.80414608875 1559.53973583639
7
       155.25816836103 123.083850273056
8
    338.859052471425 93.5614899941108
      718.813809075484 323.921664377623
10 432.900862308949 1425.95241316282
```

Subsequently, the most relevant differential features (i.e., features having low p-values and high absolute fold changes) can be extracted as a univariate feature selection. Nevertheless, it is recommended to perform also multivariate feature selection and to consider feature panels obtained from both approaches.

5 Feature pre-selection

Before multivariate feature selection will be performed, it is recommended to discard features that are obviously not differential. Discarding them will accelerate runtimes without any negative impact on results. In *PAA*, this task is called "feature pre-selection" and it is performed by the function preselect(). This function iterates all features of the data set to score them via *mMs*, *Student's t-test*, or *mRMR*. If discard.features is TRUE (default), all features that are considered as obviously not differential will be collected and returned for discarding. Which features are considered as not differential depends on the parameters method, discard.threshold, and fold.thresh.

- If method = "mMs", features having an *mMs* value larger than discard.threshold (here: numeric between 0.0 and 1.0) or do not satisfy the minimal absolute fold change fold.thresh will be considered as not differential.
- If method = "tTest", features having a p-value larger than discard.threshold (here: numeric between 0.0 and 1.0) or do not satisfy the minimal absolute fold change fold.thresh will be considered as not differential.
- If method = "mrmr", mRMR scores for all features will be computed as scoring method (using the function mRMR.classic() of the R package mRMRe). Subsequently, features that are not the discard.threshold (here: integer indicating a number of features) features having the best mRMR scores are considered as not differential.

```
> mMs.matrix1 <- mMs.matrix2 <- mMsMatrix(x=20, y=20)
> pre.sel.results <- preselect(elist=elist.unlog, columns1=c1, columns2=c2,
+ label1="AD", label2="NDC", discard.threshold=0.5, fold.thresh=1.5,
+ discard.features=TRUE, mMs.above=1500, mMs.between=400,
+ mMs.matrix1=mMs.matrix1, mMs.matrix2=mMs.matrix2,
+ method="mMs")
> elist <- elist[-pre.sel.results$discard,]</pre>
```

6 Feature selection

For multivariate feature selection *PAA* provides the function selectFeatures(). It performs a multivariate feature selection using "frequency-based" feature selection (based on *RF-RFE*, *RJ-RFE* or *SVM-RFE*) or "ensemble" feature selection (based on *SVM-RFE*).

Frequency-based feature selection (method="frequency"): The whole data is splitted in k cross validation training and test set pairs. For each training set a multivariate feature selection procedure is performed. The resulting k feature subsets are tested using the corresponding test sets (via classification). As a result, selectFeatures() returns the average k-fold cross validation classification accuracy as well as the selected feature panel (i.e., the union set of the k particular feature subsets). As multivariate feature selection methods random forest recursive feature elimination (*RF-RFE*), random jungle recursive feature elimination (*RJ-RFE*) and support vector machine recursive feature elimination (*SVM-RFE*) are supported. To reduce running times, optionally, an additional univariate feature pre-selection can be performed (usage via preselection.method). As univariate pre-selection methods mMs ("mMs"), Student's t-test ("tTest") and mRMR ("mrmr") are supported. Alternatively, no pre-selection can be chosen ("none"). This approach is similar to the method proposed in *Baek et al.* [5].

Ensemble feature selection (method="ensemble"): From the whole data a previously defined number of subsamples is drawn defining pairs of training and test sets. Moreover, for each training set a previously defined number of bootstrap samples is drawn. Then, for each bootstrap sample SVM-RFE is performed and a feature ranking is obtained. To obtain a final ranking for a particular training set, all associated bootstrap rankings are aggregated to a single ranking. To score the cutoff best features, for each subsample a classification of the test set is performed (using a svm trained with the cutoff best features from the training set) and the classification accuracy is determined. Finally, the stability of the subsample-specific panels is assessed (via Kuncheva index, Kuncheva LI, 2007 [6]), all subsample-specific rankings are aggregated, the top n features (defined by cutoff) are selected, the average classification accuracy is computed, and all these results are returned in a list. This approach has been proposed and is described in Abeel et al. [7].

selectFeatures() takes an EListRaw or EList object, group-specific sample numbers, group labels and parameters choosing and setting up a univariate feature pre-selection method as well as a multivariate feature selection method (frequency-based or ensemble feature selection) to select a panel of differential features. When an output path is defined (via output.path) results will be saved on the hard disk and when verbose is TRUE additional information will be printed to the console. Depending on the selection method, one of two different results lists will be returned:

- 1. If method is "frequency", the results list contains the following elements:
 - accuracy: average k-fold cross validation accuracy.
 - sensitivity: average k-fold cross validation sensitivity.
 - specificity: average k-fold cross validation specificity.
 - features: selected feature panel.
 - all.results: complete cross validation results.
- 2. If method is "ensemble", the results list contains the following elements:
 - accuracy: average accuracy regarding all subsamples.
 - sensitivity: average sensitivity regarding all subsamples.
 - specificity: average specificity regarding all subsamples.
 - features: selected feature panel.
 - all.results: all feature ranking results.
 - stability: stability of the feature panel (i.e., Kuncheva index for the subrun-specific panels).

In the following two code chunks first "frequency-based" feature selection and then "ensemble" feature selection is demonstrated.

```
> selectFeatures.results <- selectFeatures(elist,n1=20,n2=20,label1="AD",
+ label2="NDC",selection.method="rf.rfe",subruns=2,candidate.number=1000,
    method="frequency")
> selectFeatures.results <- selectFeatures(elist,n1=20,n2=20,label1="AD",
+ label2="NDC",selection.method="rf.rfe",subsamples=10,bootstraps=10,
+ method="ensemble")</pre>
```

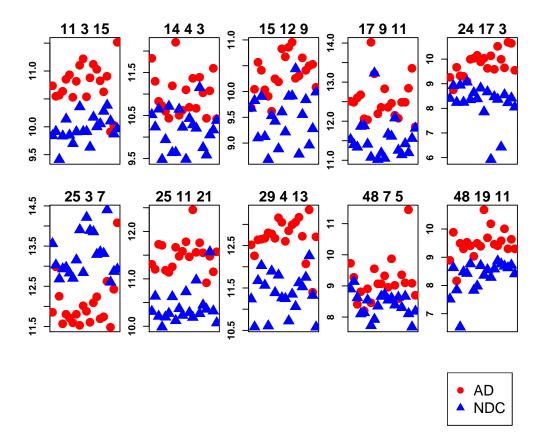
Because runtimes would take too long for this vignette *PAA* comes with pre-computated selectFeatures.results objects stored in '.RData' files. These objects can be loaded as follows:

```
> # results of frequency-based feature selection:
> load(paste(cwd, "/extdata/selectFeaturesResultsFreq.RData", sep=""))
> # or results of ensemble feature selection:
> load(paste(cwd, "/extdata/selectFeaturesResultsEns.RData", sep=""))
```

7 Results inspection

After the selection of a feature panel, these features should be validated by manual inspection and evaluation for further research. To aid results inspection, *PAA* provides several functions. The function plotFeatures() plots the intensities of all features (represented by BRC-IDs) that have been selected by selectFeatures() (one sub-plot per feature) in group-specific colors. All sub-plots are aggregated in one figure. If output.path is not NULL, this figure will be saved in a 'tiff' file in output.path.

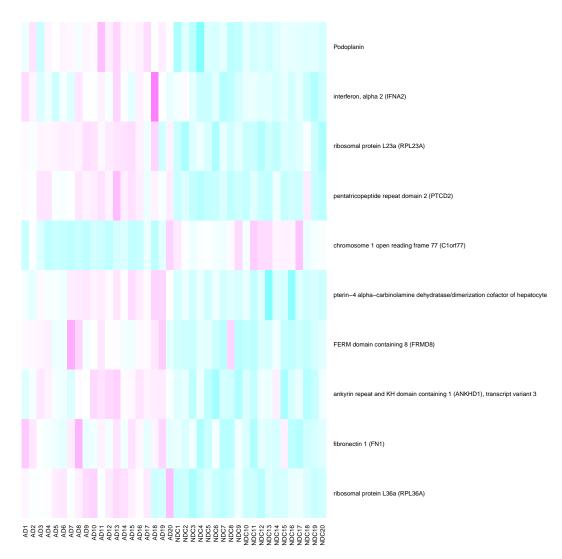
- > plotFeatures(features=selectFeatures.results\$features, elist=elist, n1=20,
- + n2=20, group1="AD", group2="NDC")



Alternatively, the function plotFeaturesHeatmap() plots intensities of all features given in the vector features (represented by BRC-IDs) as a heatmap. If description is TRUE (default: FALSE), features will be described via protein names instead of uniprot accessions. Again, if output.path is not NULL, the heatmap will be saved as a 'tiff' file in output.path.

> plotFeaturesHeatmap(features=selectFeatures.results\$features, elist=elist,

⁺ n1=20, n2=20, description=TRUE)



Finally, the function printFeatures() creates a table containing the selected biomarker candidate panel as well as additional information for results inspection. If output.path is defined, this table will be saved in a 'txt' file ('candidates.txt').

> printFeatures(features=selectFeatures.results\$features, elist=elist.unlog)[,-2]

	BRC	AD1	AD2	AD3	AD4
1	11 3 15	1707.5487217474	1497.38674689785	1518.50548665975	1595.48520781193
2	14 4 3	3647.8856681814	2525.02827878685	1822.99945555959	1693.2902270162
3	15 12 9	821.899619465933	1053.14353763606	1517.30660391222	1358.10268235525
4	17 9 11	5841.3140798993	5741.40278219469	6210.83563636426	6537.74627659344
5	24 17 3	616.111573789624	430.50778352629	810.54024033577	640.802478533216
6	25 3 7	3684.06124930958	8097.25857845367	4873.09737651854	3029.75212058229
7	25 11 21	2540.94438380918	2354.59829803536	3390.11030199312	3353.44247657033
8	29 4 13	5874.42547230922	4891.00677037418	6347.91201462816	6413.66758809429
9	48 7 5	845.714240769055	620.14440193628	340.749562634244	449.474219299952
10	48 19 11	476.178151266892	943.905600292745	288.804357634443	720.297395448951
		AD5	AD6	AD7	AD8 AD9
1	1851.1699	95801813 1954.342	50591408 1474.588	08187167 1800.721	28180474 2203.41666536497
2	1545.930	55668746 1382.000	35799687 2342.342	18157283 4715.175	57251859 1453.15299797788
3	1049.3710	02695366 959.9812	81957999 784.0292	98909074 1211.404	62403153 1168.05152698585

```
4260.17714734067 4202.60187600593 16612.0265171095 9541.51053863053 4658.8588632926
   632.069400444672 548.763100507282 1023.42880381063 1052.79856077289 1141.40761228461
    3567.8782212016 3361.12781744635 3083.52734553156 3582.11181827476 2964.7945481156
   2318.92221694186 2253.41013303313 2440.77082029899 3254.85907322306 2857.61042907193
   6536.80850077055 7127.74897797586 7039.47858075845 6525.73661581423 9104.56738330518
    293.28859081869 478.504192919484 353.200964938405 750.950212843063 534.827154135703
10 628.686647544015 736.022640348691 677.197314077335 523.364514901869 723.686113405843
                                AD11
                                                 AD12
   2386.46403448151 1487.73326737895 1883.45531898606 2229.51382781521 2089.56380522875
   1576.31726776973 2192.54630997845 1657.0714848759 2643.2065805943 1622.60970111715
   1817.67145801657 1632.14697480895 1852.35247893044 1983.67962329566 1225.49775172497
   5223.88824469712 7296.75112793968 5235.96698390644 5625.42315543494 4562.07038409095
   948.492518532499 1046.88437502484 793.938411158195 1128.04497935662 769.658352738974
   4130.59006500495 3768.6290095135 3117.05276658092 4362.44872185692 4826.64287027535
   3076.07852248745 3518.44620770821 2828.55863681375 5617.81938427695 3021.46387470043
                      6197.375428568 7401.90131165549 8122.56344668605 8489.87868607207
   8470.83889644311
   534.374903350561 640.036360803523 494.014987949269 936.872390455245 521.727313868953
10 668.009686426311 1640.47500006756
                                      825.6169869154 1170.89751921492 702.412305275103
                                AD16
                                                 AD17
   1816.81480837383 1581.63855404133 1913.63049498382 964.097897606952 1041.31869662808
1
   2680.75754761939 2088.89985475576 1386.72270539493 2163.21598235924 3100.93907875795
                     1606.128035886 1363.54480704356 1451.21232699924 1472.8558509718
   1264.90132812999
   4313.49722704237
                    5726.1793272771 5729.03626045886 7322.01008188934 10463.4326694858
5
   1461.33398384387 1014.5357715599 796.654471494386 1643.68188498961 1600.00902244818
    3305.5529166168 3411.90331260232 6299.56837933074 2867.60878558206 5513.99669518703
7
   3482.21452076536 3007.38413310608 1935.38202306179 2846.6780325369 2274.68712494841
   9182.19304833079 6731.10498346019 4314.2359530566 10389.9308274544 2697.2862285214
   385.232741137462 654.526774344986 547.249319019918 2785.35671953292 543.590666369519
      679.003582388 763.190819480539 1035.66536310848 628.178037013272 799.090556916149
               AD20
                                NDC1
                                                 NDC2
                                                                  NDC3
   2926.42411753136 916.310255562927 965.297890850329 682.054562088009 912.950704810332
   1377.25850041097 1467.91207671002 1203.85012261539 1605.84699431213 713.29858767954
   1084.48003919482 817.847716743097 906.146982416223 548.946861729732 957.882043011654
   3724.16200320842 2957.78866872182 2703.03269812683 2583.5743196281 3735.99667897858
   744.952853092911 338.540631709138 484.80631656514 302.279573332991 491.625200407955
   17381.9520086752 12078.4380584594 8356.16477086812 6570.9494040785 7820.46972808707
   3041.02403868932 1271.70744537942 1587.81230232425 1184.55950308557 1012.47570612393
   6708.44188234738 2418.89204876839 1531.7973860577 3265.91990969854 4176.0404600778
   414.318514283749 478.04672302892 564.959917710933 393.11844852088 274.765462066987
10 626.652122277308 183.129536672821 396.28721824634 229.444162809794 92.2033511239305
               NDC5
                                NDC6
                                                 NDC7
                                                                  NDC8
                                                                                   NDC9
   1126.38247141383 922.659886109754 830.938986253421 961.606341894609 1312.65211553595
   981.752307876404 1679.4377370426 796.743380621784 798.991549046095 1600.45415383023
   558.713037627185 410.597277093104 739.751575990382 686.466408438075 473.595891923403
   3777.33539556956 2722.26177707613 2158.43944120215 9622.39214229588 2075.93149199798
   303.117065525581 \ 536.157510885349 \ 326.678547811917 \ 396.881767196424 \ 334.843022317661
   8007.97121254133 7280.36488225517 6646.32014204794 9120.48431398333 15347.6266865229
                      1234.760415103 1577.46172386672 1112.00298493665 1325.10396521862
7
   1171.43537550505
   3025.96547287941 1557.58885760092 3812.53215134233 2681.25160743599 3572.53949683205
   282.289985043158 373.757162655114 211.309445291489 242.78647758168 326.622127353132
   357.247510556263 344.052731115053 435.198927146926 227.203421006667 252.122607579654
              NDC10
                               NDC11
                                                NDC12
                                                                 NDC13
   964.547283576047
                     965.92545559619 794.50575819914 1153.04044563743 1024.41205626165
   1199.79776944195 714.82808736054 1381.10817346644 1247.85077230902 1181.44529164993
```

```
778.128372427853 594.239115574468 959.255211480267 964.787743665097 1388.6637961329
   2326.72562790667 2119.09515194113 3252.01291938126 3134.98527115832 4336.07141691114
  452.275401873642 231.547622778675 406.947836547416 60.6294493022822 354.768459059868
5
  7335.85579632123 19002.2930164707 15171.4608698072 14820.5186810997 10027.6534437621
7
  1201.24683215565 1695.59724444137 1250.25039970223 1165.9062640145 2011.78693289675
8
   2463.80654651362 2434.45300087446 1689.94804150121 2615.46312616187
                                                                         2135.879656365
  405.535678033691 423.906146123585 373.155329687147 390.503241154251 334.165739139467
10 416.622316198235 328.548938140955 376.120270496846 311.854059551946 383.569582362546
              NDC15
                               NDC16
                                                NDC17
                                                                 NDC18
1
   1062.74220857401 1241.54257236708 1338.10713313903 1100.43290991954 936.367518922342
  2271.31764943595 862.867035440605 766.574994407207 1060.18779683922 1149.13869569307
2
3
  440.992612465661 751.178591098318 917.357004718083 498.687370891933 621.105094349124
4
   2443.1633378586 2258.87688670426 2743.14047789468 2340.8324014454 3014.3285273019
  329.753797565583 85.9622199864277 374.766024317663 300.196996312634 341.950351299524
5
  10473.5885640039 10195.7433739508 21655.7767725156 6220.93753625123 7480.52915420366
7
  1232.22526054351 1395.71156412758 1313.52593772083 3038.53221162454 1279.57569704464
8
   3154.40516192712 2952.69278321963 3448.73707209167 4903.95735927502 2564.88063392489
    397.00171296248 315.579611644105 405.872950164305 275.519666925887 204.822065149198
9
                     433.52538788943 410.710097186036 394.782278488936 421.419441238472
10 466.530753677265
              NDC20
```

- 997.772012656477 1
- 2 1338.41875267022
- 3 1016.73416943206
- 3615.51895537296
- 5 265.147174966629
- 7771.28134001059
- 7 1075.78204186532
- 1529.55534039403
- 291.125728322958 9
- 10 340.338492661371

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