FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

Lobry, J.R.

July 12, 2016

1 How can I extract the mitochondrial D-loop/Control Region?

This question from Sam Borstein was raised by e-mail on 2016-07-10 with an example based on the following genBank entry:

LOCUS	JF979198		16569 bp	DNA	circular P	RI 10-MAY-2012				
DEFINITION	Homo sapi genome.	iens isolate	02_C4c1a(S63	5848)	mitochondrion,	complete				
ACCESSION []	JF979198									
FEATURES		Location/Qu	alifiers							
source		116569								
		/organism="	Homo sapiens"							
		/organelle=	"mitochondrio	n"						
		/mol type="genomic DNA"								
		/isolate="0	2_C4c1a(S6358	48)"						
		/db_xref="t	axon:9606"							
		/haplotype=	"C4c1a"							
		/country="U	SA: Oklahoma, okee"	Flint	t District"					
D-loop		complement(join(161041	6569,1	1191))					
tRNA		577647								
		/product="t	RNA-Phe"							
rRNA		6481601								
		/product="1	2S ribosomal	RNA"						
ſ1										

The D-loop control region is listed under the FEATURES but is not turned out automatically into subsequences:

choo getT	sebank("g 'ype()	genbank")
	sname	libel
5962	CDS	.PE protein coding region
5963	LOCUS	sequenced DNA fragment
5964	MISC_RNA	.RN other structural RNA coding region
5965	NCRNA	.NC non-protein-coding gene other than rRNA and tRNA
5966	RRNA	.RR mature ribosomal RNA
5967	TMRNA	.TM transfer messenger RNA
5968	TRNA	.TR mature transfer RNA

The more general question is then: can I extract the sequence of something which is documented in the FEATURES but not directly available as a subsequence? The answer is yes: the function extractseqs() can do the job, dealing

with all the tedious join or complement operations. As from seqinR 3.2-1 the function has been changed not to use zlib compressed sockets by default so that it works on all platforms:

<pre>mito <- query("mito","AC=JF979198") myseq <- extractseqs("mito", operation = "feature", feature = "D-loop") myseq</pre>
 [1] ">JF979198.F1 657 residues" [2] "TGTTCGCCTGTAATATTGAACGTAGGTGCGATAAATATAGGATGAGGCAGGAATCAAAG" [3] "ACAGATACTGCGACATAGGGTGCTCCGGCTCCGGCGCTGCGCAATGCTATCGCGTGCACA" [4] "CCCCCCAGACGAAAATACCAAATGCATGGAGGACCTCCCGTGAGTGGTTAATAGGGTGATA" [5] "GACCTGTGATCCATCGTGATGTCTTATTTAAGGGGAACGTGTGGGCTATTAGGCTTTAT" [6] "GGCCCCGAGGCAAGAAGTGCCGCATCTGCGCGGATATCACTTCACCTTAACGGAGTGGTTAT" [7] "GGCCCCGAGCCAGGAGAGTACCACTCTTGTGCGCGGGATATTGACTTCACCGCAAGTGTTAT" [8] "GTCAAGGGACCCCTATCTGAGGGGGGCCACTCTTGTGCGGGATATTGACTTCACCGCAGGATGGGTG" [8] "GTCAAGGGACCCCTATCTGAGGGGGGTCATCCATGGGGGCAGGGAGGG

You can then read this just as a FASTA file with:

myfasta <- read.fasta(textConnection(myseq))
summary(myfasta)
Length Class Mode
JF979198.F1 657 SeqFastadna character</pre>



2 How can I compute a score over a moving window?

As an illustration, suppose that we want to reproduce a part of figure 1 from [6] whose screenshot is given is given in figure 1.

The score here is the GC-skew computed in non-overlapping windows of 10 Kb for a 1.6 Mb sequence. We need a fragment of *Escherchia coli* K12 chromosome from 67.4 min to 4.1 min on the genetic map. The sequence is directly available with data(m16j). Let's put this fragment into the string myseq:

data(m16j) myseq <- m16j

This is not exactly the same sequence that was used in [6] but very close to¹. We define a function called gcskew() that computes our score for a given string x:

```
gcskew <- function(x){
    if( !is.character(x) || length(x) > 1 ) stop("single string expected")
    tmp <- tolower(s2c(x))
    nC <- sum(tmp == "c")
    nG <- sum(tmp == "g")
    if( nC + nG == 0 ) return(NA)
    return(100*(nC - nG)/(nC + nG))
}
gcskew("GCCC")
[1] 50
gcskew("GCCCNNNNN")
[1] 50</pre>
```

¹The sequence used in [6] was a 1,616,174 bp fragment obtained from the concatenation of nine overlapping sequences (U18997, U00039, L10328, M87049, L19201, U00006, U14003, D10483, D26562 [10, 3, 4, 9, 1, 13]). Ambiguities have been resolved since then and its was a chimeric sequence from K-12 strains MG1655 and W3110 [5], the sequence used here is from strain MG1655 only [2].

Note some defensive programming tricks used here:

- We check that the argument **x** is a single string.
- We expand it as vector of single chars with s2c() only within the function to avoid big objects in the workspace.
- We force to lower case letters with tolower() so that we can use upper case letters too.
- We avoid division by zero and return NA in this case.
- We do not divide by the length of x but by the actual number of C and G so that ambiguous bases such as N do not introduce biases.

We move now along the sequence to compute the GC-skew:

```
step <- 10000
wsize <- 10000
starts <- seq(from = 1, to = nchar(myseq), by = step)
starts <- starts[-length(starts)] # remove last one
n <- length(starts)
result <- numeric(n)
for(i in seq_len(n)){
            result[i] <- gcskew(substr(myseq, starts[i], starts[i] + wsize - 1))
}</pre>
```

The following $code^2$ was used to produce figure 2.

```
xx <- starts/1000
yy <- result
n <- length(result)
hline <- 0
plot (yy ~ xx, type="n", axes=FALSE, ann=FALSE, ylim = c(-10, 10))
polygon(c(xx[1], xx, xx[n]), c(min(yy), yy, min(yy)), col = "black", border=NA)
usr <- par("usr")
rect(usr[1], usr[3], usr[2], hline, col="white", border=NA)
lines(xx, yy)
abline (h=hline)
box()
axis(1, at = seq(0,1600, by = 200))
axis(2, las = 1)
title(xlab = "position (Kbp)", ylab = "(C-G)/(C+G) %",
main = expression(paste("GC skew in ", italic(Escherichia~~coli))))
arrows(860, 5.5, 720, 0.5, length = 0.1, lwd = 2)
text(860, 5.5, "origin of replication", pos = 4)
```

You can now play with the **wsize** and **step** parameters to explore the signal (but note that with overlapping windows your points are no more independent) or use all the smoothing tools available under **Q**. Figure 3 shows for instance what can be obtained with the **lowess(**) function with two values for the smoothing parameter **f**. The corresponding code is as follows:

²This code is adapted from the code at http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~paul/ RGraphics/chapter3.html for figure 3.25 in Paul Murrell's book [7]. This book is a must read if you are interested by @rs force de frappe in the graphic domain.



```
plot(xx,yy, col = "grey", type = "b", ylim = c(-10,10), las = 1, xaxt = "n",
main = expression(paste("GC skew in ", italic(Escherichia~~coli))),
xlab = "position (Kbp)", ylab = "(C-G)/(C+G) %")
axis(1, at = seq(0,1600, by = 200))
lines(smooth <- lowess(xx,yy, f = 0.05), lwd = 1)
polycurve <- function(x, y, base.y = min(y), ...) polygon(x = c(min(x), x, max(x)), y = c(base.y, y, base.y), ..
up <- smooth$y > 0
polycurve(smooth$x[up], smooth$y[up], base.y = 0, col = rgb(0,0,1,0.5))
lines(lowess(xx,yy, f = 0.2), lwd = 2, col = "red")
legend("topright", inset = 0.01, legend = c("f = 0.05", "f = 0.20"), lwd = c(1,2), col = c("black", "red"))
abline(h=0)
arrows(860, 5.5, 720, 0.5, length = 0.1, lwd = 2)
text(860, 5.5, "origin of replication", pos = 4)
```

3 How can I extract just a fragment from my sequence?

Use the generic function getFrag() :

```
choosebank("emblTP")
mylist <- query("mylist", "AC=A00001")
getFrag(mylist$req[[1]], begin = 10, end = 20)
[1] "gatggagaatt"
attr(,"seqMother")
[1] "A00001"
attr(,"begin")
[1] 10
attr(,"end")
[1] 20
attr(,"class")
[1] "SeqFrag"
closebank()</pre>
```



How do I compute a score on my sequences? 4

In the example below we want to compute the G+C content in third codon positions for complete ribosomal CDS from *Escherichia coli*:

```
choosebank("emblTP")
criosebank( emoils )
ecribo <- query("ecribo","sp=escherichia coli ET t=cds ET k=ribosom@ ET NO k=partial")
myseqs <- sapply(ecribo$req, getSequence)
</pre>
 (gc3 <- sapply(myseqs, GC3))
       0.4946237 0.6046512 0.5000000 0.6194030 0.5772727 0.4838710 0.5980066
 [1]
[8]
       0.4974359 0.5031250 0.4324324 0.5000000 0.5113636 0.5290520 0.6142857
0.4904762 0.5714286 0.6191860 0.5906040 0.4880000 0.4880000 0.4946237
0.6046512 0.5000000 0.3522727 0.5076923 0.4343434 0.6194030 0.5522388
15
22
                                          0.4946237 0.4946237
0.4946237 0.5000000
0.5303030 0.4482759
29
       0.6104651 0.5661157 0.4946237
                                                                             0
                                                                                .6079734
                                                                                              0.5000000
                                                                                                                0.6343284
36
43
                        0.5789474 0.5303030
                                                                                                               0.4611111
0.5000000
       0.4659091
                                                                             0.4974359
                                                                                              0.5689655
       0.4611111
                                                                             0.4201681
                                                                                              0.5915493
      0.3829787 0.4519231 0.4302326 0.5696203 0.4285714 0.5689655 0.5000000
0.5224417 0.5661157 0.6057692 0.4444444 0.4659091 0.4130435 0.4946237
0.5661157 0.4946237 0.5680272
50
57
Ī64Ī
```

At the amino-acid level, we may get an estimate of the isoelectric point of the proteins this way:

sapj	ply(sapply	y(myseqs, g	getTrans),	computePI))		
[1] [8]	6.624309 9.203410	7.801329 9.826485	10.864793 5.674672	5.931989 7.154423	7.830476	6.624309 6.313741	7.801329
[15] [22] [29]	9.435422 7.801329 5.920490	4.310745 10.864793 6.612505	6.145496 9.346289 6.624309	4.876054 9.203410 6.624309	5.877050 7.801329	5.931989 10.864793	9.934988 5.931989
[36] [43]	11.182499 5.858421	9.598944 11.777516	6.624309 11.777511	10.864793 10.619175	9.203410 11.365738	11.031938 9.460987	5.858421 10.864793
[50] [57] [64]	4.863862 6.612505	9.845859 6.612505 6.624309	9.681066 4.310745	11.150304	10.248325	11.043607	6.624309

Note that some pre-defined vectors to compute linear forms on sequences are available in the EXP data.

As a matter of convenience, you may encapsulate the computation of your favorite score within a function this way:

GC3m <- function(list, ind = 1:list\$nelem) sapply(sapply(list\$req[ind], getSequence), GC3) GC3m(ecribo) [1] 0.4946237 0.6046512 0.5000000 0.6194030 0.5772727 0.4838710 0.5980066 [8] 0.4974359 0.5031250 0.4324324 0.5000000 0.5113636 0.5290520 0.6142857 [15] 0.4904762 0.5714286 0.6191860 0.5906040 0.4880000 0.4946237 [22] 0.6046512 0.5000000 0.3522727 0.5076923 0.4343434 0.6194030 0.5522388 [29] 0.6104651 0.5661157 0.4946237 0.4946237 0.6079734 0.5000000 0.6343284 [36] 0.4659091 0.5789474 0.4946237 0.5000000 0.4974359 0.5689655 0.4611111 [43] 0.4611111 0.5303030 0.5303030 0.4482759 0.4201681 0.5915493 0.5000000 [50] 0.3829787 0.4519231 0.4302326 0.5696203 0.4285714 0.5689655 0.5000000 [50] 0.5224417 0.5661157 0.6057692 0.4444444 0.4659091 0.4130435 0.4946237 [64] 0.5661157 0.4946237 0.5680272 [64] 0.5661157 0.6046512 0.5000000 0.6194030 0.5772727 0.4838710 0.5980066 [8] 0.4974359 0.5031250 0.4324324

5 Why do I have not exactly the same G+C content as in codonW?

This question was raised (and solved) by Oliver Clay in an e-mail (23-AUG-2006). The program codonW was written in C as part of John Peden's PhD thesis on Codon Usage [8] and is available at http://codonw.sourceforge.net/. The reason for the small differences in G+C content between the two programs is that the default behavior in codonW is to remove the stop codon before computations. Here is one way of removing the stop codon under \mathbb{R} :

gc3nos <- sapply(myseqs, function(s) GC3(s[1:(length(s) - 3)]))</pre>

As compared with the previous result, the difference is small but visible:

plot(x = gc3, y = gc3nos, las =1, main="Stop codon removal effect on G+C content in third codon positions", xlab = "With stop codon", ylab ="Stop codons removed") abline(c(0,1))



CodonW was released with a test file called input.dat, here are the first 10 lines of the file copied from CodonWSourceCode_1_4_4:

<pre>inputdatfile <- system.file("sequences/input.dat", package = "seqinr' cat(readLines(inputdatfile,n=10), sep = "\n")</pre>	')
>YCG9 Probable1377 residues Pha 0 Code 0ATGAATATGCTCATTGTCGGTAGAGTTGTTGCTAGTGTTGCTAGTGGGGGAAGCGGACTTCAAACGCTTTGCTTTGTTATTGGTTGTACGATGGTGGTGGTGGTGAAAGGTCACGTCCGTC	

This is a FASTA file that we import under ${\mathfrak R}$ with:

input	<-	<pre>read.fasta(file</pre>	=	inputdatfile)
names	(inp	out)		

[1]	"YCG9"	"YCG8"	"ALPHA2"	"ALPHA1"	"CHA1"	"KRR1"
[7]	"PRD1"	"KAR4"	"PBN1"	"LRE1"	"APA1"	"YCE9"
۲ <u>1</u> 31	"YCE8"	"YCE7"	"YCE5"	"YCE6"	"YCE4"	"PDI1"
[19]	"GLK1"	"YCD8"	"SR09"	"YCD6"	"YCD5"	"YCD3"
[25]	"STE50"	"HIS4"	"BIK1"	"FUS1"	"YC08"	"AGP1"
Ī31Ī	"LEU2"	"NFS1"	"BUD3"	"GBP2"	"ILV6"	"CWH36'
Ī37Ī	"PEL1"	"RER1"	"CDC10"	"MRPL32"	"YCP4"	"CIT2"
[43]	"YCP7"	"SAT4"	"RVS161"	"YCQO"	"ADP1"	"PGK1"
[49]	"POL4"	"YCQ7"	"SRD1"	"MAK32"	"PET18"	"MAK31'
Ī55Ī	"HSP30"	"YCR3"	"SYN"	"YCR6"	"GNS1"	"FEN2"
Ī61Ī	"RIM1"	"CRY1"	"YCS2"	"YCS3"	"GNS1"	"RBK1"
Ī67Ī	"PH087"	"BUD5"	"MATALPHA2"	"MATALPHA1"	"TSM1"	"YCT5"
[73]	"PETCR46"	"YCT7"	"YCT9"	"ARE1"	"RSC6"	"THR4"

[79]	"CTR86"	"PWP2"	"YCU9"	"YCV1"	"G10"	"HCM1"
[85]	"RAD18"	"CYPR"	"YCW1"	"YCW2"	"SSK22"	"SOL2"
[91]	"ERS1"	"PAT1"	"SRB8"	"YCX3"	"TUP1"	"YC16"
[97]	"ABP1"	"KIN82"	"MSH3"	"CDC39"	"YCY4"	"A2"
[103]	"GIT1"	"YCZO"	"YCZ1"	"YCZ2"	"YCZ3"	"PAU3"
[109]	"YCZ5"	"YCZ6"	"YCZ7"			

The file input.out contains the values obtained with codonW for the GC content and GC3s content:

```
inputoutfile <- system.file("sequences/input.out", package = "seqinr")</pre>
  cat(readLines(inputoutfile, n=10), sep = "\n")
 title
                                                                     GC3s
                                                                                              GC
title
YCG9_Probable____13
YCG8_____573_residues_
ALPHA1_____633_residue
CHA1_____1083_residue
KRR1_____951_residue
PRD1____2139_residue
KAR4_____1008_residue
PBN1_____1251_residue
                                                                                                0.394
                                                                     0.335
                                                                     0.439
                                                                                                0.446
                                                                     0.345
                                                                                                0.379
                                                                     0.328
0.364
                                                                                                0.394
0.384
0.397
                                                                     0.430
                                                                     0.354 0.330
                                                                                                0.383 0.386
  input.res <- read.table(inputoutfile, header = TRUE)</pre>
  head(input.res)
title GC3s GC
1 YCG9_Probable_____13 0.335 0.394
2 YCG8_____573_residues_ 0.439 0.446
3 ALPHA2_____633_residue 0.328 0.351
4 ALPHA1____528 residue 0.245 0.2570
4 ALPHA1_____528_residue 0.345 0.379
5 CHA1_____1083_residue 0.328 0.394
6 KRR1_____951_residue 0.364 0.384
```

Let's try to reproduce the results for the G+C content, we know that we have to remove the last stop codon:

```
input.gc <- sapply(input, function(s) GC(s[1:(length(s)-3)]))
max(abs(input.gc - input.res$GC))
[1] 0.0004946237
plot(x = input.gc, y = input.res$GC, las = 1,
xlab = "Results with GC()", ylab = "Results from codonW",
main = "Comparison of G+C content results")
abline(c(0,1))</pre>
```



The results are consistent if we consider that we have 3 significant digits in the file input.out. Now, let's try to reproduce the results for G+C in third codon positions:

```
input.gc3 <- sapply(input, function(s) GC3(s[1:(length(s)-3)]))
max(abs(input.gc3 - input.res$GC3s))
[1] 0.054
plot(x = input.gc3, y = input.res$GC3s, las = 1,
xlab = "Results with GC3()", ylab = "Results from codonW",
main = "Comparison of G+C content in third codon positions results")
abline(c(0,1))</pre>
```

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Comparison of G+C content in third codon positions results

There is clearly a problem here. Looking into the documentation of codonW, GC3s is the G+C content in third codon position after removing non-synonymous and stop codons (those corresponding to Met, Trp, Stp). Let's remove these codons:

```
codons <- words()
names(codons) <- sapply(codons, function(c) aaa(translate(s2c(c), numcode = 1)))
okcodons <- codons[! names(codons) %in% c("Met", "Trp", "Stp")]
gc3s <- function(s){
   tmp <- splitseq(s)
   tmp <- tmp[tmp %in% okcodons]
   tmp <- s2c(paste(tmp, collapse = ""))
   GC3(tmp)
}
input.gc3s <- sapply(input, gc3s)
max(abs(input.gc3s - input.res$GC3s, las = 1,
xlab = "Results with GC3()", ylab = "Results from codonW",
main = "Comparison of G+C content in third codon positions results\n(Met, Trp and Stp codons excluded)")
abline(c(0,1))</pre>
```



The results are now consistent. But thinking more about it there is still a problem with the codons for Ile:

codons[names(codons) == "Ile"]
Ile Ile Ile
"ata" "atc" "att"

There are three codons for Ile. If the distribution of the four bases was uniform and selectively neutral in third codon position of synonymous codons, then we would expect to get a G+C of 50% in quartet and duet codons at third codons positions because they all have the same number of W (A or T)and S (C or G) bases in third position. But for Ile we have two codons ending in W versus only one in S so that we would get a G+C of $\frac{1}{3}$ instead of $\frac{1}{2}$. This point was clearly stated [11] by Sueoka in 1988:

G + **C** Content of the Three Codons Positions. In the present analysis, observed G + C contents of the first, second, and third codon positions (P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 , respectively) are corrected average G + C contents of the three codon positions that are calculated from 56 triplets out of 64. Because of the inequality of α and γ at the third codon position, the three stop codons (TAA, TAG, and TGA) and the three codons for isoleucine (ATT, ATC, and ATA) were excluded in calculation of P_3 , and two single codons for methionine (ATG) and tryptophan (TGG) were excluded in all three (P_1 , P_2 , and P_3) Let's compute P_3 and compare it with GC3s:

```
P3codons <- codons[! names(codons) %in% c("Met", "Trp", "Ile", "Stp")]
P3 <- function(s){
  tmp <- splitseq(s)
  tmp <- tmp[tmp %in% P3codons]
  tmp <- s2c(paste(tmp, collapse = ""))
  GC3(tmp)
}
input.P3 <- sapply(input, P3)
max(abs(input.P3 - input.res$GC3s))
[1] 0.02821505
plot(x = input.P3, y = input.res$GC3s, las = 1,
xlab = "Results with P3", ylab = "Results from codonW GC3s",
main = "Comparison of P3 and GC3s")
abline(c(0,1))</pre>
```





This is not exactly the same, the maximum observed difference here is about 3%. In practice, P_3 , GC3, and GC3s are only slightly different [12].

6 How do I get a sequence from its name?

This question is adapted from an e-mail (22 Jun 2006) by Gang Xu. I know that the UniProt (SwissProt) entry of my protein is P08758, if I know its name³, how can I get the sequence?

 $^{^{3}}$ More exactly, this is the accession number. Sequence names are not stable over time, it's always better to use the accession numbers.

```
choosebank("swissprot")
    myprot <- query("myprot","AC=P08758")</pre>
       getSequence(myprot$req[[1]])
                                                                                                                                                                           "Q" "V"
"A" "E"
"L" "T"
"F" "K"
"G" "K"
"A" "Y"
"G" "E"
"G" "E"
"G" "E"
"G" "E"
"G" "E"
"C" "C"
"L" "U"
"L" "V"
"N" "F"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         "L" "R"
"T" "L"
"T" "L"
"F" "E"
"F" "E"
"E" "L"
"E" "E"
"Y" "Q"
"I" "D"
"L" "K"
"Y" "S"
"A" "V"
"A" "T"
"A" "T"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   "G"
"R"
"F"
"K"
"K"
"A"
"R"
"E"
"W"
"H"
"E"
"V
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             "V"
"R"
"R"
"R"
"S"
"C"
"T"
"S"
"S"
"S"
"S"
"I"
"Y"
"L"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              "T" "D"
"M" "K"
"S" "N"
"D" "L"
"V" "A"
"T" "P"
"S" "L"
"V" "V"
"V" "E"
"C" "E"
"K" "V"
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"A" "G"
"D" "L"
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             "G"
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"E"
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"E"
"E"
"L"
"K"
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Session Informations

This part was compiled under the following ${\ensuremath{\mathbb Q}}$ environment:

- R version 3.2.4 (2016-03-10), x86_64-apple-darwin13.4.0
- Locale: fr_FR.UTF-8/fr_FR.UTF-8/fr_FR.UTF-8/C/fr_FR.UTF-8/fr_FR.UTF-8
- Base packages: base, datasets, graphics, grDevices, grid, methods, stats, utils
- Other packages: ade4 1.7-4, ape 3.5, grImport 0.9-0, MASS 7.3-45, seqinr 3.2-1, tseries 0.10-35, XML 3.98-1.4, xtable 1.8-2
- Loaded via a namespace (and not attached): lattice 0.20-33, nlme 3.1-125, quadprog 1.5-5, tools 3.2.4, zoo 1.7-12

There were two compilation steps:

- @ compilation time was: Tue Jul 12 21:02:14 2016
- $\bullet~\mbox{IAT}_{\ensuremath{\text{E}}\xspaceX}$ compilation time was: July 12, 2016

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