

flowWorkspace: A Package for Importing flowJo Workspaces into R

Greg Finak <gfinak@fhcrc.org>

July 10, 2013

1 Purpose

The purpose of this package is to provide functionality to import relatively simple *flowJo* workspaces into R. By this we mean, accessing the samples, groups, transformations, compensation matrices, gates, and population statistics in the *flowJo* workspace, and replicating these using (primarily) *flowCore* functionality.

2 Why Another flowJo Workspace Import Package?

There was a need to import *flowJo* workspaces into R for comparative gating. The *flowFlowJo* package did not meet our needs. Many groups have legacy data with associated flowJo XML workspace files in version 2.0 format that they would like to access using BioConductor's tools. Hopefully this package will fill that need.

3 Support

This package supports importing of **Version 2.0 XML workspaces only**. We cannot import **.jo** files directly. You will have to save them in XML workspace format, and ensure that that format is *workspace version 2.0*. The package has been tested and works with files generated using flowJo version 9.1 on Mac OS X. XML generated by older versions of *flowJo* on windows should work as well. We do not yet support *flowJo*'s **Chimera** XML schema, though that support will be provided in the future.

The package supports import of only a subset of the features present in a flowJo workspace. The package allows importing of sample and group names, gating hierarchy, compensation matrices, data transformation functions, a subset of gates, and population counts.

BooleanGates are now supported by flowWorkspace.

4 Data Structures

The following section walks through opening and importing a flowJo workspace.

4.1 Loading the library

Simply call:

```
> library(flowWorkspace)
```

The library depends on numerous other packages, including *graph*, *XML*, *Rgraphviz*, *flowCore*, *flowViz*, *RBGL*.

4.2 Opening a Workspace

We represent flowJo workspaces using `flowJoWorkspace` objects. We only need to know the path to, and filename of the flowJo workspace.

```
> d<-system.file("extdata",package="flowWorkspaceData");  
> wsfile<-list.files(d,pattern="A2004Analysis.xml",full=T)
```

In order to open this workspace we call:

```
> ws<-openWorkspace(wsfile)  
> summary(ws)
```

```
FlowJo Workspace Version 2.0  
File location: /home/biocbuild/bbs-2.12-bioc/R/library/flowWorkspaceData/extdata  
File name: A2004Analysis.xml  
Workspace is open.
```

```
Groups in Workspace  
      Name Num.Samples  
1 All Samples          2
```

We see that this is a version 2.0 workspace file. Its location and filename are printed. Additionally, you are notified that the workspace file is open. This refers to the fact that the XML document is internally represented using 'C' data structures from the *XML* package. After importing the file, the workspace must be explicitly closed using `closeWorkspace()` in order to free up that memory.

4.3 Parsing the Workspace

With the workspace file open, we have not yet imported the XML document. The next step parses the XML workspace and creates R data structures to represent some of the information therein. Specifically, by calling `parseWorkspace()` the user will be presented with a list of *groups* in the workspace file and need to choose one group to import. Why only one? Because of the way `flowJo` handles data transformation and compensation. Each group of samples is associated with a compensation matrix and specific data transformation. These are applied to all samples in the group. When a particular group of samples is imported, the package generates a *GatingHierarchy* for each sample, describing the set of gates applied to the data (note: polygons, rectangles, quadrants, and ovals and boolean gates are supported). The set of *GatingHierarchies* for the group of samples is stored in a *GatingSet* object. Calling `parseWorkspace()` is quite verbose, informing the user as each gate is created. The parsing can also be done non-interactively by specifying which group to import directly in the function call (either an index or a group name). An additional optional argument `execute=T/F` specifies whether you want to load, compensate, transform the data and compute statistics immediately after parsing the XML tree.

```
> G<-parseWorkspace(ws,name=1,path=ws@path,isNcdf=FALSE,cleanup=FALSE,keep.indices=TRUE)
> #Lots of output here suppressed for the vignette.
```

When `isNcdf` flag is set `TRUE`, the data is stored in `ncdf` format on disk.

```
> G
```

```
A GatingSet with 2 samples
1 .      FCS File:  a2004_01T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs
      GatingHierarchy with 20 gates
<pointer: 0x6fc0c50>

2 .      FCS File:  a2004_01T2pb05i_A2_A02.fcs
```

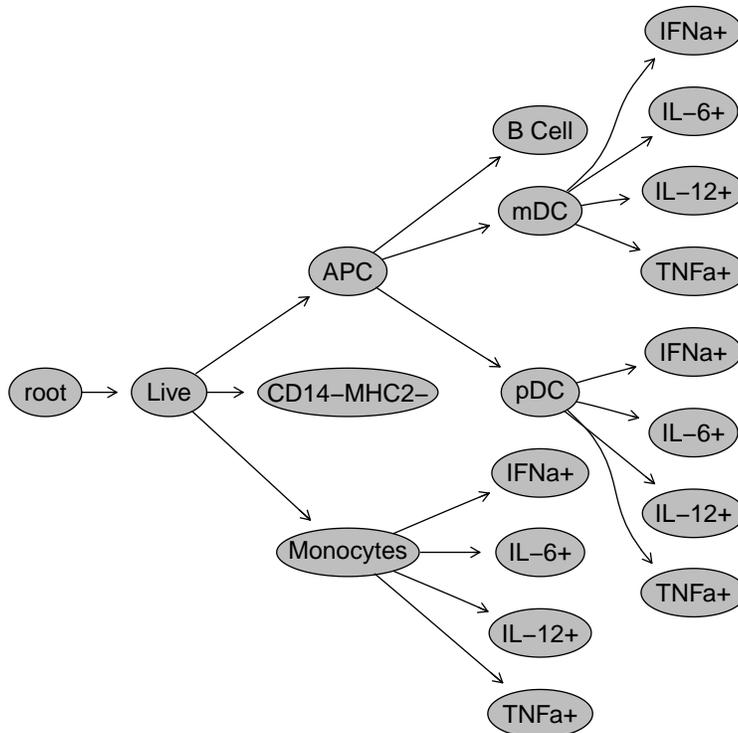
```
GatingHierarchy with 20 gates
<pointer: 0x6fc0c50>
```

We have generated a *GatingSet* with 2 samples, each of which has 19 associated gates. Subsets of gating hierarchies can be accessed using the standard R subset syntax.

At this point we have parsed the workspace file and generate the gating hierarchy associated with each sample imported from the file. The data have been loaded, compensated, and transformed in the workspace, and gating has been executed. The resulting *GatingSet* contains a replicated analysis of the original flowJo workspace.

We can plot the gating hierarchy for a given sample:

```
> gh<-G[[1]]
> plot(gh)
```



We can list the nodes (populations) in the gating hierarchy:

```
> nodelist<-getNodes(gh)
> nodelist
```

```

[1] "root"      "Live"      "APC"      "B Cell"   "mDC"
[6] "IFNa+"    "IL-6+"    "IL-12+"  "TNFa+"   "pDC"
[11] "10. IFNa+" "11. IL-6+" "12. IL-12+" "13. TNFa+" "CD14-MHC2-"
[16] "Monocytes" "16. IFNa+" "17. IL-6+" "18. IL-12+" "19. TNFa+"

```

Note that the number preceding the period in the node names is just an identifier to help uniquely label populations in the gating hierarchy. It does not represent any information about population statistics. When the node name itself is already unique, such as "Live", "B Cell", the prefix is omitted by default. We can force the prefix to be added to each node by setting `prefix TRUE`.

```

> getNodes(gh, prefix=TRUE)

[1] "0.root"      "1.Live"      "2.APC"      "3.B Cell"
[5] "4.mDC"      "5.IFNa+"    "6.IL-6+"    "7.IL-12+"
[9] "8.TNFa+"    "9.pDC"      "10.IFNa+"   "11.IL-6+"
[13] "12.IL-12+"  "13.TNFa+"   "14.CD14-MHC2-" "15.Monocytes"
[17] "16.IFNa+"   "17.IL-6+"   "18.IL-12+"  "19.TNFa+"

```

Alternatively, the full path of the node can be displayed by setting `isPath TRUE`.

```

> getNodes(gh, isPath=TRUE)

[1] "root"      "/Live"      "/Live/APC"
[4] "/Live/APC/B Cell" "/Live/APC/mDC" "/Live/APC/mDC/IFNa+"
[7] "/Live/APC/mDC/IL-6+" "/Live/APC/mDC/IL-12+" "/Live/APC/mDC/TNFa+"
[10] "/Live/APC/pDC" "/Live/APC/pDC/IFNa+" "/Live/APC/pDC/IL-6+"
[13] "/Live/APC/pDC/IL-12+" "/Live/APC/pDC/TNFa+" "/Live/CD14-MHC2-"
[16] "/Live/Monocytes" "/Live/Monocytes/IFNa+" "/Live/Monocytes/IL-6+"
[19] "/Live/Monocytes/IL-12+" "/Live/Monocytes/TNFa+"

```

We can get a specific gate definition:

```

> node<-nodelist[3]
> g<-getGate(gh,node)
> g

```

Polygonal gate 'APC' with 14 vertices in dimensions <PerCP-CY5-5-A> and <PE-CY7-A>

We can extract vertices of a gate:

```

> getBoundaries(gh,node)

      <PerCP-CY5-5-A> <PE-CY7-A>
[1,]      2349.993  2024.8746
[2,]      2163.383  1575.0085
[3,]      2240.899   992.3135
[4,]      2349.993   793.0647
[5,]      2585.516   696.7596
[6,]      3315.004  1138.4273
[7,]      3586.426  1354.9513
[8,]      3602.373  2040.1931
[9,]      3570.480  2256.4455
[10,]     3363.261  2318.7616
[11,]     3204.000  2240.8992
[12,]     3044.921  2209.8486
[13,]     2711.845  2070.8857
[14,]     2569.755  2055.5302

```

We can get the population proportion (relative to its parent) for a single population:

```

> getProp(gh,node)

[1] 0.08358564

```

Or we can retrieve the population statistics for all populations in the sample:

```

> getPopStats(gh)

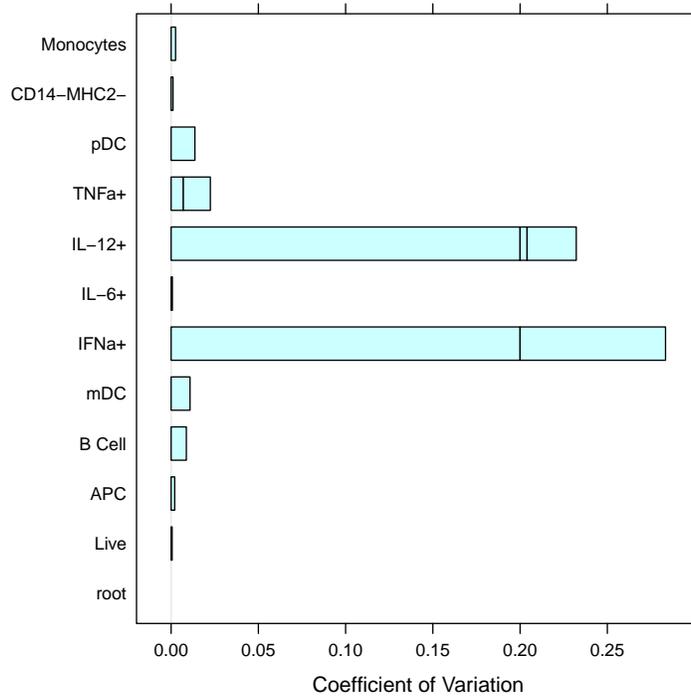
      flowCore.freq flowJo.count flowCore.count flowJo.freq
root          1.000000000         61832         61832 1.000000000
/Live         0.800297581         49542         49484 0.801235606
/Live/APC     0.084027160          4141          4158 0.083585645
/Live/APC/B Cell 0.555796056          2271          2311 0.548418256
/Live/APC/mDC 0.123376623           502           513 0.121226757
/Live/APC/mDC/IFNa+ 0.005847953             2             3 0.003984064
/Live/APC/mDC/IL-6+ 0.042884990             22             22 0.043824701
/Live/APC/mDC/IL-12+ 0.005847953             2             3 0.003984064
/Live/APC/mDC/TNFa+ 0.140350877             71             72 0.141434263
/Live/APC/pDC 0.104377104          446          434 0.107703453

```

/Live/APC/pDC/IFNa+	0.002304147	1	1	0.002242152
/Live/APC/pDC/IL-6+	0.000000000	0	0	0.000000000
/Live/APC/pDC/IL-12+	0.571428571	250	248	0.560538117
/Live/APC/pDC/TNFa+	0.000000000	0	0	0.000000000
/Live/CD14-MHC2-	0.542660254	26795	26853	0.540854225
/Live/Monocytes	0.058928138	2931	2916	0.059161923
/Live/Monocytes/IFNa+	0.003772291	13	11	0.004435346
/Live/Monocytes/IL-6+	0.237654321	694	693	0.236779256
/Live/Monocytes/IL-12+	0.047325103	146	138	0.049812351
/Live/Monocytes/TNFa+	0.250685871	754	731	0.257250085
	node			
root	root			
/Live	Live			
/Live/APC	APC			
/Live/APC/B Cell	B Cell			
/Live/APC/mDC	mDC			
/Live/APC/mDC/IFNa+	IFNa+			
/Live/APC/mDC/IL-6+	IL-6+			
/Live/APC/mDC/IL-12+	IL-12+			
/Live/APC/mDC/TNFa+	TNFa+			
/Live/APC/pDC	pDC			
/Live/APC/pDC/IFNa+	10. IFNa+			
/Live/APC/pDC/IL-6+	11. IL-6+			
/Live/APC/pDC/IL-12+	12. IL-12+			
/Live/APC/pDC/TNFa+	13. TNFa+			
/Live/CD14-MHC2-	CD14-MHC2-			
/Live/Monocytes	Monocytes			
/Live/Monocytes/IFNa+	16. IFNa+			
/Live/Monocytes/IL-6+	17. IL-6+			
/Live/Monocytes/IL-12+	18. IL-12+			
/Live/Monocytes/TNFa+	19. TNFa+			

We can plot the coefficients of variation between the counts derived using flowJo and flowCore for each population:

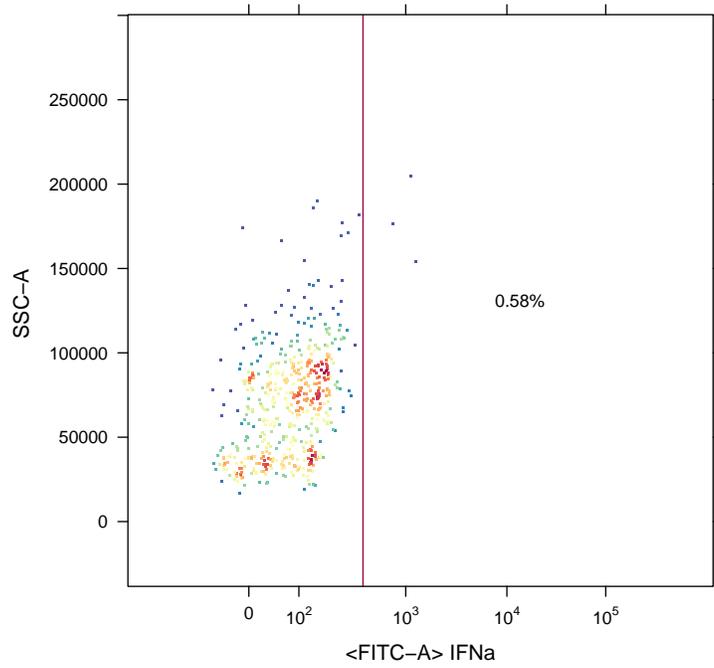
```
> print(plotPopCV(gh))
```



We can plot individual gates: note the scale of the transformed axes.

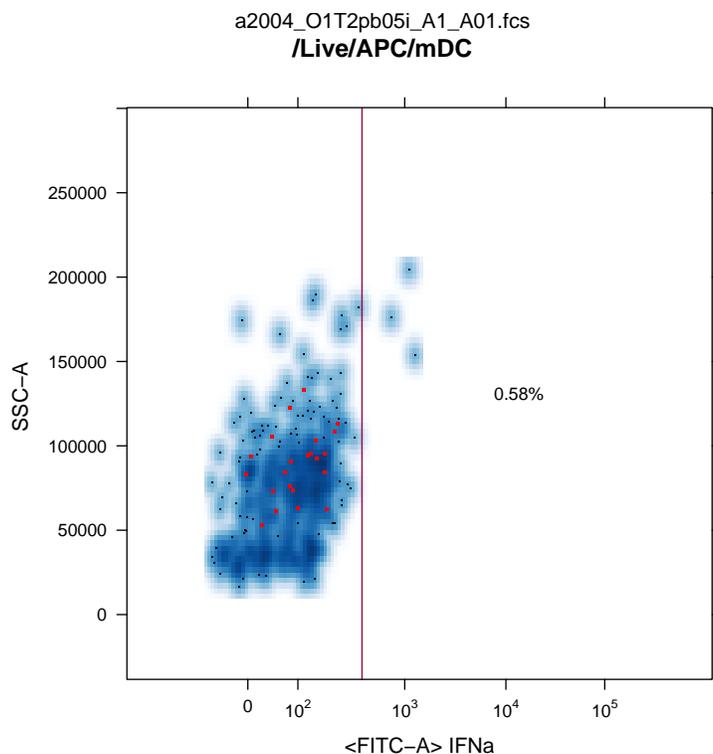
```
> plotGate(gh, nodelist[6], lwd=2, cex=2)
```

a2004_O1T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs
/Live/APC/mDC



overlay can be used to plot another cell population on top of the existing gates specified by y.

```
> plotGate(gh,y=nodelist[6],overlay=7)
```



overlay can be either a **numeric** scalar indicating the index of a gate/population within the `GatingHierarchy` or a **logical** vector that indicates the cell event indices representing a sub-cell population.

If we have metadata associated with the experiment, it can be attached to the `GatingSet`.

```
> d<-data.frame(sample=factor(c("sample 1", "sample 2")),treatment=factor(c("sample",
> pd<-pData(G)
> pd<-cbind(pd,d)
> pData(G)<-pd
> pData(G);
```

	name	sample	treatment
a2004_01T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs	a2004_01T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs	sample 1	sample
a2004_01T2pb05i_A2_A02.fcs	a2004_01T2pb05i_A2_A02.fcs	sample 2	control

We can retrieve the subset of data associated with a node:

```
> getData(gh,node)
```

flowFrame object 'a2004_01T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs'

with 4158 cells and 23 observables:

	name	desc	range	minRange	maxRange
\$P1	FSC-A	<NA>	262254.000	-111.0000	262143.000
\$P2	FSC-H	<NA>	262143.000	0.0000	262143.000
\$P3	FSC-W	<NA>	262143.000	0.0000	262143.000
\$P4	SSC-A	<NA>	262254.000	-111.0000	262143.000
\$P5	SSC-H	<NA>	262143.000	0.0000	262143.000
\$P6	SSC-W	<NA>	262143.000	0.0000	262143.000
\$P7	<Am Cyan-A>	CD123	3661.959	435.3438	4097.303
\$P8	Am Cyan-H	CD123	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P9	<Pacific Blue-A>	IL-12	3927.974	169.6086	4097.582
\$P10	Pacific Blue-H	IL-12	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P11	<APC-A>	CD11c	4405.880	-308.0749	4097.805
\$P12	APC-H	CD11c	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P13	<APC-CY7-A>	IL-6	3714.446	382.9321	4097.378
\$P14	APC-CY7-H	IL-6	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P15	<Alexa 700-A>	TNFa	3712.753	384.6227	4097.376
\$P16	Alexa 700-H	TNFa	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P17	<FITC-A>	IFNa	4180.543	-82.8373	4097.706
\$P18	FITC-H	IFNa	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P19	<PerCP-CY5-5-A>	MHCII	4942.568	-844.7629	4097.805
\$P20	PerCP-CY5-5-H	MHCII	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P21	<PE-CY7-A>	CD14	4942.568	-844.7629	4097.805
\$P22	PE-CY7-H	CD14	3641.837	455.0000	4096.837
\$P23	Time	<NA>	262143.000	0.0000	262143.000

323 keywords are stored in the 'description' slot

When applied to the GatingSet, a flowSet or ncdfFlowSet is returned.

```
> getData(G,node);
```

A flowSet with 2 experiments.

An object of class 'AnnotatedDataFrame'

rowNames: a2004_01T2pb05i_A1_A01.fcs a2004_01T2pb05i_A2_A02.fcs

varLabels: name sample treatment

varMetadata: labelDescription

column names:

FSC-A FSC-H FSC-W SSC-A SSC-H SSC-W <Am Cyan-A> Am Cyan-H <Pacific Blue-A> Pacific

Or we can retrieve the indices specifying if an event is included inside or outside a gate using:

```
> table(getIndices(gh,node))
```

```
FALSE TRUE
57674 4158
```

The indices returned are relative to the parent population (member of parent AND member of current gate), so they reflect the true hierarchical gating structure.

If we wish to do compensation or transformation manually, we can retrieve all the compensation matrices from the workspace:

```
> C<-getCompensationMatrices(ws);
> C
```

```
$`A2004-A2005_06i`
```

	Am Cyan-A	Pacific Blue-A	APC-A	APC-CY7-A	Alexa 700-A
Am Cyan-A	1.00000	0.04800	0.000000	0.0000	0.00000
Pacific Blue-A	0.38600	1.00000	0.000529	0.0000	0.00000
APC-A	0.00642	0.00235	1.000000	0.0611	0.19800
APC-CY7-A	0.03270	0.02460	0.084000	1.0000	0.02870
Alexa 700-A	0.07030	0.05800	0.016200	0.3990	1.00000
FITC-A	0.74500	0.02090	0.001870	0.0000	0.00000
PerCP-CY5-5-A	0.00368	0.00178	0.015300	0.0269	0.07690
PE-CY7-A	0.01330	0.00948	0.000951	0.1380	0.00182
	FITC-A	PerCP-CY5-5-A	PE-CY7-A		
Am Cyan-A	0.028500	0.00104	0.00000		
Pacific Blue-A	0.000546	0.00000	0.00000		
APC-A	-0.000611	0.00776	0.00076		
APC-CY7-A	0.002690	0.00304	0.01010		
Alexa 700-A	0.001530	0.10800	0.00679		
FITC-A	1.000000	0.04180	0.00281		
PerCP-CY5-5-A	0.000000	1.00000	0.07030		
PE-CY7-A	0.002340	0.03360	1.00000		

Or we can retrieve transformations:

```
> T<-getTransformations(ws)
> names(T)
```

```

[1] "InputParameterTransform_Gain1_Offset1"
[2] "A2004-A2005_06i"
[3] "InputParameterTransform_Gain1_Offset1262144"

> names(T[[1]])

[1] "InputParameterTransform_Gain1_Offset1"
[2] "InputParameterTransform_Gain1_Offset1262144"

> T[[1]][[1]]

function (x, deriv = 0L)
{
  deriv <- as.integer(deriv)
  if (deriv < 0L || deriv > 3L)
    stop("'deriv' must be between 0 and 3")
  if (deriv > 0L) {
    z0 <- double(z$n)
    z[c("y", "b", "c")] <- switch(deriv, list(y = z$b, b = 2 *
      z$c, c = 3 * z$d), list(y = 2 * z$c, b = 6 * z$d,
      c = z0), list(y = 6 * z$d, b = z0, c = z0))
    z[["d"]] <- z0
  }
  res <- .splinefun(x, z)
  if (deriv > 0 && z$method == 2 && any(ind <- x <= z$x[1L]))
    res[ind] <- ifelse(deriv == 1, z$y[1L], 0)
  res
}
<bytecode: 0xed75ac0>
<environment: 0xed6e800>

```

`getTransformations` returns a list, each element of which corresponds to a transformation applied to a group of samples. The transformation is presented as a list of functions to be applied to different dimensions of the data. Above, the transformation is applied to all samples of the group and for each sample in the group, the appropriate dimension is transformed using a channel-specific function from the list.

The list of samples in a workspace can be accessed by:

```
> getSamples(ws);
```

	sampleID	name	count	compID	pop.counts
1	1	a2004_01T2pb05i	61832	1	19
2	2	a2004_01T2pb05i	45363	1	19

And the groups can be accessed by:

```
> getSampleGroups(ws)

  groupName groupID sampleID
1 All Samples      0        1
2 All Samples      0        2
```

The `compID` column tells you which compensation matrix to apply to a group of files, and similarly, based on the name of the compensation matrix, which transformations to apply.

4.4 add/remove gates

`GatingSet` is equivalent to the `workFlow` in `flowCore` package, which provides methods to build a gating tree from raw FCS files and add or remove `flowCore` gates (or populations) to or from it. Firstly, we start from a `flowSet` that contains three ungated flow samples:

```
> data(GvHD)
> #select raw flow data
> fs<-GvHD[1:3]
```

Then we can transform the raw data:

```
> tf <- transformList(colnames(fs[[1]])[3:6], asinh, transformationId="asinh")
> fs_trans<-transform(fs,tf)
```

and create a `GatingSet` from the transformed `flowSet`:

```
> gs <- GatingSet(fs_trans)
> gs
```

```
A GatingSet with 3 samples
1 .      FCS File:  s5a01
      GatingHierarchy with 1 gates
<pointer: 0xf3959f0>

2 .      FCS File:  s5a02
```

```
      GatingHierarchy with 1 gates
<pointer: 0xf3959f0>
```

```
3 .      FCS File: s5a03
      GatingHierarchy with 1 gates
<pointer: 0xf3959f0>
```

```
> gh1<-gs[[1]]
> getNodes(gh1)
```

```
[1] "root"
```

It now only contains the root node. We can add one rectangleGate:

```
> rg <- rectangleGate("FSC-H"=c(200,400), "SSC-H"=c(250, 400),
+                      filterId="rectangle")
> nodeID<-add(gs, rg)
> nodeID
```

```
[1] 2
```

```
> getNodes(gh1)
```

```
[1] "root"      "rectangle"
```

Note that the gate is added to root node by default if parent is not specified. Then we add a quadGate to the new population generated by the rectangleGate which is named after filterId of the gate because the name is not specified when add method is called.

```
> qg <- quadGate("FL1-H"=2, "FL2-H"=4)
> nodeIDs<-add(gs,qg,parent="rectangle")
> nodeIDs
```

```
[1] 3 4 5 6
```

```
> getNodes(gh1)
```

```
[1] "root"          "rectangle"          "CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+"
[4] "CD15 FITC+CD45 PE+" "CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-" "CD15 FITC-CD45 PE-"
```

Here quadGate produces four population nodes/populations whose names are named after dimensions of gate if not specified.

Boolean Gate can also be defined and added to GatingSet:

```

> bg<-booleanFilter(`CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+|CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-`)
> bg

booleanFilter filter 'CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+|CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-' evaluating the expression
CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+|CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-

> nodeID2<-add(gs,bg,parent="rectangle")
> nodeID2

[1] 7

> getNodes(gh1)

[1] "root"
[2] "rectangle"
[3] "CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+"
[4] "CD15 FITC+CD45 PE+"
[5] "CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-"
[6] "CD15 FITC-CD45 PE-"
[7] "CD15 FITC-CD45 PE+|CD15 FITC+CD45 PE-"

```

Now the gating tree is finished but the actual gating is done by `recompute` method:

```

> recompute(gs)

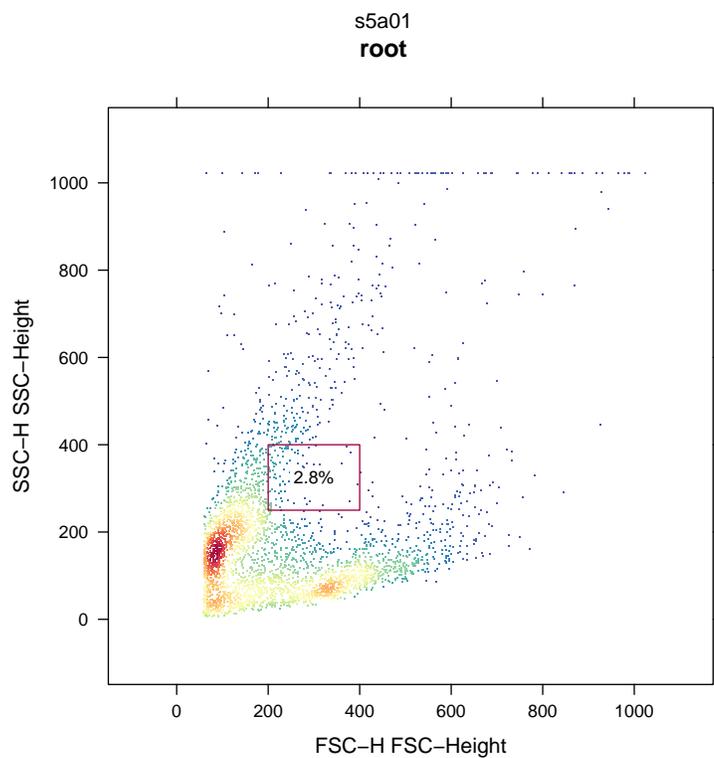
```

After gating is finished,gating results can be visualized by `plotGate` method:

```

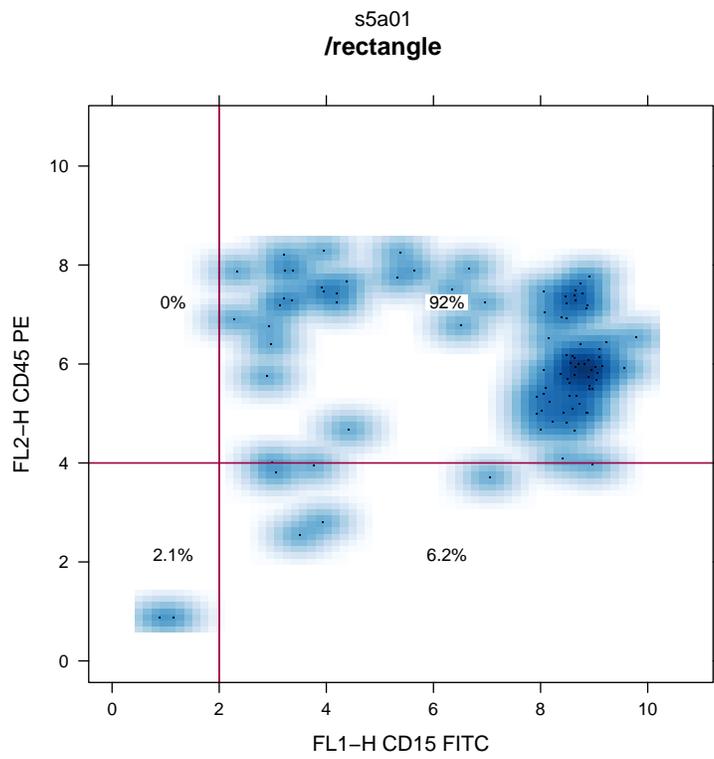
> plotGate(gh1,"rectangle") #plot one Gate

```



The second argument of `plotGate` is used to specify node index/name. Multiple gates can be plotted on the same panel:

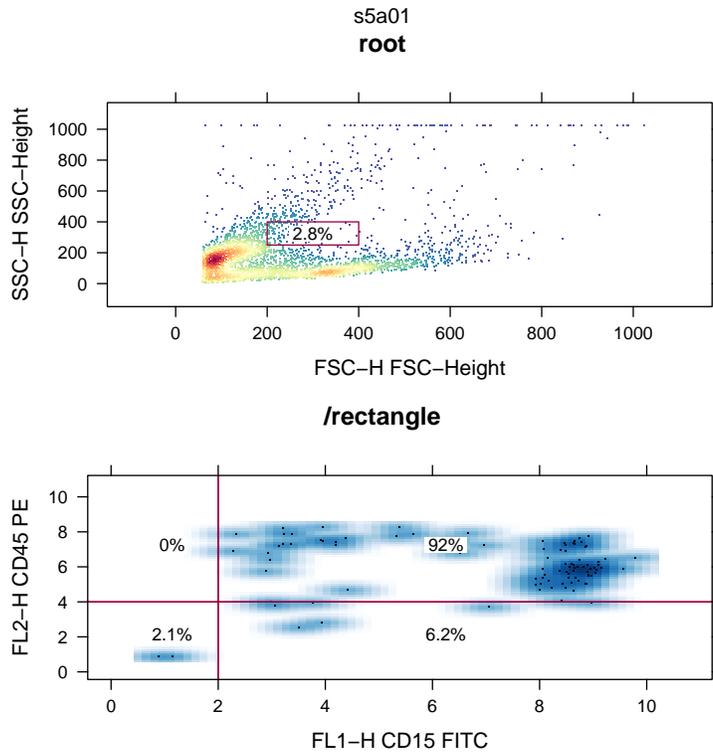
```
> plotGate(gh1, nodeIDs)
```



We may also want

to plot all the gates without specifying the gate index:

```
> plotGate(gh1)
```



Boolean gate is

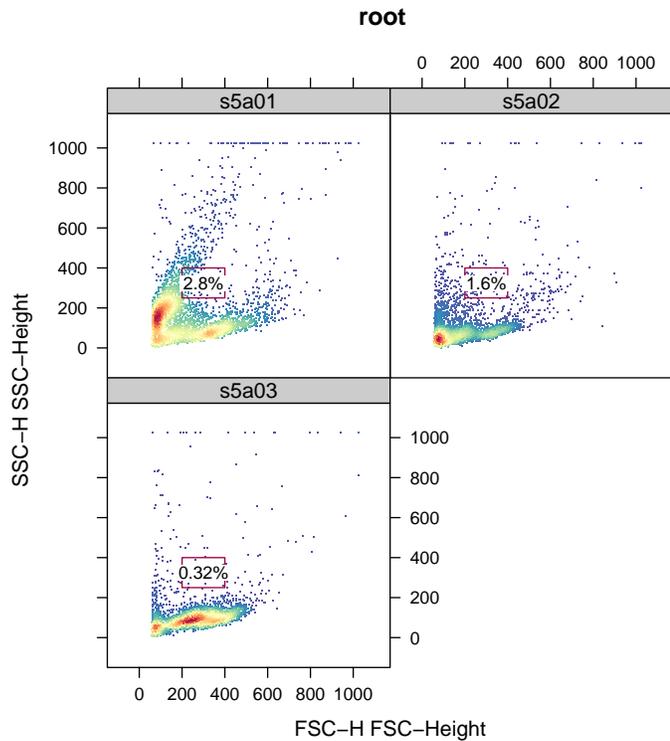
skipped by default and can be enabled by:

```
> plotGate(gh1, bool=TRUE)
```

Note that smoothing may be applied automatically if there are not enough events after gating. Sometime it is more useful to compare gates across samples using lattice plot by applying `plotGate` to a `GatingSet`:

```
> plotGate(gs, nodeID)
```

```
$`2`
```



The gating hierarchy is plotted by:

```
> plot(gh1, bool=TRUE)
```

If we want to remove one node, simply:

```
> Rm('rectangle', gs)
> getNodes(gh1)
```

```
[1] "root"
```

As we see, removing one node causes all its descendants to be removed as well.

4.5 archive and clone

Oftentime, we need to save a GatingSet including the gated flow data, gates and populations to disk and reload it later on. It can be achieved by:

```
> archive(gs, file="gs.tar")
> G1<-unarchive(file="gs.tar")
```

We also provide the `clone` method to make a full copy of an existing `GatingSet`:

```
> gs_cloned<-clone(gs)
```

Note that the `GatingSet` contains environment slots and external pointer that point to the internal C data structure. So make sure to use these methods in order to save or make a copy of existing object. The regular R assignment (`<-`) or `save` routine doesn't work as expected for the `GatingSet` object.

4.6 Exporting to FlowJo OSX 9.2

The `exportAsFlowJoXML` function can be used to export a `flowCore::workFlow` as an XML workspace for FlowJo 9.2 OSX. If `flowWorkspace` has been used to import an existing FlowJo workspace, `flowWorkspace2flowCore` can be used to obtain a `workFlow` for exporting. Currently this function can export one `workFlow` at a time.

4.7 Deprecated Functionality

The following behaviour is no longer supported and has been replaced by more extensive `netCDF` support via the `ncdfFlow` package. If you have particularly large data files (millions of events), then you won't want to keep the data around, nor the indices for gate membership. Instead, pass the options `cleanup=TRUE`, `keep.indices=FALSE` to the `execute()` function, and the data will be scrubbed after computing population statistics. With future improvements making use of the `netCDF` framework, and bitvector representations of population memberships; this will improve memory usage in high-throughput unsupervised analysis settings.

5 Troubleshooting

If this package is throwing errors when parsing your workspace, and you are certain your workspace is version 2.0, contact the package author. If you can send your workspace by email, we can test, debug, and fix the package so that it works for you. Our goal is to provide a tool that works, and that people find useful.

6 Future Improvements

We are working on support for flowJo XML workspaces exported from the Windows version of flowJo. Efforts are underway to integrate GatingSet and GatingHierarchy objects more closely with the rest of the flow infrastructure.