

Classes for record linkage of big data sets

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March 14, 2011

As of version 0.3, the package `RecordLinkage` includes extensions to overcome the problem of high memory consumption that arises when processing a large number of records (i.e. building record pairs out of ≥ 1000 records without blocking). This is achieved by blockwise creation of comparison patterns instead of computing and storing the whole set of patterns at once, which was the only choice in the former version. In addition, an embedded SQLite database is used through package `RSQLite` to perform blocking, application of phonetic codes or string metrics and creation of comparison patterns. This allows to make use of the efficient data structures (e.g. indexing) implemented in the SQLite engine.

In order to facilitate a tidier design, S4 classes and methods were used to implement the extensions. In favor of backward compatibility and development time, plans of a complete transition to S4 were dismissed. Nevertheless, the existing functions were joined with their new counterparts, resulting in methods which dispatch on the new S4 as well as on the existing S3 classes. This approach combines two advantages: First, existing code using the package still works, second, the new classes and methods offer (nearly) the same interface, i.e. the necessary function calls for a linkage task differ only slightly. An exception is `getPairs`, whose arguments differ from the existing version (see man page).

1 Defining data and comparison parameters

The existing S3 class `"RecLinkData"` is supplemented by the S4 classes `"RL-BigDataLinkage"` and `"RLBigDataDedup"` for linking two datasets and deduplication of one dataset respectively. Both share the common abstract superclass `"RLBigData"`.

```
> library(RecordLinkage)
```

```
RecordLinkage library  
[c] IMBEI Mainz
```

```
> showClass("RLBigData")
```

```
Virtual Class "RLBigData" [package "RecordLinkage"]
```

```
Slots:
```

Name:	frequencies	blockFld	excludeFld
Class:	numeric	list	numeric

Name:	strcmpFld	strcmpFun	phoneticFld
Class:	numeric	character	numeric

Name:	phoneticFun	drv	con
Class:	character	DBIDriver	DBIConnection

Name:	dbFile
Class:	character

Known Subclasses: "RLBigDataDedup", "RLBigDataLinkage"

> showClass("RLBigDataDedup")

Class "RLBigDataDedup" [package "RecordLinkage"]

Slots:

Name:	data	identity	frequencies
Class:	data.frame	factor	numeric

Name:	blockFld	excludeFld	strcmpFld
Class:	list	numeric	numeric

Name:	strcmpFun	phoneticFld	phoneticFun
Class:	character	numeric	character

Name:	drv	con	dbFile
Class:	DBIDriver	DBIConnection	character

Extends: "RLBigData"

> showClass("RLBigDataLinkage")

Class "RLBigDataLinkage" [package "RecordLinkage"]

Slots:

Name:	data1	data2	identity1
Class:	data.frame	data.frame	factor

Name:	identity2	frequencies	blockFld
Class:	factor	numeric	list

Name:	excludeFld	strcmpFld	strcmpFun
Class:	numeric	numeric	character

Name:	phoneticFld	phoneticFun	drv
Class:	numeric	character	DBIDriver

Name:	con	dbFile
-------	-----	--------

Class: DBIConnection character

Extends: "RLBigData"

For the two non-virtual classes, the constructor-like function `RLBigDataDedup` and `RLBigDataLinkage` exist, which correspond to `compare.dedup` and `compare.linkage` for the S3 classes and share most of their arguments. In contrast to the latter, these functions do not create the whole set of comparison patterns but only instantiate an object that holds all the information necessary to construct these pairs on demand.

The following example shows the basic usage of the constructors, for details consult their documentation.

```
> data(RLdata500)
> data(RLdata10000)
> rpairs1 <- RLBigDataDedup(RLdata500, identity = identity.RLdata500,
+   blockfld = list(1, 3), strcmp = 1:4)
> s1 <- 471:500
> s2 <- sample(1:10000, 300)
> identity2 <- c(identity.RLdata500[s1],
+   rep(NA, length(s2)))
> dataset <- rbind(RLdata500[s1, ], RLdata10000[s2,
+   ])
> rpairs2 <- RLBigDataLinkage(RLdata500,
+   dataset, identity1 = identity.RLdata500,
+   identity2 = identity2, phonetic = 1:4,
+   exclude = "lname_c2")
```

In order to create comparison patterns, the following backend functions exist, which are usually not directly executed by the user:

begin Constructs an SQL statement to execute blocking, phonetic code, string comparison and building comparison patterns and sends this query to the underlying SQLite database. Takes as argument the object to process.

nextPairs Fetches a block of patterns after the query has been send. Takes as arguments the object from which to fetch and the maximum number of comparison patterns to return.

clear Clears the result set after comparison patterns have been fetched. Takes as argument the object to process.

```
> rpairs1 <- begin(rpairs1)
> nextPairs(rpairs1, 10)
```

	id1	id2	fname_c1	fname_c2	lname_c1	lname_c2
1	1	8	0.0000000	NA	1.0000000	NA
2	1	64	0.6190476	NA	1.0000000	NA
3	1	141	0.5619048	NA	1.0000000	NA
4	1	185	0.6190476	NA	1.0000000	NA
5	1	217	0.6761905	NA	1.0000000	NA
6	1	248	0.6761905	NA	1.0000000	NA

```

7   1 268 0.6011905      NA 1.0000000      NA
8   1 325 0.3952381      NA 1.0000000      NA
9   1 428 0.5396825      NA 1.0000000      NA
10  1 174 1.0000000      NA 0.4476190      NA

```

```

      by bm bd is_match
1     0  0  0         0
2     0  1  0         0
3     0  0  0         0
4     0  0  0         0
5     0  0  0         0
6     0  0  0         0
7     0  0  0         0
8     0  0  0         0
9     0  0  0         0
10    0  0  0         0

```

```
> clear(rpairs1)
```

```
[1] TRUE
```

2 Supervised classification

The existing function `classifySupv` was transformed to a S4 method which handles the old S3 object ("RecLinkData") as well as the new classes. However, at the moment a classifier can only be trained with an object of class "RecLinkData".

```

> train <- getMinimalTrain(compare.dedup(RLdata500,
+   identity = identity.RLdata500, blockfld = list(1,
+   3)))
> rpairs1 <- RLBigDataDedup(RLdata500, identity = identity.RLdata500)
> classif <- trainSupv(train, "rpart", minsplit = 2)
> result <- classifySupv(classif, rpairs1)

```

The result is an object of class "RLResult" which contains the indices of links and optionally possible links.

```
> showClass("RLResult")
```

```
Class "RLResult" [package "RecordLinkage"]
```

```
Slots:
```

```

Name:      data      links possibleLinks
Class:     RLBigData  matrix      matrix

```

```

Name:      nPairs
Class:     numeric

```

A contingency table can be viewed via `getTable`, various error measures are calculated by `getErrorMeasures`.

```

> getTable(result)

      classification
true status      N      P      L
      FALSE 124694      0      6
      TRUE      1      0     49

> getErrorMeasures(result)

$alpha
[1] 0.02

$beta
[1] 4.811548e-05

$accuracy
[1] 0.9999439

$precision
[1] 0.8909091

$sensitivity
[1] 0.98

$specificity
[1] 0.9999519

$ppv
[1] 0.8909091

$npv
[1] 0.999992

```

3 Weight-based classification

As with "RecLinkData" objects, weight-based classification with "RLBigData*" classes includes weight calculation and classification based on one or two thresholds, dividing links, non-links and, if desired, possible links. The following example applies classification with Epilink (see documentation of `epiWeights` for details):

```

> rpairs1 <- epiWeights(rpairs1)
> result <- epiClassify(rpairs1, 0.5)
> getTable(result)

      classification
true status      N      P      L
      FALSE 124699      0      1
      TRUE      4      0     46

```

By default, the weights for each individual record pair are stored in the associated database, which speeds up subsequent classification significantly. If the resulting disk usage is an issue, this behavior can be changed as follows:

- In the case of weight calculation with an EM algorithm by calling `emWeights` with argument `save.weights = FALSE`. This results in only $2^{\#attributes}$ per-pattern weights being stored.
- In the case of Epilink weights, `epiWeights` can be called directly. In this case, weights are calculated during classification but are not saved in memory.

4 Evaluation and results

In addition to `getTable` and `getErrorMeasures`, `getPairs`, which was re-designed as a versatile S4 method, is an important tool to inspect data and linkage results. For example, the following code extracts all links with weights greater or equal than 0.7 from the result set obtained in the last example:

```
> getPairs(result, min.weight = 0.7, filter.link = "link")
```

	id	fname_c1	fname_c2	lname_c1	lname_c2	by	bm
1	290	HELGA	ELFRIEDE	BERGER	<NA>	1989	1
2	466	HELGA	ELFRIEDE	BERGER	<NA>	1989	1
3							
4	467	ULRIKE	NICOLE	BECKRR	<NA>	1982	8
5	472	ULRIKE	NICOLE	BECKER	<NA>	1982	8
6							
7	313	URSULA	BIRGIT	MUELLRR	<NA>	1940	6
8	457	URSULA	BIRGIT	MUELLER	<NA>	1940	6
9							

	bd	is_match	Class	Weight
1	18			
2	28	TRUE	L	0.7786012
3				
4	4			
5	4	TRUE	L	0.7293529
6				
7	15			
8	15	TRUE	L	0.7293529
9				

A frequent use case is to inspect misclassified record pairs; for this purpose two shortcuts are included that call `getPairs` with appropriate arguments:

```
> getFalsePos(result)
```

	id	fname_c1	fname_c2	lname_c1	lname_c2	by	bm
1	388	ANDREA	<NA>	WEBER	<NA>	1945	5
2	408	ANDREA	<NA>	SCHMIDT	<NA>	1945	2
3							

```

      bd is_match Class      Weight
1 20
2 20      FALSE      L 0.5067013
3

> getFalseNeg(result)

      id fname_c1 fname_c2 lname_c1 lname_c2   by
1  353      INGE      <NA>   SEIDEL      <NA> 1949
2  355     INGEU      <NA>   SEIDEL      <NA> 1949
3
4  285     ERIKA      <NA>    WEBER      <NA> 1995
5  379     ERIKA      <NA>    WEBER      <NA> 1992
6
7  127      KARL      <NA>    KLEIN      <NA> 2002
8  142      KARL      <NA>   KLEIBN      <NA> 2002
9
10  37 HARTMHUT      <NA> HOFFMSNN      <NA> 1929
11  72  HARTMUT      <NA> HOFFMANN      <NA> 1929
12

      bm bd is_match Class      Weight
1   9  4
2   8  4      TRUE      N 0.4948059
3
4   2  1
5   2 29      TRUE      N 0.4782410
6
7   6 20
8   6 29      TRUE      N 0.4692532
9
10  12 29
11  12 29      TRUE      N 0.4081096
12

```