# **Espalier**

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Espalier is a Python package for working with discordant phylogenetic trees using maximum agreement forests. The package can be used to compute maximum agreement forests, compute subtree-prune-and-regraft (SPR) distances, reconcile discordant trees and reconstruct ancestral recombination graphs (ARGs).

#### CHAPTER

# INTRODUCTION

Espalier is a Python package for working with discordant phylogenetic trees using maximum agreement forests. The package can be used to compute maximum agreement forests, compute subtree-prune-and-regraft (SPR) distances, reconcile discordant trees and reconstruct approximate ancestral recombination graphs (ARGs).

For more information on the algorithms behind Espalier please see:

Rasmussen, D.A. and Guo, F. Espalier: Efficient tree reconciliation and ARG reconstruction using maximum agreement forests, Systematic Biology, 2023; syad040

# 1.1 Motivation

**Espalier** (*noun*): the ancient agricultural art of controlling woody plant growth by pruning and attaching branches to a common frame such as a trellis.

Phylogenetic trees reconstructed from sequence data for different genomic regions often have conflicting or *discordant* tree topologies. Discordance may arise biologically from recombination or horizontal transfers of genetic material where individuals inherit genomic material from different parents. In this case, phylogenetic relationships among individuals/taxa may vary across the genome.

Espalier uses maximum agreement forests (MAFs) to identify and reconcile topological discordance between trees. Given two discordant trees, a MAF identifies a set of topologically concordant subtrees present in both trees. MAFs are therefore very useful for working with discordant trees as they allow us to identify what relationships agree and which conflict between trees.

MAFs can also help identify which lineages recombined. To see this, consider the topological effects of a recombination event where an individual inherits genetic material from different parents to the left and right of a recombination breakpoint. In a phylogenetic tree, a lineage that has undergone recombination may *attach* to different parent lineages on either side of a breakpoint. The topological effect of recombination is therefore analogous to a *subtree-prune-and-regraft* (SPR) move where a subtree is cut from one branch and regrafted to another branch elsewhere in the tree.

The subtrees in a MAF therefore identify lineages that may have moved due to recombination. MAFs are especially useful in this regard because the number of subtrees cut to obtain the MAF (i.e the SPR distance) tells us the minimum number of recombination events necessary to explain the discordance between trees. SPR distances can therefore be more useful than other distance metrics like Robinson-Fould distances in the presence of recombination because distance is quantified in terms of topological rearrangements due to subtree transfers.

However, discordance may also arise from errors or uncertainty in reconstructing trees from limited sequence data.Espalier therefore allows discordances between trees arising from phylogenetic noise to be reconciled through MAFs. Starting with a MAF, we can regraft subtrees that were cut to obtain the MAF to their respective branches in the original trees and then select the resulting tree that maximizes the likelihood of the sequence data. The reconciliation approach employed by Espalier repeats this process iteratively until all subtrees have been regrafted in a process we call *iterative regrafting*. The resulting reconciled trees may therefore be a topological hybrid of the starting trees.

Reconciling trees in this way therefore eliminates conflicts most likely attributable to phylogenetic noise while retaining conflicts that are strongly supported by the sequence data.

Of course, in the presence of true topology-altering recombination events, the ancestral relationships among sampled individuals can no longer be represented by any single tree topology but rather requires a mosaic of phylogenetic histories. Ancestral recombination graphs (ARGs) provide an ideal way to capture this mosaic as a network of linked coalescent and recombination events. An ARG can also be thought of as a sequence of *local* trees representing the phylogenetic history over different regions of the genome with additional recombination nodes linking lineages that have undergone recombination between neighboring local trees.

Espalier efficiently reconstructs approximate ARGs using (surprise!!) MAFs. Starting with an initial candidate local tree for each region of the genome, the iterative-regrafting algorithm is used to first reconcile discordances between neighboring local trees that are not strongly supported by the sequence data. Espalier then uses a dynamic programming approach based on the Viterbi algorithm to select a path of trees along the genome that maximizes the overall likelihood of the sequence data while minimizing discordance. After the tree path is chosen, MAFs are used yet again to identify the recombination events necessary to explain any remaining discordance between neighboring local trees and these events are inserted to obtain a fully connected ARG. While this approach is heuristic, Espalier performs very well at reconstructing ARGs even when compared against more exact but computationally expensive methods [RasmussenGuo2023].

#### 1.2 Installation/Usage

The easiest way to install Espalier is through pip:

```
$ pip install Espalier
```

pip will install the other Python packages required by Espalier. However, Espalier also relies on RAxML NG. See further requirements below.

If Espalier was installed correctly, the command

```
$ espalier --help
```

should return the options for Espalier's Command Line Interface.

# **1.3 Requirements**

Espalier requires Python3 as well as several Python packages to be installed:

- numpy
- pandas
- dendropy
- tskit
- biopython
- scipy
- click

These dependencies will be automatically installed by pip.

Espalier also requires but is not packaged with RAxML-NG. Instructions for installing RAxML-NG can be found here.

#### CHAPTER

TWO

#### **ESPALIER PRIMER**

#### 2.1 Installation

Espalier can easily be installed through pip:

\$ pip install Espalier

pip will install all the other Python packages. However, to use Espalier you will also need to have RAxML-NG installed. Please see these instructions.

## 2.2 Computing Maximum Agreement Forests

Espalier is largely built on maximum agreement forests. In general, an agreement forest between two discordant phylogenetic trees is obtained by cutting edges/branches until all subtrees in the resulting forest are topologically concordant, meaning that the relationships among taxa in each subtree agree between the two starting trees. A maximum agreement forest (MAF) is the agreement forest obtained by making the fewest possible cuts and thus contains the fewest possible concordant subtrees that agree between the starting trees.

Here we will compute the MAF between two discordant trees *tree1* and *tree2* available in the examples folder. First import the MAF module along with DendroPy:

```
from Espalier import MAF
import dendropy
```

Then import *tree1* as a DendroPy Tree object:

We can then import *tree2* in the same way noting that we pass the same TaxonNamespace object taxa so that the tips in *tree2* can be mapped to the equivalent tips with the same taxon names in *tree1*.

DendroPy's Tree.print\_plot() function provides a simple way to view trees as basic ASCII text plots. Let's plot the trees side by side to compare their topology.:

print("Tree 1:")
tree1.print\_plot()
print("Tree 2:")

tree2.print\_plot()

This should plot *tree1*:







We can now clearly see that these trees are topologically discordant. Subtree (1,2) is sister to all other taxa in *tree1* but sister to only subtree (6,7) in *tree2*. Also, taxon 5 is sister to subtree (9,(6,7)) in *tree1* but sister to only 9 in *tree2*.

To compute the MAF between these two trees, we can use get\_maf() in the MAF module.

```
maf = MAF.get_maf(tree1,tree2)
```

Then print all subtrees in the returned forest using plot\_maf():

from Espalier.MAF import plot\_maf
plot\_maf(maf)

This should plot the computed MAF:



It may not be immediately obvious that the forest returned by the algorithm is the true MAF. However, cutting subtree (1,2) and taxon 5 results in one large remaining subtree that is topologically consistent between the starting trees. Meanwhile, cutting any other edge besides these two will result in discordant subtrees remaining. Thus, the returned agreement forest is the true MAF in this case because it contains the fewest possible cut subtrees necessary to reconcile *tree1* and *tree2*.

Note, MAFs can also be computed using Espalier's Command Line Interface.

## 2.3 Computing SPR distances

A subtree-prune-and-regraft (SPR) move cuts or prunes a subtree from one edge in a tree and regrafts that subtree to another edge elsewhere in the tree. SPR distances are a useful way to summarize the topological distance between trees in terms of the number of subtree transfers separating two trees. Moreover, since the topological effect of a single recombination event is similar to a SPR move in that a recombining lineage will attach to two different parent lineages to the left and right of a recombination breakpoint, computing SPR distances also tells us the minimum number of recombination events necessary to explain the discordance between two trees.

The SPR distance between two trees is simple to compute given their MAF, we just need to count the number of cut subtrees in the MAF. If there are *n* component subtrees in a MAF, the SPR distance is n-1 because we do not count the final connected component. The MAF module in Espalier provides a convenient function for computing SPR distances between trees with get\_spr\_dist().

We can compute the SPR distance between trees tree1 and tree2 from the MAF example above.

```
spr_dist = MAF.get_spr_dist(tree1,tree2)
print("SPR distance: " + str(spr_dist))
```

This should print:

```
SPR distance: 2
```

Note that this is equivalent to counting the number of subtrees in the MAF and subtracting one:

```
maf = MAF.get_maf(tree1,tree2)
maf_spr_dist = len(maf) - 1
print("SPR distance: " + str(maf_spr_dist))
```

This should likewise print:

SPR distance: 2

SPR distances can also be computed using the Command Line Interface.

#### 2.4 Tree reconciliation through MAFs

MAFs can also be used to reconcile two discordant trees. To see the motivation behind Espalier's reconciliation algorithm, consider reconstructing *local trees* from different regions of a genome. Ideally, we would like to resolve conflicts between local trees attributable to phylogenetic error/noise while retaining conflicts that are strongly supported by the sequence data that likely represent true discordance due to recombination.

Here we will consider two genomic regions where *region 1* (900bp) is much longer than *region 2* (100bp). We can reconstruct maximum likelihood (ML) trees (e.g. using RAxML) from the sequence data corresponding to each genomic region and then compare the topology of the two ML trees.

```
import dendropy
from Espalier import MAF
ML_tree_file_r1 = 'reconciler_MLTree_r1.tre'
ML_tree_file_r2 = 'reconciler_MLTree_r2.tre'
taxa = dendropy.TaxonNamespace()
```

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The SPR distance between trees is 3, indicating that the trees have fairly different topologies. But we have good reason to expect that some of the discordance may be due to errors in tree reconstruction, especially for *local tree 2* since *region 2* is only 100bp long.

We will therefore try to reconcile these two trees through their MAF. Espalier's tree reconciliation algorithm starts with the MAF between two discordant trees and iteratively regrafts each subtree cut to obtain the MAF back to their original parent edges in either starting trees. This creates two alternative (partially) reconciled trees at each iteration of the algorithm; leading to a bifurcating search tree with 2<sup>n</sup> possible reconciled trees. Since we generally only want to consider reconciled trees that are strongly supported by the sequence data, we can set a parameter called lower\_bound\_ratio which determines whether or not a search path extending from a tree is searched. Specifically, setting the lower\_bound\_ratio to 0.1 means that we will terminate a search path extending from a tree if the likelihood of the sequence data given that tree is 10X lower than the likelihood given the other alternative tree.

To run the reconciliation algorithm, we must first initialize a RAxMLRunner object which uses RAxML-NG to compute the likelihood of the sequence data and a callable Reconciler object.

```
from Espalier.Reconciler import Reconciler
from Espalier.RAXML import RAXMLRunner
from Espalier import MAF
raxml = RAxMLRunner(raxml_path='raxml-ng') # provide path to RAXML if not 'raxml-ng'
reconciler = Reconciler(raxml,lower_bound_ratio=0.1)
```

We can then reconcile the two ML trees through their MAF while retaining conflicts supported by the sequence data for *region 2*:

It's important to note that the reconciliation algorithm does not just return a single reconciled tree but rather a set of plausible reconciled trees with high likelihoods. This is a feature of the algorithm we will exploit below to reconstruct Ancestral Recombination Graphs from sets of plausible local trees over each region of the genome. Here we have sorted the reconciled trees based on their likelihood and taken the tree with the highest likelihood. Now we can compare the reconciled tree against the ML tree for *region 1*:

```
print("Reconciled tree:")
rec_tree.print_plot()
print('SPR distance:', str(MAF.get_spr_dist(tree_r1,rec_tree)))
```

Running the above code outputs:



Some of the conflicts between ML trees not strongly supported by the sequence data have been removed, and the SPR distance between the reconciled tree for *region 2* and the ML tree for *region 1* is now just one as opposed to three.

Espalier includes a few advanced features for reconciliation that consider information in sequence data external to the genomic region we are considering, but that is the basic idea behind reconciling trees through their MAF.

#### 2.5 Reconstructing Ancestral Recombination Graphs

Ancestral Recombination Graphs (ARGs) capture how ancestral relationships vary across the genome due to recombination as a network of coalescent and recombination events. ARGs can also be thought of as a sequence of local trees, where each tree represents the ancestral relationships among sampled individuals over a non-recombinant region of the genome. Recombination events connect lineages in neighboring local trees that have recombined to form a connected graph.

Espalier uses a heuristic approach to reconstruct ARGs. In most cases, we start with a candidate local tree (e.g. a ML tree) for each non-recombinant genomic region. Espalier itself does not identify recombination breakpoints so plausible breakpoints on which an alignment can be partitioned into non-recombinant regions need to be identified first (see below). Espalier then reconciles topological differences between neighboring trees through their MAFs using the reconciliation algorithm described above. This generates a set of candidate trees for each genomic region or what we call a **tree trellis**. A dynamic programming algorithm based on the Viterbi algorithm is then used to select a path of local trees that maximize the likelihood of the sequence data over each region while eliminating unnecessary recombination events.

Here, we will start with an ARG simulated in msprime so we can compare the true ARG known from the simulation with the ARG reconstructed by Espalier. Let's start by looking at the true ARG. Because it can be very difficult to visualize ARGs as a network, we will visualize ARGs using tanglegrams instead. Tanglegrams emphasize discordance between local trees using lines that connect the same taxa/tip in each tree to one another such that crossing or entangled lines suggest topological discordance. Here we will use the PlotTanglegrams module to plot the tanglegrams, which in turn uses Gytis Dudas' baltic package to render the tanglegrams in matplotlib.



From the tanglegram for the true ARG above we can see that recombination has created discordance between the first two trees and the last two trees but the second and third trees are concordant. This is expected as not all recombination events will impact tree topology.

Given the sequence data for each genome region, we can reconstruct ML trees for each genome region. Prereconstructed ML trees are available in the *examples* folder. Let's plot the tanglegram for the reconstructed ML local trees:

```
# Get ML tree and seq files from example folder
ML_tree_files = ["ARG_example_MLTree" + str(i) + ".tre" for i in range(segments)]
seq_files = ["ARG_example_tree" + str(i) + ".fasta" for i in range(segments)]
# Plot tanglegram for local ML trees
tanglegram_fig_name = 'localMLTree-tanglegram.png'
PlotTanglegrams.plot(ML_tree_files, tanglegram_fig_name, numerical_taxa_names=True)
```



We can see that, compared to the true ARG, there are additional conflicts between the local trees arising from phylogenetic error in reconstruction.

Now let's reconstruct an ARG from the candidate ML trees. First we need to initialize a RAxMLRunner object and a Reconciler object that both get passed to an ARGBuilder object that reconstructs the actual ARG.

We already covered the lower\_bound\_ratio parameter in the reconciliation tutorial above. Additionally we need to set a prior\_gamma parameter which determines how information from sites external to a given region is used when reconciling local trees. Essentially, this allows us to consider whether sites adjacent to a region support a given tree topology but down weights information coming from sites further away since the probability that the true underlying topology has changed increases with distance. Espalier assumes that a sites contribution to the overall likelihood of the sequence data decays exponentially with the distance from the region of interest. The prior\_gamma parameter determines how quickly information decays, such that smaller parameter values mean that the contribution of distant sites decays more slowly. For our purposes, it will be adequate to set the prior\_gamma equal to the per site recombination rate.

The final thing we need for the reconstruction is a reference tree to reconcile the local trees against. Here we will use a consensus (maximum clade credibility tree) of the ML trees reconstructed for each genomic region:

Now we can run the actual reconstruction using the reconstruct\_ARG() method in the ARGBuilder class. Notice that we pass the rec\_rate as an argument since this is used by the algorithm to determine how much to penalize for transitioning between discordant trees.

```
# Run reconstruction
tree_path = argb.reconstruct_ARG(ML_tree_files,seq_files,ref,rec_rate)
```

The reconstruction algorithm returns a path of local trees in the ARG. Let's write the local trees in the ARG to file and then plot the tanglegram for these local trees to get an overall sense of what the reconstructed ARG looks like:

```
# Write local trees in reconstructed ARG to files
ARG_tree_files = ["ARG_example_ARGLocalTree" + str(i) + ".tre" for i in range(segments)]
for idx,tr in enumerate(tree_path):
    tr.write(path=ARG_tree_files[idx],schema='newick',suppress_annotations=True,suppress_
    orooting=True)
tanglegram_fig_name = 'ARGLocalTree-tanglegram.png'
PlotTanglegrams.plot(ARG_tree_files, tanglegram_fig_name, numerical_taxa_names=True)
```



Comparing the tanglegram for the reconstructed ARG to the tanglegram for the true ARG, we see that Espalier does a pretty good job of reconstructing the topology of the local trees. Some of the discordance between ML trees that was not strongly supported by the sequence data has been removed. Although the recombination event between the first two trees is missing, the recombination event between the last two trees is correctly reconstructed.

#### 2.6 Automated breakpoint detection

Coming soon! We are currently adding a feature to automatically detect recombination breakpoints. This feature will also partition alignments into recombination-free regions delimited by the identified breakpoints, which can be used to reconstruct local ML trees.

#### CHAPTER

#### THREE

#### **COMMAND LINE INTERFACE**

#### 3.1 Usage

Once installed, some of Espalier's methods can be run from the command line using the espalier executable.

To get an overview of the command line features, at the command line type espalier --help.

```
$ espalier --help
Usage: espalier [OPTIONS] COMMAND [ARGS]...
Options:
    -h, --help Show this message and exit.
Commands:
    maf Compute maximum agreement forest (MAF) between two...
    reconcile Reconcile two discordant trees through their maximum...
    spr Compute subtree-prune-and-regraft distance between two trees...
```

#### 3.2 Computing Maximum Agreement Forests

Maximum agreement forests (MAFs) can be computed using the maf command. Here, we will use the trees *maf\_example\_tree1.tre* and *maf\_example\_tree2.tre* found in the *examples* folder. The basic usage requires that we pass the Newick files containing the two trees as arguments to the maf command:

```
$ espalier maf maf_example_tree1.tre maf_example_tree2.tre
Computing MAF...
MAF contains 3 subtrees:
(1:2.03543736451416,2:2.03543736451416):721.1792750257996;
5:723.2147123903137;
((3:21.0348587795342,(10:3.56730088556742,(4:1.6955616440807,8:1.6955616440807):1.
→87173924148672):17.46755789396678):702.1798536107794,((6:54.32114231628793,7:54.
→32114231628793):501.67017755551933,9:555.9913198718073):167.22339251850644);
```

The subtrees in the MAF are returned as Newick tree strings, one on each line.

By default, subtrees are written to *stdout* but subtrees can be written to a file instead by supplying a third argument specifying an output file:

\$ espalier maf maf\_example\_tree1.tre maf\_example\_tree2.tre maf\_subtrees.txt

Finally, the subtrees in the MAF can be plotted using the --plot option.



# 3.3 Computing SPR distances

Subtree-prune-and-regraft (SPR) distances between trees can also be computed from the command line. We simply use the spr command, passing the two tree files as arguments:

```
$ espalier spr maf_example_tree1.tre maf_example_tree2.tre
Computing SPR distance...
SPR distance = 2
```

#### 3.4 Tree reconciliation

Two discordant trees can be reconciled through their MAF using the **reconcile** command. More information about how the trees are reconciled can be found in the *Tree Reconciliation* section of the *Espalier Primer*. The **reconcile** command requires three positional arguments: the first two arguments provide the pair of trees to be reconciled and the third argument a Fasta sequence file. Topological discordances between the two trees strongly supported by the sequence data will be retained while those not supported will be eliminated.

Here we will reconcile a pair of ML trees for two different genomic regions based on the sequence data from the second genomic region. We can think of the first tree as a reference or consensus tree and the second tree as an alternative local tree topology reconstructed for the second genomic region. Our goal then is to reconcile the conflicts between the reference tree and the local ML tree that are not strongly supported by the sequence data.

```
$ espalier reconcile reconciler_MLTree_r1.tre reconciler_MLTree_r2.tre reconciler_r2.

→ fasta

Likelihood: -680.88

(((4:0.105918,((8:0.102793,3:0.102793):0.003125000000000028,5:0.105918):5.

→ 29999999985872e-07):2.86982,10:2.97574):1.00409,((7:0.309185,2:0.309185):0.

→ 04671170000000002,(1:0.309185,(6:0.1545925,9:0.1545925):0.1545925):0.

→ 046711700000000002):3.6239383);
```

Usually the reconcile command returns a set of reconciled trees. The reconciled trees are sorted in descending order based on the likelihood of the sequence data given each tree. However, in this example, only one reconciled tree with significant support was found.

Reconciled trees are written to *stdout* by default, but trees can be written to a file by supplying a fourth argument specifying an output file:

```
$ espalier reconcile reconciler_MLTree_r1.tre reconciler_MLTree_r2.tre reconciler_r2.

→fasta reconciled_trees.txt
```

One important optional parameter is --1br, which sets the lower-bound-ratio used to constrain the search path explored by the reconciliation algorithm to only include reconciled trees strongly supported by the sequence data. We can however use a smaller lower-bound-ratio to broaden the search path to include reconciled trees that are less strongly supported by the sequence data. Here setting the --1br parameter to 0.0001 instead of 0.1 returns two plausible reconciled trees instead of one:

```
espalier reconcile reconciler_MLTree_r1.tre reconciler_MLTree_r2.tre reconciler_r2.fasta_

---lbr 0.0001
```

```
Tree log likelihood: -680.88
(((4:0.105918,((8:0.102793,3:0.102793):0.0031250000000000028,5:0.105918):5.
→299999999985872e-07):2.86982,10:2.97574):1.00409,((7:0.309185,2:0.309185):0.
→04671170000000002,(1:0.309185,(6:0.1545925,9:0.1545925):0.1545925):0.
→04671170000000002):3.6239383);
```

Tree log likelihood: -689.09 ((7:0.309185,(2:0.309185,(1:0.309185,(6:0.1545925,9:0.1545925):0.1545925):0.0):0.0):3. →67065,((4:0.105918,((8:0.102793,3:0.102793):0.003125000000000028,5:0.105918):5. →299999999985872e-07):2.86982,10:2.97574):1.00409);

# 3.5 ARG reconstruction

ARG reconstruction is not currently supported through the command line interface. This feature should be coming soon in Espalier version 0.2.

#### CHAPTER

# FOUR

# **INDICES AND TABLES**

- genindex
- modindex
- search

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

[RasmussenGuo2023] Rasmussen, D.A. and Guo, F. Espalier: Efficient tree reconciliation and ARG reconstruction using maximum agreement forests, Systematic Biology, 2023; syad040.