

# oro.nifti: Rigorous - NIfTI Input / Output

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December 29, 2011

## 1 Introduction

The **oro.nifti** package requires incoming data to be in the ANALYZE~7.5 or NIfTI formats. Data acquisition and input (e.g., from DICOM using **oro.dicom**) must be performed by the user before **oro.nifti** may be used to summarize the data. Several software packages allow DICOM-to-NIfTI (or ANALYZE) conversion; e.g.,

- oro.dicom ([rigorous.r-forge.r-project.org](http://rigorous.r-forge.r-project.org))
- FreeSurfer ([surfer.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu](http://surfer.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu))
- Xmedcon ([xmedcon.sourceforge.net](http://xmedcon.sourceforge.net))
- MRIConvert ([lnci.oregon.edu/~jolinda/MRIConvert](http://lnci.oregon.edu/~jolinda/MRIConvert))

This is by no means an exhaustive list of software available for DICOM conversion.

### 1.1 A Note on Axes and Orientation

The NIfTI format contains an implicit generalized spatial transformation from the data co-ordinate system  $(i, j, k)$  into a real-space “right-handed” co-ordinate system. In this real-space system, the  $(x, y, z)$  axes are *usually* set such that  $x$  increases from left to right,  $y$  increases from posterior to anterior and  $z$  increases from inferior to superior.

At this point in time the **oro.nifti** package cannot apply an arbitrary transform to the imaging data into  $(x, y, z)$  space – such a transform may require non-integral indices and interpolation steps. The package does accommodate straightforward transformations of imaging data; e.g., setting the  $x$ -axis to increase from right to left (neurological). Future versions of **oro.nifti** will attempt to address more complicated transformations.

## 1.2 NIfTI and ANALYZE data in S4

A major improvement in the `oro.nifti` package is the fact that standard medical imaging formats are stored in unique classes under the S4 system. Essentially, NIfTI and ANALYZE data are stored as multi-dimensional arrays with extra slots created that capture the format-specific header information. The NIfTI class also has the ability to read and write extensions that conform to the data format standard. Customized printing and validity-checking functions are available to the user and every attempt is made to ensure that the information from the multi-dimensional array is in agreement with the header values.

## 1.3 Audit Trail

Following on from the S4 implementation of both the NIfTI and Analyze data formats, the ability to extend the NIfTI data format header is utilized in the `oro.nifti` package. First, extensions are properly handled when reading and writing NIfTI data. Second, users are allowed to add extensions to newly-created NIfTI objects using various functions and the `XML` package. Third, by default all operations that are performed on a NIfTI object will generate what we call an *audit trail* that consists of an XML-based log. Each log entry contains information not only about the function applied to the NIfTI object, but also various system-level information; e.g., version of R, user name, date, time, etc. When writing NIfTI-class objects to disk, the XML-based NIfTI extension is converted into plain text and saved appropriately (ecode = 6). The user may control the tracking of data manipulation via the audit trail using a global option. For example please use the command

```
> options(niftiAuditTrail=FALSE)
```

to turn off the “audit trail” option in `oro.nifti`.

Interactive visualization of multidimensional arrays, stored in NIfTI or Analyze format, is best performed outside of R at this point in time. Popular viewers, especially for brain imaging, are

- FSLView (<http://www.fmrib.ox.ac.uk/fsl/fslview/>)
- MRICroN (<http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd/rorden/MRicon/>)

## 1.4 Examples

### 1.4.1 Labelled LR Standard (MNI152) Images in NIfTI Format

The first example of reading in, and displaying, medical imaging data in NIfTI format (`avg152T1_LR_nifti.nii.gz`) was obtained from the NIfTI website ([nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/](http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/)). Successful execution of the command:

```
> (mni.LR <- readNifti(system.file("nifti/mniLR.nii.gz", package="oro.nifti")))
```

NIfTI-1 format

```
Type : niftiAuditTrail
```

```

Data Type      : 2 (UINT8)
Bits per Pixel : 8
Slice Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Intent Code    : 0 (None)
Qform Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Sform Code     : 4 (MNI_152)
Dimension      : 91 x 109 x 91
Pixel Dimension: 2 x 2 x 2
Voxel Units    : mm
Time Units     : sec

```

```
> audit.trail(mni.LR)
```

```

<audit-trail xmlns="http://www.dcemri.org/namespaces/audit-trail/1.0">
  <created>
    <workingDirectory>/tmp/RtmpS4BBZL/Rbuild5c0f420d2f95/oro.nifti/inst/doc</workingDirectory>
    <filename>/tmp/RtmpS4BBZL/Rinst5c0f4417a61a/oro.nifti/nifti/mniLR.nii.gz</filename>
    <call>readNIfTI(fname = system.file("nifti/mniLR.nii.gz", package = "oro.nifti"))</call>
    <system>
      <r-version.version.string>R version 2.14.1 (2011-12-22)</r-version.version.string>
      <date>Thu Dec 29 11:50:02 2011 GMT</date>
      <user>bwhitcher</user>
      <package-version.Version>0.3.1</package-version.Version>
    </system>
  </created>
</audit-trail>

```

```
> descrip(mni.LR)
```

```
[1] "FSL3.2beta"
```

```
> image(mni.LR)
```

produces a 4D array of the image data, with the default NIfTI axes, and is displayed on a 10×10 grid of images (Figure 1). Note, the `image` function has been modified to accept `nifti` and `anlz` objects and display them with minimal user input. Two accessor functions are also shown here: `audit.trail` and `descrip`. The former is used to access the XML-based audit trail that is stored as a NIfTI header extension and the latter is the name of a valid NIfTI header field (allowed to store up to 80 characters).

The second example of reading in, and displaying, medical imaging data in NIfTI format (`avg152T1_RL_nifti.nii`) was also obtained from the NIfTI website ([nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/](http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/)). Successful execution of the command

```
> (mni.RL <- readNIfTI(system.file("nifti/mniRL.nii.gz", package="oro.nifti")))
```

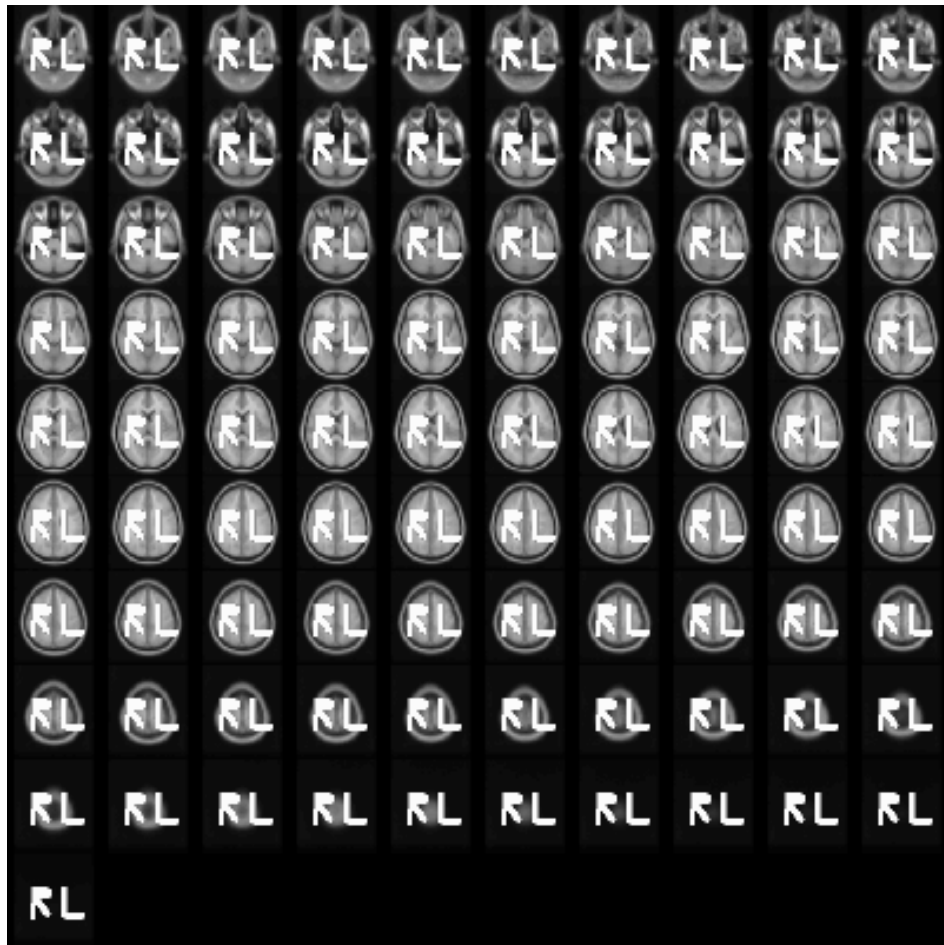


Figure 1: Axial slices of MNI volume `mnLR_nifti` stored in radiological convention.

NIfTI-1 format

```

Type           : niftiAuditTrail
Data Type      : 2 (UINT8)
Bits per Pixel : 8
Slice Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Intent Code    : 0 (None)
Qform Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Sform Code     : 4 (MNI_152)
Dimension      : 91 x 109 x 91
Pixel Dimension : 2 x 2 x 2
Voxel Units    : mm
Time Units     : sec

```

```
> image(mni.RL)
```

produces a 4D array of the image data that may be displayed in a 10×10 grid of images (Figure~2).

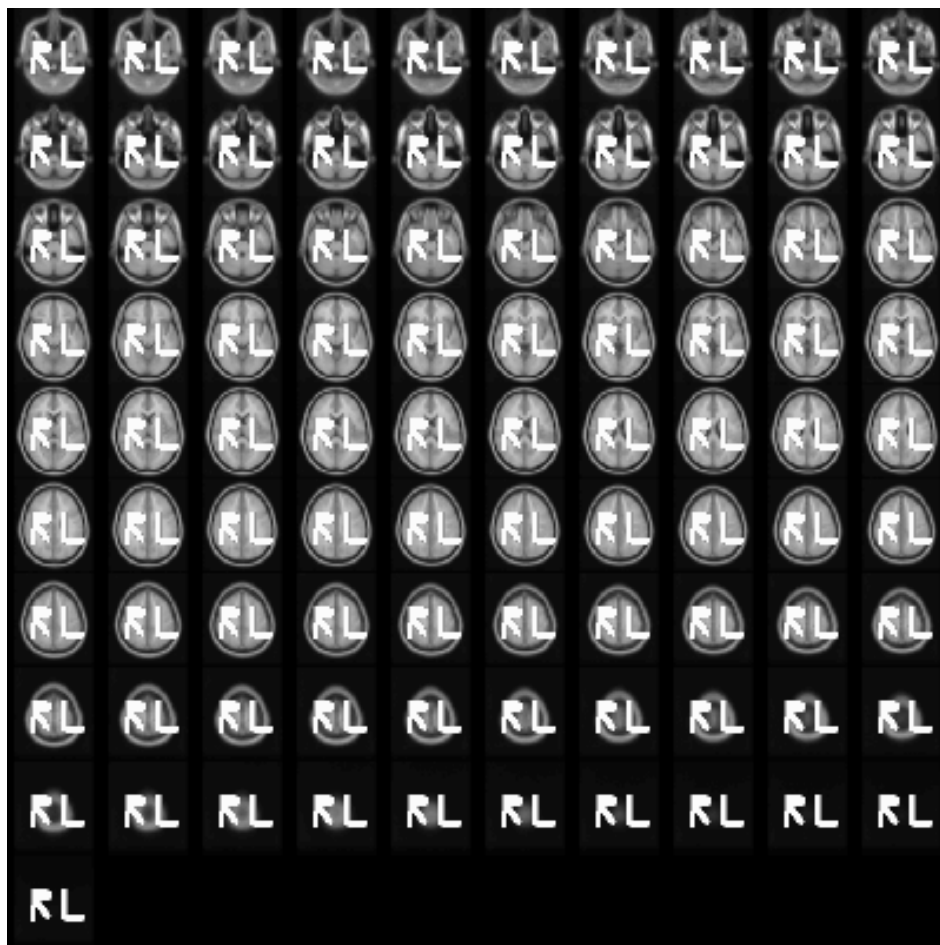


Figure 2: Axial slices of MNI volume `avg152T1_RL_nifti` stored in neurological convention.

The first image (LR) is stored in radiological convention. The second image (RL) is stored in neurological convention. Any NIfTI-1 compliant viewing software should display these images identically.

### 1.4.2 Simple Time-series or Multi-volume Image

This is an example of reading in, and displaying, a four-dimensional medical imaging data set in NIfTI format (`filtered_func_data.nii`) obtained from the NIfTI website ([nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/](http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/)). Successful execution of the command

```
> (ffd <- readNifti(system.file("nifti/ffd.nii.gz", package="oro.nifti")))
```

NIfTI-1 format

```
Type           : niftiAuditTrail
Data Type       : 4 (INT16)
Bits per Pixel  : 16
Slice Code      : 0 (Unknown)
Intent Code     : 0 (None)
Qform Code     : 1 (Scanner_Anat)
Sform Code     : 1 (Scanner_Anat)
Dimension       : 64 x 64 x 21 x 18
Pixel Dimension : 4 x 4 x 6 x 3
Voxel Units     : mm
Time Units      : sec
```

```
> image(ffd)
```

produces a four-dimensional (4D) array of imaging data that may be displayed in a  $5 \times 5$  grid of images (Figure~3). The first three dimensions are spatial locations of the voxel (volume element) and the fourth dimension is time.

An additional graphical display function has been added for `nifti` and `anlz` objects that allows orthographic displays.

```
> orthographic(ffd)
```

### 1.4.3 Statistic Image

This is an example of reading in and displaying a statistical image so that it may be overlaid on the EPI (echo planar imaging) data taken from the functional MRI experiment. The original NIfTI files (`filtered_func_data.nii` and `zstat1.nii`) were obtained from the NIfTI website ([nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/](http://nifti.nimh.nih.gov/nifti-1/)). Successful execution of the command

```
> (zstat1 <- readNifti(system.file("nifti/zstat1.nii.gz", package="oro.nifti")))
```

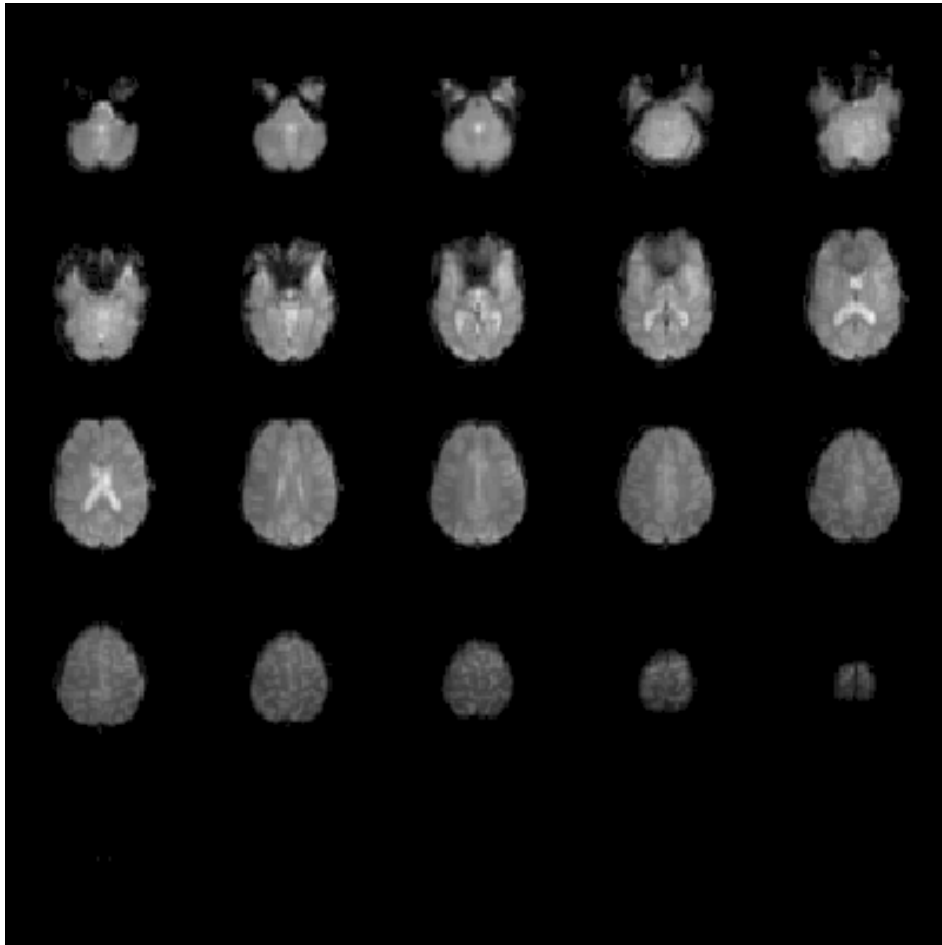


Figure 3: Axial slices of the functional MRI “volume” `filtered_func_data` from the first acquisition.

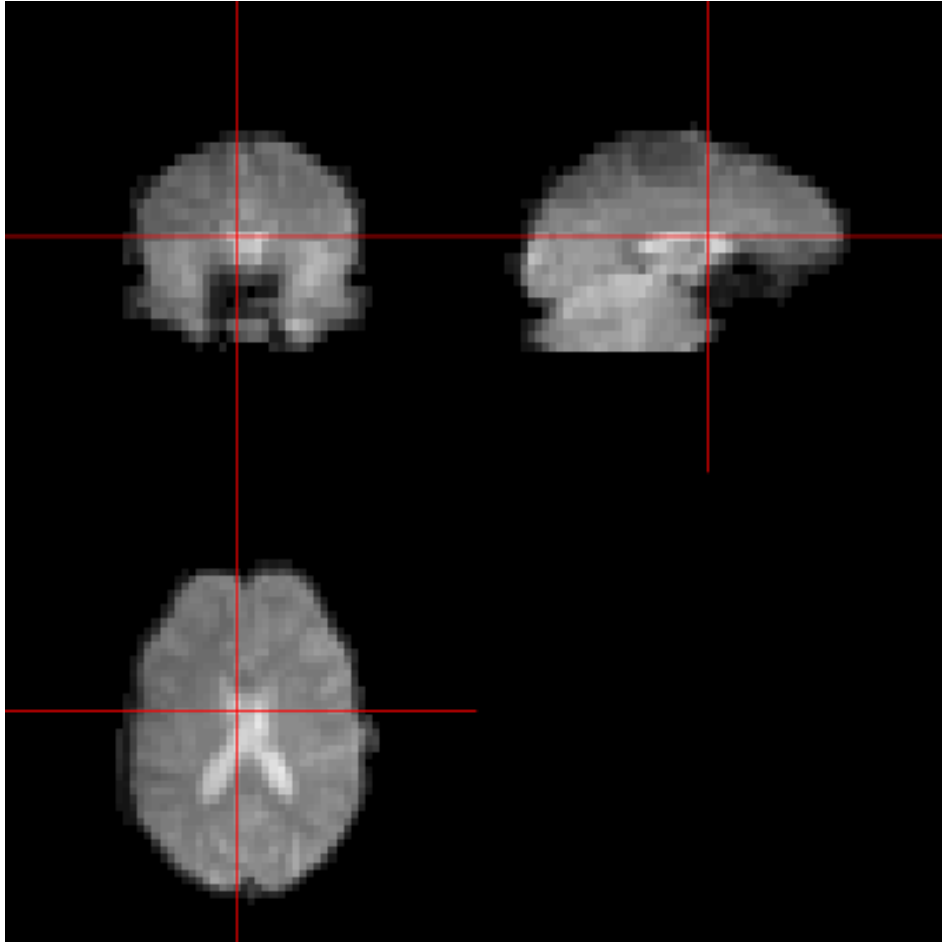


Figure 4: Orthographic display of the first volume from the functional MRI dataset `filtered_func_data`. By default the mid-axial, mid-sagittal and mid-coronal planes are chosen.



NIfTI-1 format

```
Type           : niftiAuditTrail
Data Type      : 16 (FLOAT32)
Bits per Pixel : 32
Slice Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Intent Code    : 5 (Zscore)
Qform Code     : 1 (Scanner_Anat)
Sform Code     : 0 (Unknown)
Dimension      : 64 x 64 x 21
Pixel Dimension : 4 x 4 x 6
Voxel Units    : mm
Time Units     : sec
```

```
> overlay(ffd, ifelse(abs(zstat1) > 5, zstat1, NA), zlim.y=range(zstat1))
```

produces a 4D array of parameter estimates (essentially coefficients from a linear regression performed at each voxel) that may be overlayed on the original data for anatomical reference (Figure~5). The function `overlay` extends the capabilities of displaying “images” by allowing one to add a statistical image to an underlying structural image.

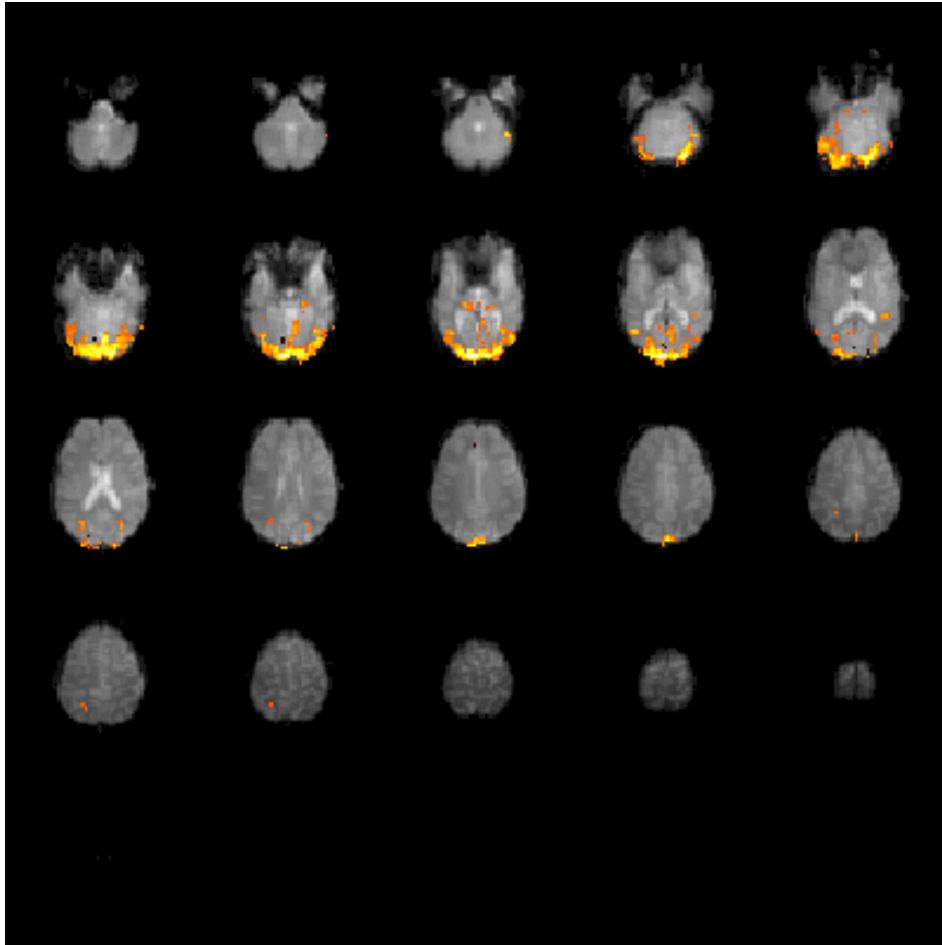


Figure 5: Axial slices of the functional MRI data with with the statistical image overlayed. The test statistics were thresholded at  $|Z| \geq 5$ .