

Description of the biomaRt package

Steffen Durinck^{‡,*}, Wolfgang Huber^{¶,†},
Yves Moreau[‡], Bart De Moor[‡]

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[‡]Department of Electronical Engineering, ESAT-SCD, K.U.Leuven,
Kasteelpark Arenberg 10, 3001 Leuven-Heverlee, Belgium,
<http://www.esat.kuleuven.ac.be/~dna/BioI>
and [¶]European Bioinformatics Institute, Hinxton, UK

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	objects	2
2.1	Mart-class	2
2.2	martTable-class	2
3	BioMart API functions	3
3.1	listMarts	3
3.2	useMart	3
3.3	listDatasets	3
3.4	useDataset	4
3.5	Filter, Values and Attributes	4
4	Easy functions	5
4.1	Connecting to BioMart databases	5
4.1.1	martConnect	6
4.1.2	martDisconnect	6
4.2	Annotating identifiers with gene information	6
4.2.1	GO annotation	9
4.2.2	OMIM annotation	9

*Steffen.Durinck@esat.kuleuven.ac.be

†huber@ebi.ac.uk

4.2.3	INTERPRO protein domains	10
4.3	Homology mapping	10
4.4	Identify subsets of genes for further analysis with the <code>getFeature</code> function .	11
4.5	Sequence information	14
4.6	Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms	14
4.7	More exotic functions	15
4.7.1	<code>getPossibleXrefs</code>	15
4.7.2	<code>getXref</code>	16

1 Introduction

The BioConductor *biomaRt* package provides an API in R to query BioMart databases such as Ensembl (<http://www.ensembl.org>), a software system which produces and maintains automatic annotation on metazoan genomes. Two sets of functions are currently implemented. A first set of functions aims to mimic functionality of other BioMart API's such as Martshell, Martview, etc. (see <http://www.biomart.org> for more information). These functions are very general, and can be used with any BioMart system. They allow retrieval of all information that other BioMart API's provide. A Second set of functions are tailored towards Ensembl and are a set of commonly used queries in microarray data analysis. With these two sets of functions, one can for example annotate the features on your array with the latest annotations starting from identifiers such as affy id's, locuslink, RefSeq, entrezgene,.. Annotation includes gene names, GO, OMIM annotation, etc. On top of this, *biomaRt* enables you to retrieve any type of information available from the BioMart databases from R.

2 objects

2.1 Mart-class

An object of the `Mart` class stores connections to BioMart databases and additional information about the BioMarts. It has the following slots:

- `connections`: stores the `RMySQLConnections`
- `arrayToSpecies`: Stores mapping from affy arrays to species

2.2 martTable-class

An object of the `martTable` class is the output of the Ensembl specific functions and has the following slots:

- `id`: stores the id used for querying
- `table`: is a list of vectors storing the retrieved data

3 BioMart API functions

In this section we'll discuss functions that resemble other BioMart API's such as Martshell (see: <http://www.biomart.org> for more info). These functions are very general and can be used on all BioMart databases. The order in which the functions are discussed is the usual order of how you should use them.

3.1 listMarts

The `listMarts` lists the possible BioMarts where we can connect to.

```
> library(biomart)

Loading required package: RMySQL
Loading required package: DBI
Loading required package: XML

> marts <- listMarts()
> marts

[1] "ensembl_mart_35" "vega_mart_35"      "snp_mart_35"      "msd_mart_4"
[5] "uniprot_mart_17"
```

3.2 useMart

Here we select from the list of possible BioMart databases, a BioMart that we want to use. You have to specify the full name of the BioMart e.g. "ensembl_mart_32".

```
> index <- grep("ensembl", marts)
> mart <- useMart(marts[index])

connected to:  ensembl_mart_35
```

3.3 listDatasets

Next we want to select a specific dataset of the selected BioMart. To see which dataset is available we use the function `listDatasets`.

```
> listDatasets(mart)

      dataset      version
1 ptroglodytes_gene_ensembl  CHIMP1
2   ggallus_gene_ensembl    WASHUC1
3  rnorvegicus_gene_ensembl  RGSC3.4
4   scerevisiae_gene_ensembl    SGD1
```

```

5  tnigroviridis_gene_ensembl TETRAODON7
6   xtropicalis_gene_ensembl   JGI3
7   frubripes_gene_ensembl     FUGU2
8  cintestinalis_gene_ensembl  CINT1.95
9   agambiae_gene_ensembl      MOZ2a
10  amellifera_gene_ensembl     AMEL2.0
11  btaurus_gene_ensembl       BDGP4
12  celegans_gene_ensembl      CEL140
13  mmusculus_gene_ensembl     NCBIM34
14  cfamiliaris_gene_ensembl   BROADD1
15  dmelanogaster_gene_ensembl  BDGP4
16  drerio_gene_ensembl        ZFISH5
17  hsapiens_gene_ensembl      NCBI35
18  mdomestica_gene_ensembl     JGI3

```

3.4 useDataset

To actually use a dataset we use the function `useDataset` to update our Mart object so it contains the configuration information of the dataset of interest.

```
> mart <- useDataset(dataset = "hsapiens_gene_ensembl", mart = mart)
```

```
Reading database configuration of: hsapiens_gene_ensembl
```

```
Checking attributes ... ok
```

```
Checking filters ... ok
```

```
Checking main tables ... ok
```

3.5 Filter, Values and Attributes

In BioMart, a filter is used to search a set of attributes that have a specified value for that filter. To explain this better let's consider the following use case. We want to get the gene symbol, chromosome name and band of the following features on the affy hgu95av2 chip: 1939_at, 2082_s_at and 1454_at. In this case the attributes are gene symbol, chromosome name and band, they are the information we want to retrieve. The filter is the hgu95av2 chip and as values for this filter we use the affy identifiers we want to retrieve the information from. In BioMart a list of possible attributes that we can query for can be retrieved by using the function `listAttributes`

```
> attributes <- listAttributes(mart)
```

```
> attributes[1:10]
```

```

[1] "chr_name"           "chrom_start"       "chrom_end"
[4] "chrom_strand"       "band"              "gene_stable_id"
[7] "transcript_stable_id" "translation_stable_id" "external_gene_id"
[10] "external_db_name"

```

Similarly a list of possible filters can be obtained with the function `listFilters`.

```
> filters <- listFilters(mart)
> filters[1:10]

[1] "chr_name"           "gene_chrom_start"
[3] "gene_chrom_end"     "in_encode"
[5] "disease_gene_boolean" "known_gene_boolean"
[7] "uniprot_swissprot_boolean" "uniprot_sptrembl_boolean"
[9] "uniprot_accession_boolean" "uniprot_id_boolean"
```

To get the information from our example we can use the function `getBM`, using valid attributes and filter.

```
> getBM(attributes = c("external_gene_id", "chr_name", "band"),
+       filter = "affy_hg_u95av2", values = c("1939_at", "2082_s_at",
+       "1454_at"), mart = mart)

  affy_hg_u95av2 external_gene_id chr_name  band
2      1939_at      TP53          17  p13.1
3      2082_s_at      CDH1          16  q22.1
1      1454_at      SMAD3          15  q22.33

> martDisconnect(mart)

[1] TRUE
```

As you see multiple attributes can be retrieved at once but in the current version of `biomaRt` there is the restriction that the attributes which are queried together, should somehow be of a similar type, e.g. gene symbol, chromosome name or e.g. allele, SNP, and frequency of snp.

4 Easy functions

4.1 Connecting to BioMart databases

A first step in using the `biomaRt` package is to connect to a BioMart database. The function `martConnect` establishes a connection with one or more of the following BioMart databases: `snp`, `ensembl`, `sequence` and `vega`. Default this function will connect to public BioMart databases. If no `biomart` is specified, only a connection to `ensembl` will be established. If you want to use local BioMart install you have to set the `local` argument to `TRUE` and specify `host`, `password` and `user` details in the corresponding arguments.

4.1.1 martConnect

```
> mart <- martConnect()
```

```
connected to:  ensembl_mart_35
```

4.1.2 martDisconnect

You can only hold a limited number of connections with different BioMarts. The function `martDisconnect` can be used to close a mart connection.

```
> martDisconnect(mart)
```

4.2 Annotating identifiers with gene information

The function `getGene` uses a query id to look up the name, description and chromosomal information of the corresponding gene. Currently the `getGene` function takes identifiers from entrezgene, ensembl, refseq, affy, hugo and embl. Besides the `id` argument, this function also has a `species`, `array` and `type` argument.

The `id` argument is either a vector of identifiers or a single identifier to be annotated.

The `species` argument should have the species from which the identifier originates.

The `array` argument takes affy array identifiers as values. A list of possible identifiers supported by the package can be obtained by executing the function `getAffyArrays`.

The `mart` argument is a mart connection, which was obtained using the method `martConnect`.

The `type` takes the values of 'entrezgene', 'refseq', 'hugo', 'ensembl' and 'embl' to clarify which type of identifier is specified in the `id` argument.

First we connect to the BioMart databases we need (note that this should happen only once per session).

```
> mart <- martConnect(biomarts = c("ensembl", "snp", "sequence"))
```

```
connected to:  ensembl_mart_35
```

```
connected to:  snp_mart_35
```

```
connected to:  sequence_mart_35
```

Then we check which affy arrays are available:

```
> getAffyArrays(mart)
```

	affyID	EnsemblArrayID	species
1	canine	canine	cfamiliaris
2	drosgenome1	drosgenome1	dmelanogaster
3	drosophila2	drosophila_2	dmelanogaster

4	zebrafish	zebrafish	drerio
5	chicken	chicken	ggallus
6	hcg110	hc_g110	hsapiens
7	hgfocus	hg_focus	hsapiens
8	hgu133plus2	hg_u133_plus_2	hsapiens
9	hgu133a2	hg_u133a_2	hsapiens
10	hgu133a	hg_u133a	hsapiens
11	hgu133b	hg_u133b	hsapiens
12	hgu95av2	hg_u95av2	hsapiens
13	hgu95b	hg_u95b	hsapiens
14	hgu95c	hg_u95c	hsapiens
15	hgu95d	hg_u95d	hsapiens
16	hgu95e	hg_u95e	hsapiens
17	hugenefl	hugenefl	hsapiens
18	u133x3p	u133_x3p	hsapiens
19	mgu74av2	mg_u74av2	mmusculus
20	mgu74bv2	mg_u74bv2	mmusculus
21	mgu74cv2	mg_u74cv2	mmusculus
22	mouse4302	mouse430_2	mmusculus
23	mouse430a2	mouse430a_2	mmusculus
24	rat2302	rat230_2	rnorvegicus
25	rgu34a	rg_u34a	rnorvegicus
26	rgu34b	rg_u34b	rnorvegicus
27	rgu34c	rg_u34c	rnorvegicus

Assume now that we have some upregulated features that we want to annotate. To get the gene information on a certain affy array do:

```
> upregulated <- c("210708_x_at", "202763_at", "211464_x_at")
> gene <- getGene(id = upregulated, array = "hgu133plus2", mart = mart)
> gene
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "210708_x_at" "202763_at"   "211464_x_at"
```

Slot "table":

\$symbol

```
[1] "CASP10" "CASP3"  "CASP6"
```

\$description

```
[1] "Caspase-10 precursor (EC 3.4.22.-) (CASP-10) (ICE-like apoptotic protease 4) (Apopt
[2] "Caspase-3 precursor (EC 3.4.22.-) (CASP-3) (Apopain) (Cysteine protease CPP32) (Yam
```

```
[3] "Caspase-6 precursor (EC 3.4.22.-) (CASP-6) (Apoptotic protease Mch-2) [Contains: Ca
```

```
$band
```

```
[1] "q33.1" "q35.1" "q25"
```

```
$chromosome
```

```
[1] "2" "4" "4"
```

```
$start
```

```
[1] 201873361 185924000 110967389
```

```
$end
```

```
[1] 201919616 185945750 110982233
```

```
$martID
```

```
[1] "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000164305" "ENSG00000138794"
```

When using other id's we have to specify the `type` and `species`, use the function `getSpecies` to find valid species names.

```
> getGene(id = 100, species = "hsapiens", type = "entrezgene",  
+       mart = mart)
```

```
An object of class "martTable"
```

```
Slot "id":
```

```
[1] "100"
```

```
Slot "table":
```

```
$symbol
```

```
[1] "ADA"
```

```
$description
```

```
[1] "Adenosine deaminase (EC 3.5.4.4) (Adenosine aminohydrolase). [Source:Uniprot/SWISSP
```

```
$band
```

```
[1] "q13.12"
```

```
$chromosome
```

```
[1] "20"
```

```
$start
```

```
[1] 42681578
```



```
$end  
[1] 42713790
```

```
$martID  
[1] "ENSG00000196839"
```

4.2.1 GO annotation

Gene Ontology annotation can be retrieved with the function `getGO`. The arguments are the same as the function `getGene`.

```
> go <- getGO(id = upregulated[1], array = "hgu133plus2", mart = mart)  
> go
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at"  
[6] "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at" "210708_x_at"
```

Slot "table":

\$GOID

```
[1] "GO:0005515" "GO:0008234" "GO:0030693" "GO:0006508" "GO:0042981"  
[6] "GO:0030693" "GO:0042802" "GO:0006917"
```

\$description

[1] "protein binding"	"cysteine-type peptidase activity"
[3] "caspase activity"	"proteolysis and peptidolysis"
[5] "regulation of apoptosis"	"caspase activity"
[7] "protein self binding"	"induction of apoptosis"

\$evidence

```
[1] "IEA" "IEA" "IEA" "IEA" "IEA" "TAS" "IPI" "TAS"
```

\$martID

```
[1] "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400"  
[5] "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400" "ENSG00000003400"
```

4.2.2 OMIM annotation

OMIM annotation can be retrieved with the function `getOMIM`. The arguments are the same as the function `getGene`.

```
> omim <- getOMIM(id = "203140_at", array = "hgu133plus2", mart = mart)  
> omim
```

```

An object of class "martTable"
Slot "id":
[1] "203140_at" "203140_at"

Slot "table":
$OMIMID
[1] 109565 109565

$disease
[1] "Lymphoma, B-cell (2)" "Lymphoma, diffuse large cell (3)"

$martID
[1] "ENSG000000113916" "ENSG000000113916"

```

4.2.3 INTERPRO protein domains

INTERPRO protein domains of the corresponding proteins can be searched with the function `getINTERPRO`. Again the arguments are the same as the function `getGene`.

```
> getINTERPRO(id = "1939_at", array = "hgu95av2", mart = mart)
```

```

An object of class "martTable"
Slot "id":
[1] "1939_at" "1939_at" "1939_at" "1939_at"

Slot "table":
$INTERPROID
[1] "IPR002117" "IPR011615" "IPR010991" "IPR001472"

$"short description"
[1] "P53" "P53_DNA_bd" "p53_tetrameristn" "NLS_BP"

$description
[1] "p53 tumor antigen"
[2] "p53, DNA-binding"
[3] "p53, tetramerisation"
[4] "Bipartite nuclear localization signal"

```

4.3 Homology mapping

This function maps homologs of genes of one species to another species. To see which species are available do:

```
> getSpecies(mart)
```

```
[1] "agambiae"      "amellifera"    "btaurus"       "celegans"
[5] "cfamiliaris"   "cintestinalis" "dmelanogaster" "drerio"
[9] "frubripes"     "ggallus"       "hsapiens"      "mdomestica"
[13] "mmusculus"     "ptroglodytes"  "rnorvegicus"   "scerevisiae"
[17] "tnigroviridis" "xtropicalis"
```

Now we can look for homologs:

```
> getHomolog(id = 2, from.species = "hsapiens", to.species = "mmusculus",
+   from.type = "entrezgene", to.type = "refseq", mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "2" "2" "2" "2" "2"
```

Slot "table":

\$MappedID

```
[1] "NM_175628"      "NM_008645"      "NM_001013775" "NM_008646"      "NM_007376"
```

```
> getHomolog(id = "1939_at", to.array = "canine", from.array = "hgu95av2",
+   mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "1939_at" "1939_at"
```

Slot "table":

\$MappedID

```
[1] "1582452_at" "1590246_at"
```

4.4 Identify subsets of genes for further analysis with the getFeature function

The function `getFeature` is a general function to look up identifiers which pass a certain filter. A first such a filter is to look for identifiers that correspond to genes with a given symbol. If the array argument is given then affy identifiers from that array will be returned. For retrieving other identifiers one has to specify the species and the type of identifier to retrieve.

```
> getFeature(symbol = "BRCA2", array = "hgu95av2", mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

[1] "1990_g_at" "1989_at"

Slot "table":

\$symbol

[1] "BRCA2" "BRCA2"

\$description

[1] "Breast cancer type 2 susceptibility protein (Fanconi anemia group D1 protein). [Sou

[2] "Breast cancer type 2 susceptibility protein (Fanconi anemia group D1 protein). [Sou

A second possible filter is to look for id's which have a certain OMIM disease term attached to them (this only works for hsapiens).

```
> getFeature(OMIM = "diabetes mellitus", type = "refseq", species = "hsapiens",  
+           mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

[1]	"NM_000207"	"NM_000545"	"NM_000545"	"NM_001042"	"NM_000160"
[6]	"NM_000208"	"NM_002103"	"NM_000408"	"NM_005544"	"NM_178849"
[11]	"NM_000457"	"NM_175914"	"NM_001030003"	"NM_178850"	"NM_001030004"
[16]	"NM_000340"	"NM_002123"			

Slot "table":

\$OMIMID

[1]	176730	142410	142410	138190	138033	147670	138570	138430	147545	600281
[11]	600281	600281	600281	600281	600281	138160	222100			

\$description

[1]	"Diabetes mellitus, rare form (1)"
[2]	"Insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (3)"
[3]	"Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus-2, 601407 (2)"
[4]	"Diabetes mellitus, noninsulin-dependent (3)"
[5]	"Diabetes mellitus, type II (3)"
[6]	"Diabetes mellitus, insulin-resistant, with acanthosis nigricans (3)"
[7]	"{Non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, susceptibility to} (2)"
[8]	"Diabetes mellitus, type II (3)"
[9]	"Diabetes mellitus, noninsulin-dependent (3)"
[10]	"Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"
[11]	"Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"
[12]	"Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"

```
[13] "Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"
[14] "Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"
[15] "Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, 125853 (3)"
[16] "Diabetes mellitus, noninsulin-dependent (3)"
[17] "Diabetes mellitus, insulin-dependent-1 (2) (?)"
```

Similarly one can look for id's that have a certain GO annotation e.g. retrieve all affy id's on the hgu133plus2 array which have protein-tyrosine kinase activity.

```
> tyrkinase <- getFeature(GO = "protein-tyrosine kinase", array = "hgu133plus2",
+   mart = mart)
```

An other filter uses the position of genes on the genome. One can query for all genes on a certain chromosome:

```
> ychrom <- getFeature(chromosome = "Y", type = "entrezgene", species = "hsapiens",
+   mart = mart)
> ychrom$id[1:10]

[1] "6736"    "6192"    "7544"    "90655"   "83259"   "441540"  "266"     "90665"
[9] "5616"    "64591"
```

Or query for genes that lay in a particular region:

```
> getFeature(chromosome = 21, start = 3e+07, end = 3.5e+07, array = "hgu95av2",
+   mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "33610_at"  "33611_g_at" "34559_at"  "37460_at"  "38370_at"
[6] "36620_at"  "33704_at"   "41692_at"  "841_at"    "40624_at"
[11] "1588_at"   "1589_s_at"  "1569_r_at" "1568_s_at" "1569_r_at"
[16] "33227_at"  "33228_g_at" "1157_s_at" "41140_at"  "38384_at"
[21] "39097_at"  "39096_at"   "37029_at"  "32496_at"  "32168_s_at"
```

Slot "table":

\$chromosome

```
[1] "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21"
[16] "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21" "21"
```

\$start

```
[1] 30508196 30508196 30613592 31414352 31414352 31953954 32605201 32922944
```

```
[9] 33320113 33320113 33524101 33524101 33524101 33524101 33560542 33560542
[17] 33560542 33619084 33697072 33798113 33837220 33837220 34197628 34743225
[25] 34810658
```

```
$end
```

```
[1] 30510223 30510223 30614224 31853161 31853161 31963112 32687021 33022105
[9] 33323371 33323371 33558688 33558688 33558688 33558688 33591390 33591390
[17] 33591390 33653993 33731696 33837068 33871682 33871682 34210028 34806443
[25] 34909303
```

4.5 Sequence information

The function `getSequence` retrieves the sequence given it's chromosome, start and end position.

```
> getSequence(species = "ggallus", chromosome = 1, start = 400,
+             end = 500, mart = mart)
```

```
An object of class "martTable"
```

```
Slot "id":
```

```
[1] "1_400_500"
```

```
Slot "table":
```

```
$chromosome
```

```
[1] 1
```

```
$start
```

```
[1] 400
```

```
$end
```

```
[1] 500
```

```
$sequence
```

```
[1] "GTGACATTTCCAGCATTCAAGTGTGTCAAAGCCTAGCTTCATTTTTGAATGTATTGAGGGGCAGATGTCCATCTCATGAATCAT"
```

4.6 Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms

The function `getSNP` retrieves all SNP's between a given a start and end position on a given chromosome.. Note: make sure you have a Mart object with connections to ensembl and snp

```
> getSNP(chromosome = 8, start = 148350, end = 148612, species = "hsapiens",
+        mart = mart)
```

```

An object of class "martTable"
Slot "id":
  [1] "TSC1421398" "TSC1421399" "TSC1421400" NA          "TSC1421401"
  [6] NA          "TSC1421402" "TSC1737607" NA          NA

Slot "table":
$snpsStart
  [1] 148394 148411 148462 148471 148499 148525 148533 148535 148539 148601

$allele
  [1] "C/A" "A/G" "C/T" "T/G" "G/A" "G/A" "G/A" "C/T" "C/T" "G/A"

$coding
  [1] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA

$intronic
  [1] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA

$syn
  [1] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA

$utr5
  [1] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA

$utr3
  [1] 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

```

4.7 More exotic functions

4.7.1 getPossibleXrefs

This function retrieves the possible cross-references present in Ensembl. This is a very general function to see what can be extracted from Ensembl. The results of this function can be used in the getXref function to extract the data of interest.

```

> xref <- getPossibleXrefs(mart = mart)
> xref[1:10, ]

      species    xref
[1,] "agambiae" "anopheles_symbol"
[2,] "agambiae" "celera_gene"
[3,] "agambiae" "celera_pep"
[4,] "agambiae" "celera_trans"
[5,] "agambiae" "embl"

```

```
[6,] "agambiae" "pdb"
[7,] "agambiae" "prediction_sptrembl"
[8,] "agambiae" "protein_id"
[9,] "agambiae" "uniprot_accession"
[10,] "agambiae" "uniprot_id"
```

4.7.2 getXref

This powerful function retrieves any cross reference in Ensembl. It can for example be used to map different affymetrix array within one species. E.g. starting from an affy id of chip hgu95av2 and id 1939_at, look for corresponding affy identifiers on the affy hgu133plus2 chip.

```
> getXref(id = c("1939_at"), from.species = "hsapiens", to.species = "hsapiens",
+       from.xref = "affy_hg_u95av2", to.xref = "affy_hg_u133_plus_2",
+       mart = mart)
```

An object of class "martTable"

Slot "id":

```
[1] "1939_at" "1939_at"
```

Slot "table":

\$from.id

```
[1] "1939_at" "1939_at"
```

\$to.id

```
[1] "211300_s_at" "201746_at"
```

\$martID

```
[1] "ENSG000000141510" "ENSG000000141510"
```

```
> martDisconnect(mart)
```