

# Package ‘alabaster.spatial’

March 27, 2025

**Title** Save and Load Spatial 'Omics Data to/from File

**Description** Save SpatialExperiment objects and their images into file artifacts, and load them back into memory.

This is a more portable alternative to serialization of such objects into RDS files. Each artifact is associated with metadata for further interpretation; downstream applications can enrich this metadata with context-specific properties.

**Version** 1.7.1

**Date** 2024-11-09

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**Depends** SpatialExperiment, alabaster.base

**Imports** methods, utils, grDevices, S4Vectors, alabaster.sce, rhdf5

**Suggests** testthat, knitr, rmarkdown, BiocStyle, DropletUtils, magick, png, digest

**VignetteBuilder** knitr

**RoxygenNote** 7.3.2

**biocViews** DataImport, DataRepresentation

**git\_url** <https://git.bioconductor.org/packages/alabaster.spatial>

**git\_branch** devel

**git\_last\_commit** f82c877

**git\_last\_commit\_date** 2024-11-09

**Repository** Bioconductor 3.21

**Date/Publication** 2025-03-27

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loadSpatialImage	<i>Load a spatial image</i>
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### Description

Load an image as a [SpatialImage](#) or subclass thereof.

### Usage

```
loadSpatialImage(img.info, project)
```

### Arguments

img.info	Named list containing the metadata for this assay.
project	Object specifying the project of interest.

### Value

A [SpatialImage](#) containing the image data (or a reference to it).

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

### Examples

```
example(read10xVisium, echo=FALSE)
img <- imgData(spe)$data[[1]]

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
meta <- stageObject(img, tmp, "whee")

out <- loadSpatialImage(meta, tmp)
```

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readSpatialExperiment *Read a SpatialExperiment from disk*

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## Description

Read a [SpatialExperiment](#) object from its on-disk representation.

## Usage

```
readSpatialExperiment(path, metadata, ...)
```

## Arguments

path	String containing a path to a directory, itself created using the <a href="#">saveObject</a> method for <a href="#">SpatialExperiment</a> objects.
metadata	Named list of metadata for this object, see <a href="#">readObjectFile</a> for details.
...	Further arguments passed to <a href="#">readSingleCellExperiment</a> and internal <a href="#">altReadObject</a> calls.

## Value

A [SpatialExperiment](#) object.

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun

## See Also

"[saveObject, SpatialExperiment-method](#)", to save a [SpatialExperiment](#) to disk.

## Examples

```
library(SpatialExperiment)
example(read10xVisium, echo=FALSE)

tmp <- tempfile()
saveObject(spe, tmp)
readObject(tmp)
```

---

saveObject, SpatialExperiment-method  
*Save a spatial experiment*

---

### Description

Save a [SpatialExperiment](#) object to its on-disk representation.

### Usage

```
## S4 method for signature 'SpatialExperiment'  
saveObject(x, path, ...)
```

### Arguments

x	A <a href="#">SpatialExperiment</a> object.
path	String containing the path to a directory in which to save x.
...	Additional named arguments to pass to specific methods.

### Details

Currently, only PNG and TIFF image formats are supported in the [imgData](#). All other images will be re-saved as PNG.

### Value

x is saved to path and NULL is invisibly returned.

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

### See Also

[readSpatialExperiment](#), to read the [SpatialExperiment](#) back into the R session.

### Examples

```
library(SpatialExperiment)  
example(read10xVisium, echo=FALSE)  
  
tmp <- tempfile()  
saveObject(spe, tmp)  
list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

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stageSpatialImage	<i>Stage images for upload</i>
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### Description

These methods are deprecated and are only documented here for back-compatibility purposes.

### Usage

```
## S4 method for signature 'VirtualSpatialImage'
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, ...)
```

```
## S4 method for signature 'StoredSpatialImage'
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, ...)
```

```
## S4 method for signature 'RemoteSpatialImage'
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, ...)
```

### Arguments

x	A <a href="#">SpatialImage</a> object.
dir	String containing a path to a directory.
path	String containing a relative path inside a directory.
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of another object.
...	Further arguments, ignored.

### Details

Each of the different methods will take advantage of any existing files to avoid an actual save. For example, the [RemoteSpatialImage](#) method will download the file directly to path, while the [StoredSpatialImage](#) method will create a link or copy the file. The [SpatialImage](#) method will fall back to saving the raster directly as a PNG.

### Value

An image file is created at `file.path(dir, path)`, possibly after appending an appropriate file extension.

The return value should be a named list containing at least:

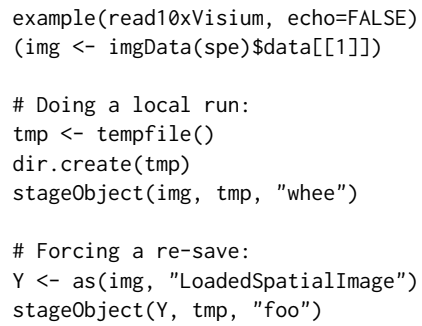
- `$schema`, a string specifying the schema to use to validate the metadata. This may have a `package` attribute to specify the package where the schema lives (in its `inst/schemas` directory).
- `path`, a string containing the path to the file containing the assay contents. This should start with the input path but can be followed by any necessary file extensions.
- `child`, whether this is a child resource of a larger object.

Other fields can be provided and will be included in the metadata, provided that they are recognized by the specified schema.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
example(read10xVisium, echo=FALSE)
The image contains R code for the stageSpatialImage package. It starts with an example function call: example(read10xVisium, echo=FALSE) followed by (img <- imgData(spe)$data[[1]]). Then, it shows a local run: # Doing a local run: tmp <- tempfile() dir.create(tmp) stageObject(img, tmp, "whee"). Finally, it shows forcing a re-save: # Forcing a re-save: Y <- as(img, "LoadedSpatialImage") stageObject(Y, tmp, "foo").  
(img <- imgData(spe)$data[[1]])  
  
# Doing a local run:  
tmp <- tempfile()  
dir.create(tmp)  
stageObject(img, tmp, "whee")  
  
# Forcing a re-save:  
Y <- as(img, "LoadedSpatialImage")  
stageObject(Y, tmp, "foo")
```

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