DGRPool: A web tool leveraging harmonized *Drosophila* Genetic Reference Panel phenotyping data for the study of complex traits

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Abstract

Genome-wide association studies have advanced our understanding of complex traits, but studying how a GWAS variant can affect a specific trait in the human population remains challenging due to environmental variability. *Drosophila melanogaster* is in this regard an excellent model organism for studying the relationship between genetic and phenotypic variation due to its simple handling, standardized growth conditions, low cost, and short lifespan. The *Drosophila* Genetic Reference Panel (DGRP) in particular has been a valuable tool for studying complex traits, but proper harmonization and indexing of DGRP phenotyping data is necessary to fully capitalize on this resource. To address this, we created a web tool called **DGRPool** (dgrpool.epfl.ch), which aggregates phenotyping data of 935 phenotypes across 125 DGRP studies in a common environment. DGRPool enables users to download data and run various tools such as genome-wide association analyses (GWAS) and Phenome-WAS analyses. As a proof-of-concept, DGRPool was used to study the longevity phenotype and uncovered both established and unexpected correlations with other phenotypes such as locomotor activity, sleep duration, and oxidative stress resistance. DGRPool has the potential to facilitate new genetic and molecular insights of complex traits in *Drosophila* and serve as a valuable, interactive tool for the scientific community.

Introduction

Drosophila melanogaster is an excellent model organism for studying genotype-to-phenotype relationships. It is a short-living species and is very easy to maintain in similar laboratory conditions, which limits confounding factors such as the environment. The *Drosophila* Genetic Reference Panel (DGRP) was created in the early 2010s and now consists of 205 inbred lines that are fully sequenced, of which 192 are still available in the Bloomington *Drosophila* Stock Center (https://bdsc.indiana.edu/)[1,2]. The DGRP has proven highly valuable to study the genetic basis of complex traits, as illustrated by the many studies that have used GWAS principles to identify variants that contribute to traits related to morphology, metabolism, behavior, aging, disease susceptibility etc. (**Figure 1A**). Furthermore, since the DGRP lines were inbred for many generations, they are almost fully homozygous, which simplifies the identification of putatively causal alleles and elucidation of implicated molecular mechanisms[3]. Moreover, the fact that the same lines can be studied by various researchers for diverse traits should leverage these data generation efforts to uncover unexpected correlations between phenotypes or relationships between genetic variants and a wide range of traits.

However, there is currently only one major data resource that aims to compile DGRP information, the DGRP2 website (http://dgrp2.gnets.ncsu.edu/)[1,2]. This website hosts the genotyping data, its annotation, and potential covariates, as well as 31 phenotypes from 12 studies (**Table 1**). The data is primarily hosted as static files, downloadable from the website, along with limited RNA expression data. In addition, a very important tool, used by the DGRP community, is the possibility for any user to submit their own phenotype files for running a GWAS analysis (corrected with known covariates). This is particularly useful, especially for researchers that do not have the bioinformatics knowledge or capacity to perform these tasks internally. However, the DGRP2 website has not been updated for an extended period as the last referenced paper dates back to 2015, and, except for the GWAS computation, remains thus static. This means that any meta-study, which would aim to aggregate datasets across available phenotypes, would require hours (if not days) of work to transform the data into an appropriate and common format. Moreover, the result of such effort would unlikely become available to the rest of the community, and thus any other group would need to redo this work in order to gather similar information, while the data of other phenotyping studies beyond the 12 available would not be easily accessible.

For all these reasons, we decided to create a web application, DGRPool (dgrpool.epfl.ch), that would both act as a repository of DGRP phenotyping datasets and also as an online tool for assisting researchers with some basic systems genetics-inspired analyses. Our goal was

to index all existing literature about DGRP phenotyping data —where possible— in order for
users to quickly search through the website using simple keywords. We manually associated
each study with broad and tailored categories such as "ageing", "metabolism", or "olfactory".
We specifically spent important time curating the datasets to avoid any errors or
misrepresentations of datasets. To avoid the "maintenance issue" that is common to online
tools, and keep the data up to date, we implemented specific curators tools, to help maintain
the web application in the future. These tools allow any user to submit a novel dataset, which
is then attributed to a curator, in order to manually format and validate all phenotyping data
and metadata associated with the study. Importantly, any user can become a curator, as
advertised on the main page of the resource, since we strongly believe that such a
community-run resource architecture is most optimal to keep a web tool state-of-the-art and
allow crowd-based curation work[4].

In addition, we set out to build important tools for the DGRP community such that DGRPool
would not only be a static repository for downloading phenotyping data but could also be
used as an interactive data analysis tool. For example, users can correlate phenotypes
together, from the same study or across studies. We also implemented an automated GWAS
analysis (using PLINK2, and known covariates) which we pre-calculated on all the
phenotyping data that are currently available. Using this data, users can simply browse
through their genes or variants of interest and directly find related phenotypes. A PheWAS
page also allows exploration of each variant's impact across multiple phenotypes. Moreover,
these tools are applicable to user-submitted phenotypes, so that anyone can upload their
own phenotypes to search the DGRPool database for correlated phenotypes or to run
GWAS analyses.

Our goal is to ensure that DGRP phenotyping data is findable, accessible, interoperable, and
reusable (FAIR)[5] to fully leverage the opportunities that stem from this unique genotyping-
phenotyping resource. To this end, we made user access our priority, both for removing the
bottleneck of data harmonization, and also to allow for better, more reproducible research.

To showcase the potential of our tool in facilitating new biological discoveries, we conducted
a proof-of-concept study focusing on the longevity phenotype, a well-studied trait in
Drosophila research with clear relevance to human longevity[6]. By leveraging the data
harmonization and curation efforts in DGRPool, we identified multiple phenotypes that are
significantly associated with longevity across 18 different studies, such as oxidative stress
resistance[7], sleep duration[8,9], desiccation survival[10,11], and starvation resistance[10,12,13].
Interestingly, we also observed correlations between shorter lifespan and certain
phenotypes, such as locomotor activity[14] and food intake[15,16]. These results validate prior

knowledge and illustrate how our tool can provide novel biological insights with just a few
clicks. Therefore, we firmly believe that tools such as DGRPool —which ultimately could
become entirely community-driven— are essential not only for catalyzing novel research, but
also for leveraging the diversity and richfulness of existing datasets.

Results

A thousand phenotypes across 125 studies

To start our data collection, we searched for DGRP studies that reference any phenotyping
data and in parallel implemented diverse tools to automatically aggregate these data and
their associated metadata from the journals hosting the datasets. However, we quickly
realized that it was difficult to automate the entire process. Specifically, the import of
phenotyping data proved challenging since i) datasets tended to be hosted in very different
formats such as Excel files or PDF, ii) data was stored within the journal's supplementary
section, or in external repositories such as Figshare; and iii) the format of the phenotyping
data differed from one publication to another. Because of these challenges, we implemented
a curation page to manually review, edit, and correct datasets that were automatically
aggregated, aiming to prevent errors in the imported datasets. In addition, this allows the
curator to add relevant remarks or comments on the study under review, thus providing
enhanced context for future analyses of these datasets.

In line with the community-resourcing philosophy of DGRPool, we created a specific
"curator" role that any logged-in user can claim, again with the underlying rationale of
assuring long-term sustainability of our web application. With this role, the user has access
to additional functionalities on the DGRPool website, including the modification of any
metadata attached to a study (title, authors, description, categories), and the submission or
modification of attached phenotypes (see **Supp. Figure S1**). Although this may entail a
considerable amount of time, we assert that this approach is the most effective means of
furnishing high-quality data. Consistent with this philosophy, we have incorporated a
functionality on the homepage which empowers any user to submit a DOI as a
recommendation for a study that could be absent from the DGRPool repository. If the DOI is
not in the database, it triggers the same automated scripts that were originally used to
incorporate the 125 studies. The corresponding study is then created on DGRPool, and its
metadata (authors, links, …) are automatically imported. Once a study has been created,
one of three possible labels can be assigned to describe the state of curation of a study: 1)
Submitted (default), when no curator is yet assigned to the study, 2) **Under curation**, when
a curator is assigned, and 3) **Curated** when all phenotyping data and metadata have been

curated, and the study received final approval by the curator. At this time, DGRPool hosts

125 studies, including 41 that have already been fully curated, 81 still under curation, and 3

under a submitted status given that the latter were used to test DGRPool's DOI feature. All

metadata of these three studies were correctly imported into DGRPool, but not the

associated phenotypes, which is also the case for a portion of the other 122 studies. Indeed,

in total, 74 studies have attached phenotyping data; 100% of the curated ones, and only

40% of the non-curated ones. Altogether, the total number of studies in DGRPool is currently

125, and we expect that this number will continue to grow upon its public release, along with

the number of curated studies.

Since the curation process is still ongoing, we will be referring to two different datasets in the

manuscript: 1) The **full dataset**, comprising **125** studies (independent of "curation" status),

and 2) the **curated dataset**, comprising **41** studies that already underwent tedious curation

and contributed about 500 phenotypes (see below). Of note, for all tools available on the

website, it is possible to run these on either all studies or (as is currently the default), only on

the curated studies.

For all of the curated studies, we carefully separated the data by sex when information on

sex-specific phenotypes was available, or we assigned it as *NA* when flies were sex-mixed,

when there was no information on sex, or when the phenotype is inherent to a population

(e.g. in the case of non-sexual chromosomal traits, like inversions). We also extracted this

information from the phenotyping data itself for the non-curated studies, when available, but

when not findable, it was set to *NA*, waiting for a more in-depth curation and careful reading

of the paper method's section. Therefore, across all 125 studies, this led to an overall

equilibrium between all represented sexes, with slightly more data for females and slightly

less unannotated data (**Figure 1B**). However, when focusing only on the 41 curated

datasets, the proportion of phenotypes without assigned sex (*NA*) dropped drastically to

~15%. This effect highlights the importance of tedious curation, which typically requires the

curator to read through the entire manuscript to understand the utilized experimental

protocols to select the appropriate sex, even if this information is not explicitly indicated in

the phenotyping data itself.

Upon data curation, the assigned curator(s) has to specify a few phenotypic categories for

each study, for example, "Metabolism", "Nutrition", or "Ageing" (**Figure 1C**). Since these

categories are browsable, it facilitates searching for a set of specific studies or linking the

studies together. Interestingly, the top annotated categories are either "Behaviour", "Life

History Traits", or "Resistance", which is consistent with historical behavioral and immune

studies conducted for *Drosophila* as a model organism[17–21]. The number of phenotypes per

study ranges from 1 to 89 (**Figure 1D, Supp Figure S2**), with a median of 5, and a mean of

11, revealing that while a low number of phenotypes (usually less than 10) tends to be the

norm, some studies aggregate lots of (often similar) phenotypes. An example of the latter is

Chaston et al., 2016[22] which investigated the impact of microbiota on nutritional traits. The

authors studied 76 different microbial taxa, whose effect was quantified independently,

generating a high number of phenotypes. Similarly, Dembeck et al., 2015[23] studied cuticular

hydrocarbon composition, considering 66 different cuticular components, while Vonesch et

al., 2016[24] studied organismal size traits, regrouping 28 morphological phenotypes such as

wing length or intraocular distance. In total, the 41 curated studies aggregate 312 M + 220 F

+ 132 NA = 664 sex-specific phenotypes, for a total of 500 unique phenotypes (~60%), while

the remaining non-curated studies provide another 57 M + 34 F + 267 NA = 358 sex-specific

phenotypes, for a total of 329 unique phenotypes (~40%).

Harmonization and formatting of phenotyping data

DGRP phenotyping data are often available as a supplemental data table, published along

with the main paper on the journal's website. Such data can also be stored on external

websites such as Figshare and, as already indicated, the corresponding file can be in

varying formats (i.e. Excel, text, or PDF), so it is challenging to entirely automate extraction

algorithms. Usually, the data are presented in the form of a matrix, with DGRP lines in rows

and phenotypes in columns. But sometimes, they can be in a more "exotic" format[25],

requiring a hands-on approach to format it appropriately. Also, the provided phenotyping

data are often not sufficiently self-informative and thus require in-depth reading of the

original manuscript to grasp abbreviations or identify the correct measurement units. These

are important, in particular, to assure reproducibility, but especially when aggregating

multiple studies together such that the scale of the values is similar. In DGRPool, we

therefore created a common matrix format to represent all studies, and we implemented a

"Unit" metadata for each phenotype. Then, for each study, we mapped all phenotypes to

their appropriate format and units (**Supplement Figure S3**). This part is fully accessible to

the curator, who can update or add any phenotype that would be missing, with their

corresponding units and meta-data description.

Another issue that we faced is that phenotypes are often averaged across multiple individual

flies and that the authors only provide these "Summary datasets". This can be problematic in

terms of reproducibility, since some figures may show boxplots or distributions of values for

each DGRP line, but these plots are not reproducible when only summary data is available

(i.e. means or medians). Fortunately, some studies do provide "raw datasets" which contain

multiple phenotypic values per DGRP line, often corresponding to replicate flies of the same

genotype. These values tend to be of much greater interest since they enable statistical
analyses and/or the computation of further summary statistics (not only mean or median, but
also the standard error of means or other often non-provided summary values).

Finally, for some studies, phenotyping data were not or no longer available from the journal's
website[26–28], which is often the journal's responsibility. However, in all cases, we were able
to contact the authors directly to recover the missing datasets.

To avoid such issues in the future, we have formulated a couple of good practice guidelines
for authors to facilitate and improve upon our and future datasets with the aim of enabling
harmonized and reproducible research. These guidelines are detailed in the Discussion
section of this manuscript. All curated datasets in DGRPool are formatted following these
guidelines (where possible), and phenotypes can now be easily downloaded in a standard
TSV format from a particular study, or from a phenotype page.

How to leverage these datasets by correlating phenotypes

Our formatting and harmonizing of all datasets now enables interesting cross-phenotype
analyses to generate new biological insights. One strategy to perform such analyses is to
download a summary table that contains all the phenotypes in a common format and that is
available from DGRPool's front page. However, we deemed this still insufficient as a
catalyzing resource, which is why we implemented tools to correlate existing and user-
submitted phenotypes with all the other phenotypes in DGRPool (**Supp. Figure S4**).

To better understand the structure of these phenotypes, and how they relate together, we
also computed a global visualization of the phenotype correlations across all curated studies
(**Figure 2A, Supp. Figure S5**). This revealed a clear trend, with phenotypes belonging to the
same study (within-study) correlating in general stronger than those from different studies
(**Figure 2B, Supp. Figure S6**). This is expected since a given study will typically contain
phenotypes that have been acquired for a given research topic, thus they will share
similarities. Another potential factor that could explain this similarity is the well-known "batch
effect". Indeed, phenotypes acquired in the same environment (same lab, technician,
reagents etc.) may sometimes show greater similarity than those acquired across different
labs and conditions[29]. The longevity phenotype however, assessed in at least six of the
studies in DGRPool[27,30–34] across different laboratories, illustrates that phenotype and its
measurements not only exhibits strong correlation across sexes (**Figure 2C**), but are also
sufficiently robust between laboratories (**Figure 2D**). This example illustrates both the high
robustness of results acquired in the context of DGRP studies (stable genotype, stable

environment) and the robustness of the phenotype itself, which highlights its potential high
heritability.

Cross-study correlations highlight phenotype relationships

Figure 2A also highlights interesting cross-study correlations. For example, we can see a
strong correlation between (Vonesch et al, 2016)[24] and (Grubbs et al, 2013)[35] which is
perhaps expected since both studies examine fly morphology traits. The first one measures
different organismal size traits such as eye interocular distance, or wing length, while the
second studies leg and antenna development from imaginal discs, resulting in measuring
phenotypes such as leg and bone length (**Figure 3A**). Similarly, three studies: (MacKay et
al, 2012)[1], (Richardson et al, 2012)[36] and (Huang et al, 2014)[2] are expectedly correlated
since all three investigate the influence of the *Wolbachia* endosymbiont. Another interesting
correlation is between (Chow et al., 2013)[37] and (Durham et al., 2014)[27] which both studied
fecundity and yield a cross-study correlation between remating proportion (Chow et al.,
2013)[37] vs. mean fecundity (Durham et al., 2014)[27] (**Figure 3B**). While potentially
conceptually obvious, this correlation suggests that females that are more likely to mate with
multiple males tend to also produce a greater number of eggs.

These examples were all generated using DGRPool phenotype correlation tools, supporting
our notion that it can leverage cross-study comparisons of multiple phenotypes to unveil
potentially new interesting phenotype interaction/associations. As a further proof of concept
and given society's strong interest in defining "healthy aging" determinants[38], we continued
investigating the "mean longevity" phenotype from (Arya et al, 2010)[30] and we selected 50
phenotypes that were significantly correlated with it at 25% FDR threshold (**Figure 3C**). The
hierarchical clustering clearly separated the phenotypes into three clusters: longevity-like
phenotypes (strongly correlated together), other longevity-associated phenotypes (correlated
with longevity), and phenotypes that seem antagonistic to longevity (anti-correlated
phenotypes). Among the phenotypes that positively correlated with longevity, some may be
expected such as starvation resistance[10,12,13] and oxidative stress resistance[7] but some are
less intuitive such as desiccation survival[10,11], certain cuticular components of the
epicuticle[39], and sleep duration[8,9], whose relationship to longevity is complex and still not
fully understood[40]. Although we cannot exclude spurious correlations, some of these more
surprising correlations appear biologically highly interesting, illustrating the capacity of
DGRPool to unveil new research avenues that seem worth exploring in greater molecular
detail. Also of interest is the group of often unexpected phenotypes that significantly anti-
correlates with longevity. These include locomotor activity[14], some other cuticular
components of the epicuticle[41], and food intake[15,16], suggesting that higher locomotor activity

or food intake is linked to reduced longevity. Whether these are direct or indirect links
remains unanswered, but appears worthy for a more in-depth scrutiny that is beyond the
scope of this paper.

Inversely, our analyses also revealed that some expected phenotype correlations could not
be detected. For example, in the context of metabolic energy expenditure[42], it might seem
intuitive that higher activity[43] would lead to greater food intake[44]. However, we did not
observe such a correlation. Similarly, higher activity levels may reflect increased mating
behaviour[37], but this was also not observed. These are just a few examples of several cases
where expected correlations did not materialize, collectively signifying that the genetic
architecture underlying such traits appears inherently complex.

These proof-of-concept examples demonstrate in our opinion the utility of the DGRP lines
and by extension DGRPool to serve as powerful tools that will facilitate the identification of
non-intuitive phenotype correlations and their underlying molecular basis as well as the
discovery of putative genotype to phenotype relationships, as detailed below.

From phenotypes to associated genotypes

The goal of most DGRP phenotyping studies is to eventually be able to link the phenotypes
to potentially causal variants or sets of variants[45]. In response, tools like DGRP2 GWAS
(http://dgrp2.gnets.ncsu.edu/)[1,2] have been put in place to accommodate geno-phenotype
relationship analyses.

With the goal of providing an integrative analytical environment, we therefore also
implemented GWAS tools within DGRPool, aiming to assist researchers with performing
GWAS analyses and interpreting the respective output. Specifically, we precalculated GWAS
analyses using PLINK2 on every existing phenotype in DGRPool (see **Methods**), thereby
considering all ~4M available DGRP variants while correcting for six main covariates
(*Wolbachia* status, and five major insertions)[2]. Consequently, users can browse the GWAS
results from any phenotype page on DGRPool (**Supp. Figure S7**). These comprise a
QQplot, for assessing the validity of the results, or potentially over-estimated p-values, and a
Manhattan plot, for visualizing the significant loci across the *D. melanogaster* genome. It also
displays a table with the top 1000 associated variants and allows the user to download the
table of all significant hits, at a p-value<0.01 threshold. The tool further runs an ANOVA
between the phenotype and the six main covariates to uncover potential confounder effects
(prior correction), which is displayed as a "warning" table to inform the user about potential
associations of the phenotype and any of the covariates. The interface also allows plotting
an independent boxplot for each variant to visualize the effect of each allele on the

phenotype. Importantly, for each variant, we also implemented a PheWAS button to visualize
the effect of a particular variant over all existing phenotypes in DGRPool. We also annotated
all the variants for impact (non-synonymous effects, stop-codon gain, etc.) and for potential
regulatory effect (transcription factor binding motif disruption), which should assist
researchers with prioritizing the variants in terms of potential consequences. For all of these
variants, we also provide links to their description in Flybase[4].

As mentioned, these GWAS results are available for each existing phenotype in DGRPool,
directly from the phenotype's page. But users can also submit their own phenotype files
(through the 'Tool' menu in the header), and visualize the same information for their own
phenotypes. The GWAS analysis runs in the backend and takes about 1-2 minutes before
displaying the results. This is implemented using a queuing system which prevents
overloading the server in case of a peak of users or requests.

After having run GWAS on all phenotypes in DGRPool, we observed the distribution of the
number of significant variants per phenotype at $p \leq 1 \times 10^{-5}$ threshold, which is an often used
arbitrary threshold for GWAS analyses in DGRP studies (**Figure 4A**). This threshold yields
on average 382 significant hits per tested phenotype, which is skewed due to some
phenotypes leveraging lots of results (median = 38). Conveniently, this threshold seems
sufficient for avoiding an over-abundant number of false positives, as is clearly visible from
other, less stringent, thresholds (**Supp. Figure S8**). Another very often used threshold, is the
Bonferroni one, which is much more stringent and varies from $p \leq 1.126 \times 10^{-8}$ (if considering
all 4M variants) to $p \leq 2.64 \times 10^{-8}$ (if removing variants with low MAF or high number of
missing values). In our results, the Bonferroni threshold ($p \leq 2.64 \times 10^{-8}$) yielded 73
significant hits on average (median = 0, **Supp. Figure S8**) which could be limiting for many
studies as it may mask potentially interesting variants that, while minimally contributing on an
individual basis, may collectively point to implicated pathways or biological processes[46].
Thus, while choosing an optimal threshold is in general challenging, our results indicate that
any threshold below 1×10^{-5} is reasonable given that at this threshold, the *p*-values appear
not over-estimated, as observed on the respective QQplots. We also verified if any variant is
over-selected across all phenotypes to uncover a possible bias in our studies (**Figure 4B**),
but we did not find such variants, even at different thresholding values (data not shown).

As a proof-of-concept and a validation of our approach, we compared our results with a
randomly selected study that identified several variants associated with survival to azinphos-

methyl at different doses (0.25, 0.5, 1, and 2 μg/ml)[26]. Of note, this study is available in

DGRPool under https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/studies/3. In particular, this study showed that

survival to azinphos-methyl is highly variable among DGRP lines, even at a "low" 0.25 μg/ml

dose. Importantly, the results of this study are reproduced in DGRPool as can be observed

on the respective phenotype's page (https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/20**, Figure 4C**). For

example, DGRPool's GWAS results are very similar to those of the study

(https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/20/gwas_analysis, **Figure 4D**) and show a strong

association at a 2R locus. Interestingly, the top variant we found, 2R:8072884 (p = 1.966 x

10^{-26}), a 509bp insertion polymorphism, is the *Accord* LTR insertion. It is annotated as

located upstream of the *Cyp6g1* gene and has a high likelihood to be the main causal

gene[47,48]. As described in the author's Ph.D. thesis[49], the minor allele at this variant —which

corresponds to NOT having the insertion— correctly genotypes eight out of nine susceptible

DGRP lines that are homozygous for the ancestral *Cyp6g1*[M] arrangement at this locus

(DGRP lines 091, 486, 642, 776, 802, 821, **843**, 852, and 857). The presence of the *Accord*

LTR insertion is associated with increased resistance to organophosphates, suggesting that

derived alleles of *Cyp6g1* confer organophosphate resistance in the DGRP (**Figure 4E**).

These results show that DGRPool is able to accurately reproduce results from existing

studies, and that new biological findings can be leveraged from its interactive results and

plots. Revisiting the same organophosphate study[26], the PheWAS page present in the

GWAS results shows that this top variant is not only significant at other doses, but that it is

also significant in the context of other studies, in particular one study on cuticular

hydrocarbon composition[23], and another study investigating *Drosophila* microbiota[22]. This

could help with fine-tuning putative causal variants, but also with uncovering potential

associations between certain phenotypes that in turn could enable studies aimed at

providing underlying genetic and molecular mechanisms.

Extreme phenotypes

After having collected and harmonized thousands of DGRP phenotypes, we investigated if

we could identify outliers amongst DGRP lines that would potentially bias phenotypic

associations. Indeed, if a particular DGRP line is repeatedly ranked in the extreme of all

phenotypes, it could be that there are unknown cofactors that make the line "weaker" in

general, or inversely. Although it is difficult to judge what phenotype is particularly

advantageous or disadvantageous due to the presence of potential trade-offs[50,51], we can

determine how often a DGRP line is in the top *or* bottom 15% of a given phenotype. By

focusing on phenotypes that are likely impacting overall viability, we ranked DGRP lines for

each associated phenotype. Upon ranking the DGRP lines, we calculated whether the rank

falls within the top or bottom 15% performers of the phenotype. We then assessed for each

DGRP line how often they are 'extreme' and divided this by the total number of phenotypes

in which the DGRP line has been included to obtain a "fraction of extremeness" (FoE).

Finally, we filtered for lines which had at least 50 phenotypic measures available to ensure

that our values were not driven by a low number of observations (**Figure 5A**). Looking

broadly, we observed a mild correlation of fraction of extremeness (FoE) across the sexes

(**Figure 5B**, Spearman's ρ = 0.3514, p < 1.57 x 10^{-5}). While this may indicate that

extremeness is a population-wide feature, it is not sufficiently profound to conclude that

DGRP lines are generally extreme in both sexes, which may only be the case for specific

DGRP lines.

Upon considering individual DGRP lines, we can observe to what extent they are extreme for

each individual phenotype. In **Figure 5C,** we show the most extreme and "moderate" (i.e.

least distinctive) DGRP lines for each sex using an adjusted fraction of extremeness for

plotting purposes in which lower scores represent DGRP lines with a high fraction of

extremeness. While females of DGRP_879 and males of DGRP_783 tend to be extreme in

some cases, for the majority of phenotypes they are considered moderate. Conversely,

females of DGRP_757 and males of DGRP_352 are more likely to be labeled as extreme.

These examples only represent extremeness for individual DGRP lines of a given sex,

however, their counterpart may not be *as* extreme or moderate. We therefore also looked for

DGRP lines which can be considered extreme in both females and males, and are

potentially more extreme on a population-wide basis. **Figure 5D** describes such populations

where the overall fraction of extremeness between males and females differed on average at

most 0.05. In these cases, DGRP_852 and DGRP_042 are more likely to be extreme across

sexes, which may be attributed to at least two factors. First, this may indicate that the

population is generally not healthy if they consistently display a low lifespan, or second, and

conversely, well-documented trade-offs of life history traits such as lifespan vs fecundity may

be strongly at play here. The former does not however seem to be the case, as shown in

Figure 5E. Both DGRP_852 and DGRP_042 generally display lifespan values around the

mean lifespan of all DGRP lines, suggesting that they are more likely extreme for other

phenotypes and are thus not by definition weak lines. However, DGRP_757 and DGRP_765

consistently display lower longevity in lifespan studies. These lines may therefore on the one

hand be of particular interest for those studying life history traits in an evolutionary context,

even though we did not observe strong lifespan and fecundity trade-offs across our

phenotype dataset. On the other hand though, it may be advisable not to include DGRP_757

and DGRP_765 when studying the genetic basis of these complex traits as their outlier

status may not reflect common genetic principles.

Discussion

There are many studies across organisms where collated phenotyping data has led to novel

insights[52,53]. Even though the *Drosophila* Genetic Reference Panel was formally released

more than ten years ago, the resulting phenotype data of over 100 studies has so far not

been combined into a single accessible resource. We anticipate that providing wider access

to this data, as driven by FAIR principles[5], will therefore facilitate our general understanding

of the relationship between genotypes and phenotypes.

We have previously shown that using a subset of this resource effectively enabled us to

establish a relationship between mitochondrial haplotypes and feeding behavior which we

experimentally validated[54]. Next to our own study, other studies have used a similar

approach and compared their results to already published phenotypes. For example, Wang

et al.[55] studied the resistance and tolerance of DGRP flies to the fungal pathogen

Metarhizium anisopliae (Ma549) and found that the host's defense to Ma549 was correlated

with its defense to the bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Pa14). But they also compared

this result to several previously published DGRP phenotypes including oxidative stress

sensitivity[56], aggression[57], nutritional scores[58], sleep indices[43], and others. Similarly, Zwarts

et al.[59] studied the size of the cerebral cortex and the mushroom bodies (MB). They showed

that these phenotypes were correlated with phenotypes from other studies like aggression[60]

and sleep[43]. Therefore, we believe that DGRPool will either aid with validating the findings of

a given study (i.e. higher bacterial resistance linked to overall resistance phenotypes) or by

placing a study's phenotype data into a wider context (for example, linking brain size to

behavioral phenotypes).

Moreover, having access to multiple studies studying similar phenotypes can also be of help

for meta-analyses and increased statistical power. In the case of longevity for example, there

are multiple studies that aggregated this phenotype, across similar or complementary DGRP

lines. Therefore, one could conduct a meta-GWAS analysis[61] by leveraging the replicates or

combining the different lines into a single dataset. This tends to be a challenging process

given the need for data harmonization and curation, which is exactly what we aimed to

address by establishing with DGRPool. Of course, since similar DGRP lines across

laboratories still have the same genotype, they should not be treated as biological replicates,

but phenotypes could be averaged across similar lines, which would reduce hidden

covariates such as laboratory adaptation or batch effects. Moreover, complementary lines

can be used to enhance power and potentially find more small-effect associations. Indeed,
researchers are increasingly advocating for collaboration and joining efforts to combine
resources[62] to enable more accurate, and reproducible results.

Our data collection and harmonization efforts have already enabled us to conduct some
interesting cross-study analyses, including an investigation into the presence of biases
stemming from outlier DGRP lines. Our "extremeness" analysis revealed that caution is
warranted when selecting DGRP lines for specific studies, because, while some DGRP lines
may be situated at the outer edge of the phenotypic spectrum by chance, DGRP_757 and
DGRP_765 generally display lower lifespans in longevity studies. It is important to note that
a shorter lifespan does not necessarily imply lower viability, as populations can still be
propagated healthily. However, a shorter lifespan may also result from an impaired
development[63] or developmental environment, which may confound the study of healthy
aging[64]. Consequently, researchers should consider excluding these extreme lines from their
experimental designs to prevent loss of power or potential covariate biases.

Furthermore, and beyond our current focus on DGRP lines, we may in the future also
consider adding standard *D. melanogaster* lines such as w1118, YWB, YWN or ORB to
DGRPool. This is because such lines have often been included as controls in DGRP
studies[34], and for most of these, genomic information is also available.

Finally, in order to sustain the value of the DGRP as a resource and to promote more
findings, we provide the following guidelines for future DGRP phenotyping studies:
● When available, report the raw datasets with values per fly. Optionally, but only in
addition, the summary datasets can be provided, with values averaged across flies.
● Provide the data as a separate Excel or text file (TSV/CSV) in the form of a matrix, with
DGRP lines in rows and phenotypes in columns. Avoid reporting the values in the form of
a PDF or an image, because it complicates data extraction afterward.
● Clearly define the abbreviations in the tables and the units used for all phenotypes, so
that the phenotyping dataset is self-explanatory and does not require an extended search
in the main manuscript.
● Report all DGRP lines in the first column of the phenotyping file, and the corresponding
sex in the second column (M, F, or NA), before all phenotypes. Be careful to use the
same format for all DGRP lines (e.g. DGRP_XXX).
● Pick a common format for all *NA* values. Whether reporting *NA*, or as an empty cell. But
avoid mixing different formats.

In conclusion, we propose that DGRPool has two primary purposes within the *Drosophila*
community and beyond. First, it can be used to evaluate potential associations between
phenotypes and contribute to understanding the genetic architecture underlying complex
traits. Second, it can serve as a catalyst for further research and inform broader validation
experiments, as exemplified in our previous work[54]. In the latter study, the validation of our
hypothesis would not have been feasible without a harmonized dataset of phenotype data,
as the connection between mitochondrial haplotypes and food intake would have remained
theoretical. To maximize the benefits of DGRPool, it should therefore remain subject to all
FAIR principles, which unfortunately are still too often only implemented in terms of "open"
and "sharing." In other words, when large amounts of data are made publicly available
without systematic curation or homogenization, data interoperability and reproducibility can
be highly problematic. DGRPool is in this regard a crucial initial step towards making DGRP
phenotyping data widely accessible and usable for the entire *Drosophila* research
community.

Methods

Data availability
All phenotyping data aggregated in DGRPool can be downloaded in a common format on
each phenotype page. In the "Download" section on the front page, we also provide four .tsv
files containing 1) All studies and their metadata (authors, citation, ...), 2) All phenotypes and
their metadata (name, description, unit, …), 3) All DGRP lines and their metadata (name,
bloomington accession, …), and 4) a global file with all numerical phenotypes across all
studies, formatted following our recommendations.
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All codes used to produce the figures of this manuscript are also available on our GitHub:
https://github.com/DeplanckeLab/DGRPool

Web application
The DGRPool web application is hosted on a virtual machine at EPFL. All compute-intensive
calculations (i.e. GWAS) are performed on an HPC within EPFL and results are then moved
to the virtual machine's local storage. The back-end is implemented with Ruby-on-Rails
(RoR) 7 and all data is stored in a PostgreSQL relational database. The front-end uses
different JavaScript libraries and is set to enable interactive usage. For instance, the
application implements bootstrap tooltips to display HTML texts within tooltips, plotly.js
v.2.16.1[29] to generate the scatter plots, bar plots and box plots , using *scattergl*, *bar* and *box*

modes respectively, or Jquery autocomplete for phenotype search combined with a SOLR

search engine running on the server side (used for the phenotype comparison tool).

Semi-automated referencing of studies and/or phenotypes

To submit a new study, any user can submit a DOI from the front page. Then, all metadata

associated with this study (authors, journal, date, …) are automatically imported from the

Crossref[65] API. When the study is created, it acquires the "Submitted" state, and

administrators are notified. Then, a curator is assigned to the study and needs to manually

verify all information. A specific curator page allows him/her to 1) edit the metadata, 2) edit

the categories associated with the study, or 3) add/remove/modify the phenotyping data and

edit their names/types/units.

Identifiers from GEO[66], ArrayExpress[67], or the Sequence Read Archive (SRA)[68] can be

associated manually with any study, for example for referencing additional gene expression

data that would be published along with the phenotyping data.

Phenotypes correlated with longevity

We computed the correlation of the "mean longevity" phenotype from (Arya et al, 2010)[30]

and selected 50 phenotypes that were significantly correlated with it using a 25% FDR

threshold. For this, we used the phenotype correlation tools available in DGRPool (result list

available at https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/1315/compute_correlation) which makes our

results reproducible and freely accessible, following the FAIR principles.

GWAS

GWAS analyses (whether pre-calculated, or using the web tool) use Plink2 v2.00a3LM (1 Jul

2021). It runs on all available variants in the DGRP database which is using the dm3

assembly (4'438'427 variants: 3'963'420 SNPs, 293'363 deletions, 169'053 insertions and

12'591 MNPs) with options "--glm --geno 0.2 --maf 0.05". We corrected the model for six

main covariates (*Wolbachia* status, and 5 major insertions) that were described in [2] and also

used on the DGRP2 website. Of note, these covariates are phenotypes, and thus are also

available as a separate, browsable study on DGRPool (https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/studies/17).

Extremeness

Fraction of extremeness was calculated for each phenotypic spectrum separately by ranking

the values with ties being assigned the minimum rank. We then calculated a cut-off to assign

ranks in the bottom or upper 15% of a phenotypic range. This rank cut-off was further

rounded up to be more inclusive on either end (i.e. if the cut-off was 1.2 or 1.8, the cut-off

would become 2). Phenotypes equal or lower than the cut-off were assigned -1, whereas

phenotypes equal to the max rank minus the cutoff or higher were assigned 1. Remaining

phenotypic values were assigned 0. DGRP lines with phenotypic values of either -1 or 1

were then considered extreme for a given phenotype.

To calculate the overall fraction of extremeness for each DGRP line, we counted the number

of times a DGRP line was assigned -1 or 1 and divided this by the total number of

phenotypes available for that particular DGRP line. For most of our analyses, we only

included DGRP lines for which at least 50 phenotypes were available unless stated

otherwise.

The adjusted fraction of extremeness was calculated by dividing the phenotypic ranking by

the max rank of a given phenotype. Values were adjusted with 1 minus the value if the value

was above 0.5 (e.g. if x = 0.91, the adjusted value is 1-0.91 = 0.09). Only adjusted fraction of

extremeness values below 0.15 are therefore considered extreme. As no rounding was

performed in this case, it is possible for DGRPs to be assigned -1 and labeled as extreme,

even though the DGRP line may have a value of 0.167. Further analysis shows that this

'violation' only takes place for 1.1% (417 out 36,753) of the observations. At a *per* DGRP

view, this would amount to less than 1 per 50 phenotypes, the cut-off for the number of

phenotypes which a line needs to adhere to in order to be included in our analysis.

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Author contributions

RB and BD initiated the project. VG, RB and BD wrote the article. RR implemented the
automatic pipeline to retrieve phenotypic data from articles. VG and ER curated the studies.
FPAD designed and implemented the web application and its database. FPAD designed and
set up the unified format to represent phenotype data. FPAD and VG implemented the
different tools (GWAS, PheWAS, Correlation). VG tested the web application extensively.
VG and RB performed supporting analyses (e.g. GWAS, extremeness analysis).

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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 Figures

Figure 1. General content of the DGRPool web tool. A. Pubmed search on "*Drosophila*
DGRP" terms unveiled 131 results from 2012 to 2023 (search made on March 2023). **B.** Sex
of the DGRP lines used across all 125 studies (left) and 41 curated studies (right), for each
phenotype. Studies have only been curated up to study 41 at the time of writing. **C.** Number
of studies per phenotype category. Studies can be assigned to multiple categories. **D.**
Number of phenotypes per study and per sex. Studies without attached phenotypes were not
plotted. Of note, a given phenotype can be measured for different sexes and thus counted
multiple times.

Figure 2. Within- and cross-study phenotype correlations. A. Spearman's correlation of
all phenotypes available in the 41 curated studies. Of note, we separately computed the
phenotype correlations when data per sex were available (M, F or NA), and we restricted the
computation to quantitative (non-categorical) phenotypes. Phenotypes are grouped by study
(colored box at the bottom of the plot). **B.** Absolute value of the Spearman's correlation of
pairs of phenotypes that originated from the same study (within-study) and those that
originated from two different studies (cross-study). Of note, displayed values are median.
Mean values are 0.099 for cross-study, and 0.260 for within-study. Again, we restricted the
calculation to the 41 curated studies. **C.** Correlation of two longevity phenotypes from the
same study (Arya et al, 2010)[30], revealing a strong correlation between Female (F) and Male
(M) longevity. **D.** Correlation of two phenotypes from different studies: mean lifespan
(Durham et al, 2014)[27] and mean longevity (Arya et al, 2010)[30]. Of note, both the C and D
plots were generated using the "phenotype correlation" tool in DGRPool.

Figure 3. Phenotype correlations contribute new biological insights. A. Correlation of
mean femur length (Grubbs et al., 2013)[35] vs. mean head width (Vonesch et al., 2016)[24]
showing the significant cross-study association of organismal size traits. **B.** Correlation of
remating proportion (Chow et al., 2013)[37] vs. mean fecundity (Durham et al., 2014)[27]. **C.** 50
phenotypes correlated with longevity (Arya et al, 2010)[30] at a 25% FDR threshold, revealing
three main groups of phenotypes: lifespan phenotypes (middle rows), other correlated
phenotypes (bottom rows) and anti-correlated phenotypes (top rows). Of note, both the A
and B plots were generated using the "phenotype correlation" tool in DGRPool.

Figure 4. Overview of GWAS results across phenotypes and one case study. A.
Distribution of the number of significant variants after a GWAS, for each phenotype available
in DGRPool. Of note, all values >1000 have been set to 1000, for easier visualization. **B.** For
each variant, we plotted the number of times it was significantly associated with a phenotype
(y-axis = number of occurrences). It is worth noting that we chose a Manhattan plot for
representing this information, but this is not a "real" GWAS Manhattan plot. **C.** Case study on
survival to azinphos-methyl exposure (Battlay et al., 2016)[26], here to a 0.25 µg/ml dose. This
plot was extracted from the phenotype's page on DGRPool at
https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/20. **D.** Manhattan plot (taken from DGRPool's result page
https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/20/gwas_analysis) showing the association of variants to
"survival at 0.25 µg/ml dose" phenotype. **E.** Boxplot (taken from DGRPool's result page
https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/phenotypes/20/gwas_analysis), showing the effect of the top variant,
2R:8072884, which is a long insertion.

Figure 5. Analysis of extremeness among DGRP lines across 40 phenotypes. A.
Fraction of extremeness of a given DGRP line. DGRP lines are assigned as 'extreme' in a
phenotype when they are in the top or bottom 15% of the phenotypic spectrum. Phenotypes
were selected based on the curated studies which had the following categories assigned to
them: Life history traits, Immunity, Toxicity, Resistance, Fecundity, Aging. DGRP lines were
included if they had at least 50 phenotypic measures. **B.** Scatter plot for the fraction of
extremeness of DGRP lines. On the x-axis, the fraction of extremeness is plotted for
females, whereas males are plotted on the y-axis. **C.** Most extreme and moderate DGRP
lines per sex. On the x-axis, the adjusted fraction of extremeness is provided. Individual
fractions of extremeness per phenotype were retrieved for each DGRP line. The fraction was
adjusted by 1 minus the fraction of extremeness if the fraction of extremeness was above
0.5. Because extremeness can range from 0 to 0.15 or 0.85 to 1, we adjusted the fraction of
extremeness for plotting purposes. DGRP lines with a low adjusted fraction of extremeness
are therefore more extreme, whereas a high adjusted fraction of extremeness is
representative of more moderate DGRP lines. **D.** Extreme and moderate DGRP line
pairings. On the x-axis, the adjusted fraction of extremeness is provided. Extreme and
moderate line pairings were retrieved by searching for DGRP lines for which the fraction of
extremeness between females and males was not greater than 0.05 while still having the
highest and lowest average fraction of extremeness (across sex). **E.** Looking at phenotypes
from Figure 2D marked as longevity/lifespan, for DGRP lines which are in the top 5 of
fraction of extremeness for each respective sex, including DGRP_852 and DGRP_042 (red
shades) from **5D**. We specifically highlight DGRP_757, DGRP_765 in blue shades to show
that they are across multiple studies in the lower end of the lifespan as is expected given
that the lifespan trait is robust across studies. Similarly, DGRP_320 shows a trend in which it
displays above average lifespan. Other extreme DGRP lines which were in each respective
top 5 are displayed in gray.

Supplement Figures

Supplemental Figure S1. **Screenshot from the curator's view for a given study - Metadata section.** This screenshot shows the metadata section of the editing page for a study, where the curator can edit any of the fields. We expect the curator to set a description (short abstract) for the study, and associate some categories. The curator can also deactivate a phenotype if he/she considers that it is not a proper phenotype (like the number of replicates). Once the curation is done, the "Status" field can be changed to "Validated", which signifies that the curation process is finished, allowing the study to be widely visible to the users.

Supplemental Figure S2. **Number of phenotypes per study.** Studies have only been curated up to study 41 at the time of writing. Studies without attached phenotypes were not plotted. We here disregard the sex and thus count the unique phenotypes irrespective of the available sex associated with them. The 41 curated studies have 500 different phenotypes (~60%), while the remaining (S42-S125) studies provide another 329 phenotypes (~40%).

Supplemental Figure S3. **Screenshot from the curator's view for a given study - Phenotype section.** This screenshot shows the phenotype section of the editing page for a study, where the curator can create or update the phenotyping data associated with the study. Here, the data is from (Huang et al, 2020)[31], taken as an example study. It is divided into 4 columns (from left to right): 1) dataset type (raw or summary), 2) phenotypes, 3) DGRP lines, and 4) actions. If the curator submits or updates a phenotype, a parsing script is then run to check the data format, and then the data is updated in the DGRPool database. For each study, the curator can submit, update or delete a unique summary dataset, containing summary data for each DGRP line (for e.g. mean or median values). The curator can also submit multiple raw datasets, if the raw data is available for this study. Raw data means that the phenotyping data is not summarized, i.e. there are multiple values for the same DGRP line (e.g. because of replicate flies). **Note:** Gray phenotypes are deactivated phenotypes, i.e. not treated as real phenotypes (here, it is a block number for each fly).

Supplemental Figure S4. **Screenshot from the phenotype correlation tool result page.** This screenshot shows the results obtained after running the phenotype vs phenotype correlation tool, available directly from a phenotype page, by clicking the "Compute Correlation" button. Of note, there is also the possibility to run this tool from the "Tool" section displayed on the banner of the DGRPool website on any user-submitted phenotype file.

Supplemental Figure S5. Spearman's correlation of all phenotypes available in the 41 curated studies. Here, we applied a binary coloring using a fixed threshold to better visualize the correlations. All correlations above abs(Spearman's ⍴) > 0.3 are shown in black (therefore anti-correlated phenotypes are also in black), the others are in white.

Supplemental Figure S6. Comparison of correlation within and cross-study. We calculated the absolute value of the Spearman's correlation of pairs of phenotypes that originated from the same study (within-study) and those that originated from two different studies (cross-study). Of note, displayed values are median. Mean values are 0.170 for cross-study, and 0.287 for within-study. These values are calculated across all phenotypes (125 studies).

Supplemental Figure S7. Screenshot from the GWAS result page. This screenshot shows the results obtained after running the GWAS analysis, available directly from a phenotype page, by clicking the "GWAS" button. Of note, there is also the possibility to run this tool from the "Tool" section displayed on the banner of the DGRPool website on any user-submitted phenotype file.

845 **Supplemental Figure S8. Distribution of the number of GWAS hits per phenotype depending**
846 **on the significance threshold.**

847 **Tables**

			DGRPool	**DGRP2**
	REFERENCE		This study	(Mackay et al., 2012) (Huang, Massouras, et al., 2014)
DATA	*DGRP lines*		341	205
	DGRP studies		125 (41 fully curated)	12
	Phenotypes		935	31
	Gene Expression data		External links	✓
TOOLS	**GWAS**	*Calculated on all phenotypes*	✓	
		User upload	✓	✓
		Method	Plink2	FastLMM
		Covariates	*Wolbachia* + 5 Insertions	*Wolbachia* + 5 Insertions
		Boxplot of REF vs ALT	✓	
		PheWAS *of top variants*	✓	
	Phenotype correlation	*Calculated on all phenotypes*	✓	
		User upload	✓	
WEB	*URL*		https://dgrpool.epfl.ch/	http://dgrp2.gnets.ncsu.edu/
	Backend		Ruby-on-rails + PostgreSQL	NA
	Frontend		Javascript, Plotly	NA
FEAT.	Curation system & tools		✓	
	Publish new studies		✓	
	Interactive plots		✓	

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Table 1. **Comparison of the two currently available web portals organizing DGRP phenotyping**
data. This table compares different features available in DGRPool, with DGRP2, the current main
resource for DGRP data. It separates the features into 1) **Data**, which summarizes the available
phenotyping data, 2) **Tools**, which lists the available tools and options, mainly GWAS, PheWAS and
phenotype correlation, 3) **Web**, which describes the website itself, and 4) **Additional features**, that
are available in DGRPool, such as the curation system, the possibility to publish new studies and the
interactive plots.