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Optimization of Spectral Library Size Improves DIA-MS Proteome Coverage

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40 Running title: Optimization of Spectral Library Size for DIA

41 Keywords: Data-independent acquisition; protein identification; Pan-human library; Spectral
42 library optimization.

43

44 **Abstract**

45 Efficient peptide and protein identification from data-independent acquisition mass
46 spectrometric (DIA-MS) data typically rely on an experiment-specific spectral library with a
47 suitable size. Here, we report a computational strategy for optimizing the spectral library for a
48 specific DIA dataset based on a comprehensive spectral library, which is accomplished by *a*
49 *priori* analysis of the DIA dataset. This strategy achieved up to 44.7% increase in peptide
50 identification and 38.1% increase in protein identification in the test dataset of six colorectal
51 tumor samples compared with the comprehensive pan-human library strategy. We further applied
52 this strategy to 389 carcinoma samples from 15 tumor datasets and observed up to 39.2%
53 increase in peptide identification and 19.0% increase in protein identification. In summary, we
54 present a computational strategy for spectral library size optimization to achieve deeper
55 proteome coverage of DIA-MS data.

56

57 **Introduction**

58 Data-independent acquisition mass spectrometry (DIA-MS) based proteomics coupled with
59 targeted data analysis is playing an increasing role in biomedical studies (1), owing to its high
60 degree of reproducibility, quantitative accuracy, and high throughput (2, 3). Both spectral
61 library-free and library-based strategies are being applied to analyze DIA-MS data (4). While the
62 library-free strategies (5, 6) could identify peptides directly from DIA-MS itself without the
63 requirement of an external spectral library, the depth of proteomic coverage is limited at the
64 moment (7-9). The more widely adopted strategy is based on building a spectral library using the

65 corresponding data-dependent acquisition mass spectrometry (DDA-MS) datasets of the samples
66 of interest (10), or a pre-built library from public data repositories (11-14).

67 The size of the spectral library has a direct impact on the performance of DIA-MS data
68 analysis (15). A larger number of DDA-MS runs, particularly from fractionated samples, leads to
69 a more comprehensive spectral library enabling potential detection of a larger number of
70 peptides and proteins from the DIA-MS datasets (15). However, it also generates a larger search
71 space and reduces the statistical power to detect true positives (16, 17). Extra concerns are raised
72 where the proteins and peptides within the library may not be specific to a particular specimen,
73 potentially introducing more false positives (18). Other drawbacks include the prolonged
74 computational time which is approximately linearly correlated with the size of the library (19),
75 and distortion of retention time (RT) distribution for alignment (20).

76 The spectral library size could be optimized to improve DIA-MS performance. The Van
77 Eyk group have reported that applying a comprehensive fractionated library led to higher number
78 of protein/peptide identifications from DIA-MS datasets than un-fractionated libraries with
79 limited sizes (15). Similar results have been reported by Uszkoreit group, where they found
80 larger library led to higher peptide and protein identification but the increase was minimal when
81 the library is comprehensive enough (21). The combination of an in-house built library with
82 external libraries from public data improves DIA data analysis performance (17). Inclusion of
83 internal library extracted from DIA files also improved peptide and protein identification (9). On
84 the other hand, it has also been observed that libraries of very large size led to higher FDRs in
85 the DIA-MS analyses and hence compromises the identification results (17). It was further
86 demonstrated that, even within the same spectral library, controlling the confidence of peptide
87 identifications to exclude redundant peptides could improve peptide and protein identification

88 results (16). Although these studies have repetively reported the importance of the size of
89 spectral library size, a systematic evaluation and optimization of library size is still lacking.

90 Here, we propose a two-step strategy called subLib to generate the experiment-specific
91 subset libraries using *a priori* analysis of the DIA data to improve the proteomic coverage. The
92 strategy to derive a subset library of optimal size was further applied to analyze the DIA data of
93 15 human tumors.

94

95 **Materials and Methods**

96 **Colorectal cancer dataset**

97 To evaluate our strategy, the DIA-MS datasets were collected from a colorectal cancer
98 proteomic project in our group (Xiang *et al.*, manuscript in preparation). Briefly, 286 FFPE
99 samples from 44 colorectal cancer patients were processed into peptides with a pressure cycling
100 technology (PCT)-based protocol as described in the previous study (22). They were subjected to
101 data acquisition on the nanoflow EASY-nLC™ 1200 System coupled with Q Exactive HF
102 hybrid Quadrupole-Orbitrap in DIA mode over a gradient of 60 min using 24 DIA windows
103 spanning from 400 Da to 1200 Da.

104 **Fifteen datasets of multiple tumor types**

105 A total of 389 tumor tissue samples from 15 tumor types were collected. The gastric
106 carcinoma (n=30) and thyroid carcinoma (n=30) samples were collected from the First Affiliated
107 Hospital College of Medicine, Zhejiang University. The prostate carcinoma (n=30) and bone
108 carcinoma (n=30) samples were collected from the Second Affiliated Hospital College of

109 Medicine, Zhejiang University. The liver carcinoma (n=33) and leukemia (n=27) samples were
110 collected from Wuhan Union Hospital. The ovarian carcinoma (n=30) samples were collected
111 from Zhejiang Cancer Hospital. The cervical carcinoma (n=28) samples were collected from
112 Shengjing Hospital of China Medical University. The lung adenocarcinoma (n=32), gallbladder
113 carcinoma (n=20), pancreatic adenocarcinoma (n=20), myosarcoma (n=19), clear cell renal cell
114 carcinoma (CCRCC, n=20), diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL, n=19), and papillary
115 thyroid cancer (PTC, n=21) were collected from Harbin Medical University Cancer Hospital. All
116 samples were approved by the ethics committees of their respective hospitals. The tissue samples
117 were prepared with PCT-based tissue lysis and protein digestion protocol (22) and analyzed by
118 DIA-MS, as listed in Table S1. Ethics approvals for this study were obtained from the Ethics
119 Committee or Institutional Review.

120 **Proteomic data analysis workflow**

121 The raw DIA-MS data files were converted to mzXML format using the msConvert tool in
122 ProteomeWizard (23). The DIA-MS datasets were analyzed using the open-source software
123 OpenSWATH (version 2.4.0) (24) with the following criteria: common internal reference
124 peptides (CiRTs) of each tissue were applied respectively for retention time alignment; m/z
125 extraction window was set to 30 ppm, and RT extraction window was set between 200-800
126 seconds, depending on different gradients of the DIA-MS module (Table S1). PyProphet (version
127 2.1.3) (24) was used for statistical validation via setting the global cutoff of FDR as 0.01 at both
128 peptide and protein levels. Protein inference was performed as described previously (25). Unless
129 otherwise mentioned, the software parameters were kept the same for all the analyses in this
130 study.

131 **Subset library generation**

132 We proposed a two-step strategy to take a subset of the spectral library. Firstly, the public
133 library is taken to analyze the candidate DIA-MS dataset using the OpenSWATH workflow.
134 Different FDR cutoffs were set to generate a list of identification results. Afterwards, they were
135 matched against the public library to generate experiment-specific subset libraries.

136 In this study, we set the DIA Pan-Human Library (DPHL) (12) as the baseline library to
137 analyze the colorectal cancer dataset containing 284 DIA-MS data files. FDR cutoffs were set at
138 0.01, 0.02, 0.03, 0.04, 0.05, 0.06, 0.07, 0.08, 0.09, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5 and 0.6 (n=15), to
139 generate 15 identification results. After matching with DPHL, OpenSwathDecoyGenerator.exe in
140 OpenMS (version2.4.0) was applied to generate equal amount of decoys in mutated fashion. The
141 resultant subset library is a combination of DPHL subsets and decoys.

142

143 **Results and Discussions**

144 **Generation of the subset library by refining DPHL**

145 For data comprehensiveness and accessibility, DPHL built from 16 human tissue types
146 containing 359,627 peptide precursors and 14,782 protein groups was used as the baseline
147 spectral library. A DIA-MS dataset of 286 colorectal cancer sample cohort was analyzed to
148 derive the initial identifications. We set the FDR cut-off for peptide precursor and protein
149 identification to 0.01, 0.02, 0.03, 0.04, 0.05, 0.06, 0.07, 0.08, 0.09, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5 and 0.6
150 (a total of 15 tests), then retrieved the resultant subset libraries at each FDR cutoff. The four
151 representative DIA-MS data files (sample A1-A4) within the cohort and two external colorectal
152 cancer DIA-MS data files (sample B1 and B2) were taken to evaluate the identification
153 performance of each subset library (Figure 1A). The number of identified peptides shows a

154 generally decreasing trend as the FDR cutoff increases (Figure 1C), with the exceptions when
155 FDR increases from 0.01 to 0.02, and from 0.04 to 0.05. The number of identified proteins
156 increased as the FDR cut-off increased from 0.01 to 0.05, and gradually decreased afterward,
157 with a drastic decline when the cutoff was beyond 0.1 (Figure 1D). This is not unexpected since
158 the peptides identified with high FDR are more likely absent in the sample at the detection limit.
159 As the library size increased, the negative effect prevailed. The best result was obtained from the
160 library with a FDR cutoff of 0.05. The optimal library was composed of 85,655 peptide
161 precursors, 62,390 peptides, and 6,448 protein groups, leading to the identification of 29,979
162 peptide precursors and 4,418 protein groups, respectively. This optimized library led to 44.7%
163 and 38.1% increase of peptide precursors and protein groups, respectively, compared with the
164 results by the unfiltered DPHL (Figure S1). The subset library with the FDR cutoff of 0.05 was
165 the best subset library which was hence adopted for further evaluation. The DIA files used for
166 library size optimization from samples A1-A4 led to similar data to those from independent
167 samples (B1 and B2), suggesting that the library size optimization is generic and applicable to
168 DIA files of the same tissue type.

169 **Adding unidentified peptide precursors to the subset library sacrificed identification**

170 To check if unidentified peptide precursors in a spectral library would affect the DIA-MS
171 proteome coverage, we randomly generated nine sets of DPHL peptides that were excluded from
172 the subset library (defined as “unidentified peptides”), with precursor number equivalent to n%
173 of the subset library (n=10, 20, ..., 90), and combined them with the subset library peptides
174 (Figure 1B). When applying the reconstructed spectral libraries to analyze the test DIA dataset, a
175 steady decrease of identified peptides and proteins was observed as more unidentified precursors

176 were included (Figure 1E, F), with the highest proteome coverage coming from the library with
177 no unidentified peptides, summing up to 29,712 peptide precursors and 4,433 protein groups.

178 We also replaced the unidentified peptides to *in silico* generated decoy peptides and
179 repeated the above analyses. Peptide/protein identifications decreased as the computational
180 peptide proportions increase from 0% to 60%. Further addition of decoys would, however, subtly
181 increase protein identifications (Figure 1G, H). The highest proteome coverage came from the
182 library with no decoy interferences, summing up to 19,322 peptide precursors and 3,461 protein
183 groups. We hence concluded that any false positive interference in the library would suppress the
184 peptide/protein identification.

185 **Adding subset library peptides to interferences improves identification**

186 We then conducted a backward analysis by adding increasing proportions of subset library
187 peptides to the unidentified peptides (Figure 1B). The spectral library composed by precursors of
188 unidentified peptides solely (n=0) could not identify any peptide or protein in the DIA-MS data.
189 The numbers of identification of peptides and proteins exhibited almost marked increase as n
190 increased (Figure 1I, K). Together with the above results, they validated the effectiveness of
191 setting FDR cutoff as 0.05 to eliminate false positive targets.

192 **Applying subLib to DIA-MS of 15 tumor sample types**

193 We named the library generation strategy “subLib” and further applied it to the fifteen DIA
194 datasets of different types of cancer samples, including bone, cervical, DLBCL, gallbladder,
195 gastric, leukemia, liver, lung, myosarcoma, ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, PTC, and CCRCC
196 (Figure 2A). Peptide/protein identifications using the subset library exceeded that from using
197 DPHL in most cases (Figure 3A), and over 99% of the protein identifications were overlapped in

198 every cancer type (Figure S2). We collectively found that the subLib strategy outperformed the
199 DPHL strategy in all cancer types, with the most prominent increase from PTC carcinoma
200 samples (19.02% increase in protein groups and 36.17% increase in peptide precursors, Figure
201 2B). Of note, the discrimination ability to separate the targets from decoys led to a marked
202 increase (Figure 2C), further validating that the subLib strategy can reduce false positives in
203 clinical proteomic data. Missing values were equivalent between DPHL and the subLib strategy
204 (Figure 3B), and the protein quantification results were in good accordance as well with Pearson
205 correlation ratios all over 0.92 across all the tumor tissue types (Figure 3B), suggesting that
206 decreasing library sizes by adjusting FDR values does not impair protein identification nor
207 quantification. Moreover, different tumor types could be well resolved using the thus generated
208 protein matrix (Figure 2D). These results indicate that this subLib strategy could be generically
209 used for DIA data generated from different samples.

210 **Concluding remarks**

211 In this study, we present a computational strategy to optimize library size for DIA data
212 analysis. In our DIA data of human tissue specimens, setting FDR to 0.05 enabled effective
213 spectral library subsetting. The application of this strategy to DIA data from 15 tumor types
214 further consolidated this conclusion. This subLib strategy reduced false positive identifications,
215 increased peptide and protein identifications, and generated protein data matrix quantitatively
216 comparable to the DIA analysis with unfiltered library. In conclusion, the subLib strategy for
217 DIA spectral library size optimization boosts proteome identifications of DIA-MS data.

218

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226

227 **Conflict of interest statement**

228 The research group of Tiannan Guo is partly supported by Pressure Biosciences Inc, which
229 provided access to advanced sample preparation instrumentation. T.G is shareholder of Westlake
230 Omics Inc. W.G. is employee of Westlake Omics Inc. The remaining authors declare no
231 competing interests.

232

233 **Data Availability**

234 The raw data and peptide/protein matrixes were deposited in ProteomeXchange Consortium
235 (<https://www.iprox.org/>). Project ID: IPX0002439000 and IPX0001981000.

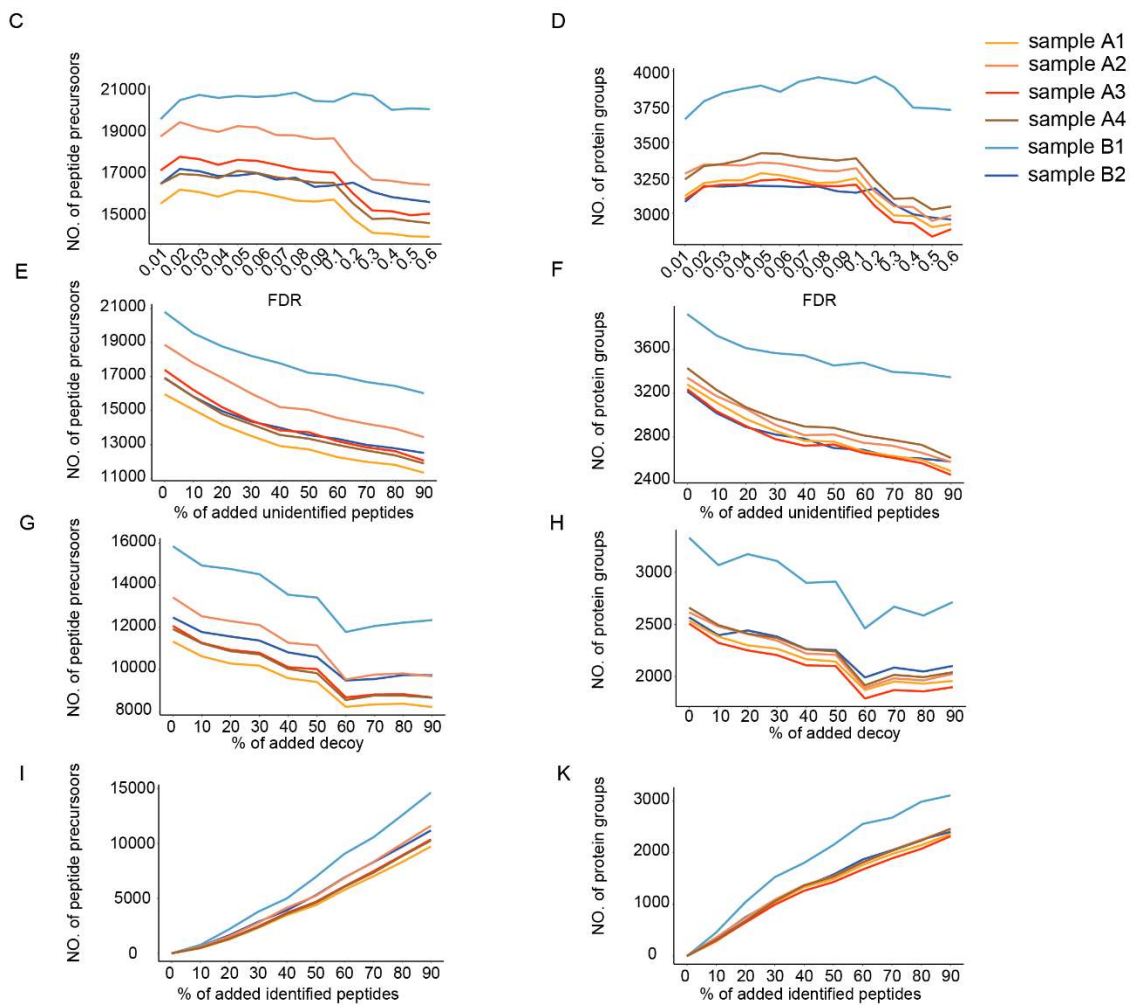
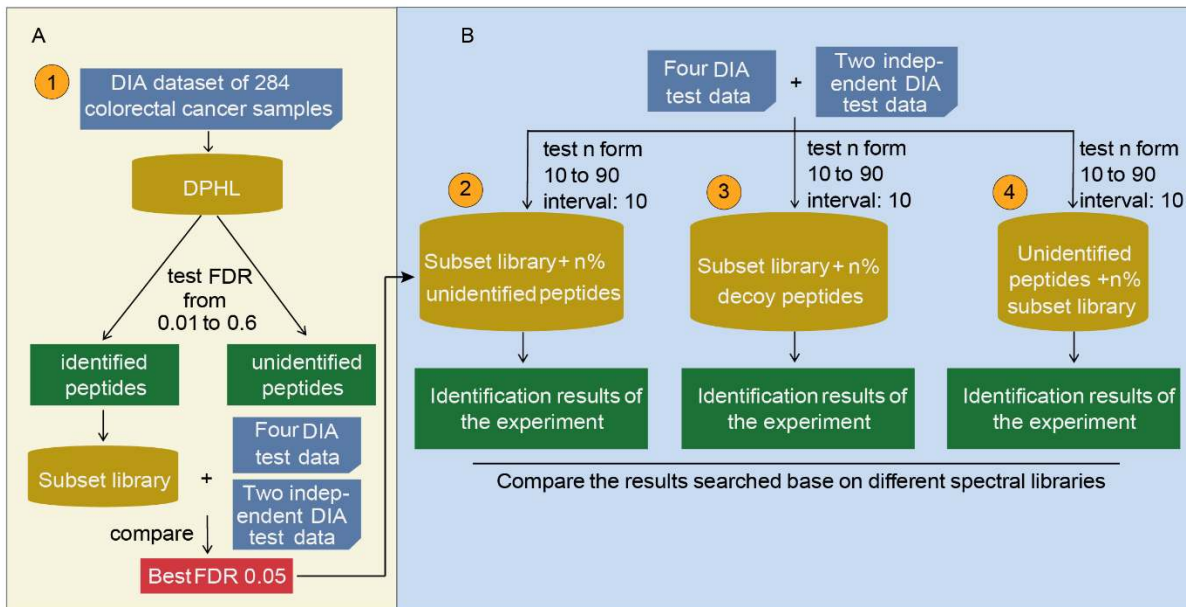
236

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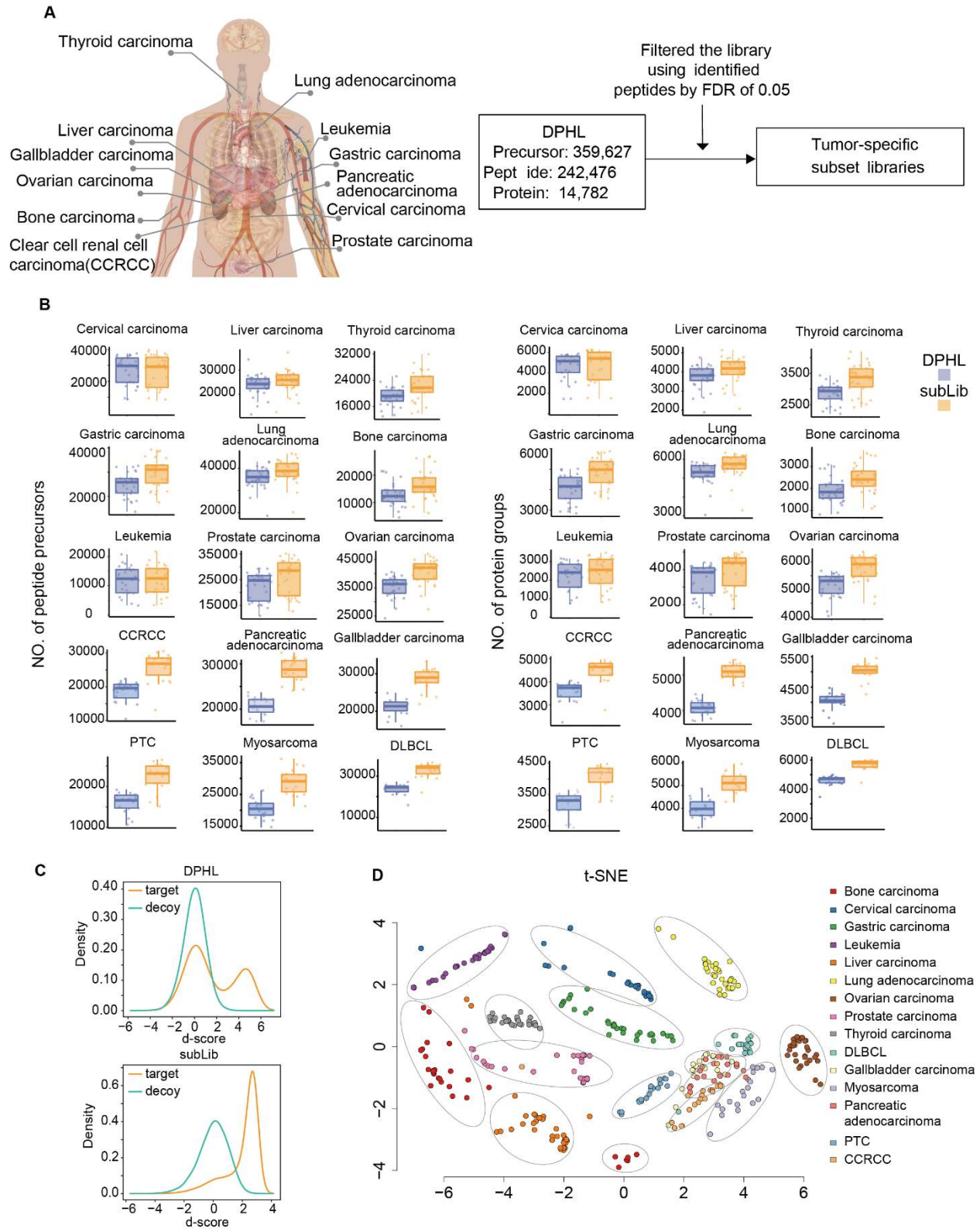
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321 **Figure 1. Optimizing DPHL in the DIA dataset of colorectal cancer.** (A) The workflow of
322 spectral library optimization. Step 1: Select the best FDR for refining the subset library from the
323 public DPHL library. The subset library refined from DPHL with FDR of 0.05 is considered as
324 the optimal subset library, which was used as a primary optimized subset spectral library in this
325 study. Step 2: Evaluate the performance of the spectral library consisting of the subset library
326 and n% unidentified peptides. Step 3: Evaluate the performance of spectral library consisting of
327 subset library and n% decoy peptides. Step 4: Evaluate the performance of spectral library
328 consisting of unidentified peptides and n% peptides from the subset library. By comparing all the
329 identification results, the subset library refined from DPHL with FDR of 0.05 is the best
330 experiment-specific spectral library for DIA data analysis. The numbers of identified peptides
331 (C) and proteins (D) based on the subset libraries which were refined from DPHL at nine
332 different FDRs. The numbers of identified peptides (E) and proteins (F) based on the spectral
333 libraries consisting of subset library and n% unidentified peptides. The numbers of identified
334 peptides (G) and proteins (H) based on the spectral libraries consisting of the subset library and
335 n% decoy peptides. The numbers of identified peptides (I) and proteins (K) based on the spectral
336 libraries consisting of unidentified peptides and n% peptides from the subset library.

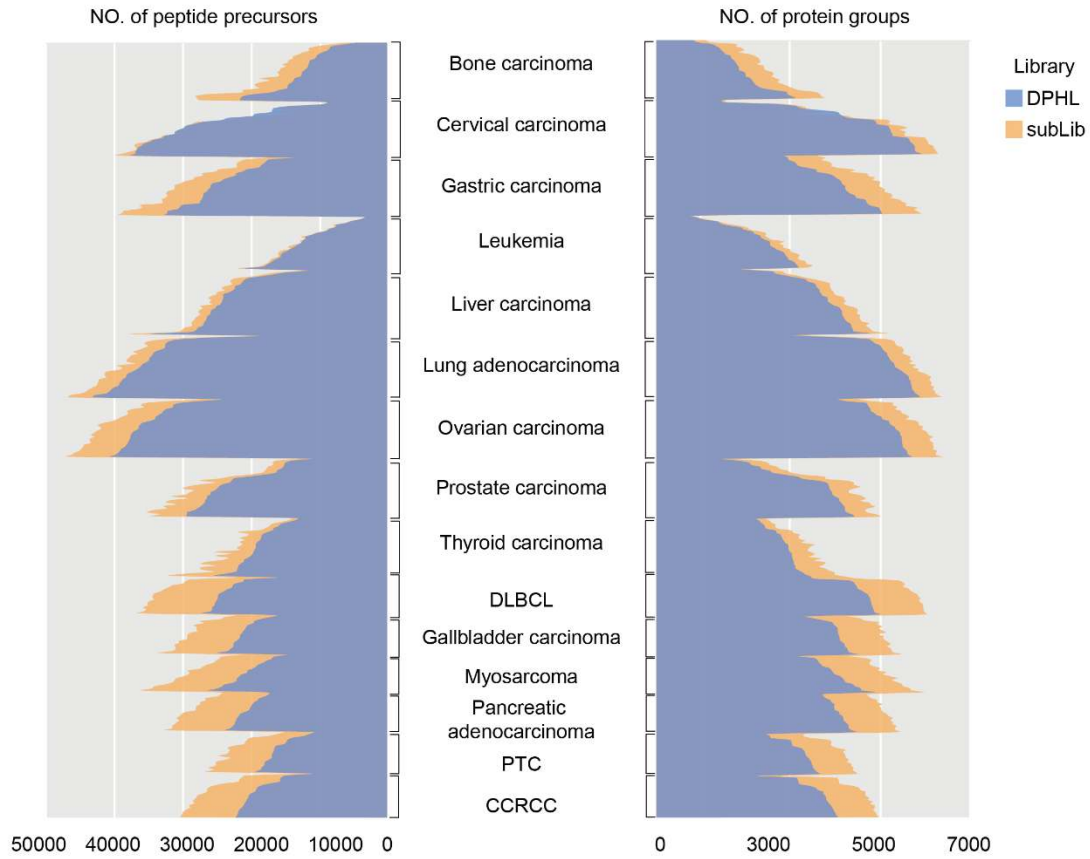


338 **Figure 2. Tumor-specific subset library improves the identifications compared with DPHL.**

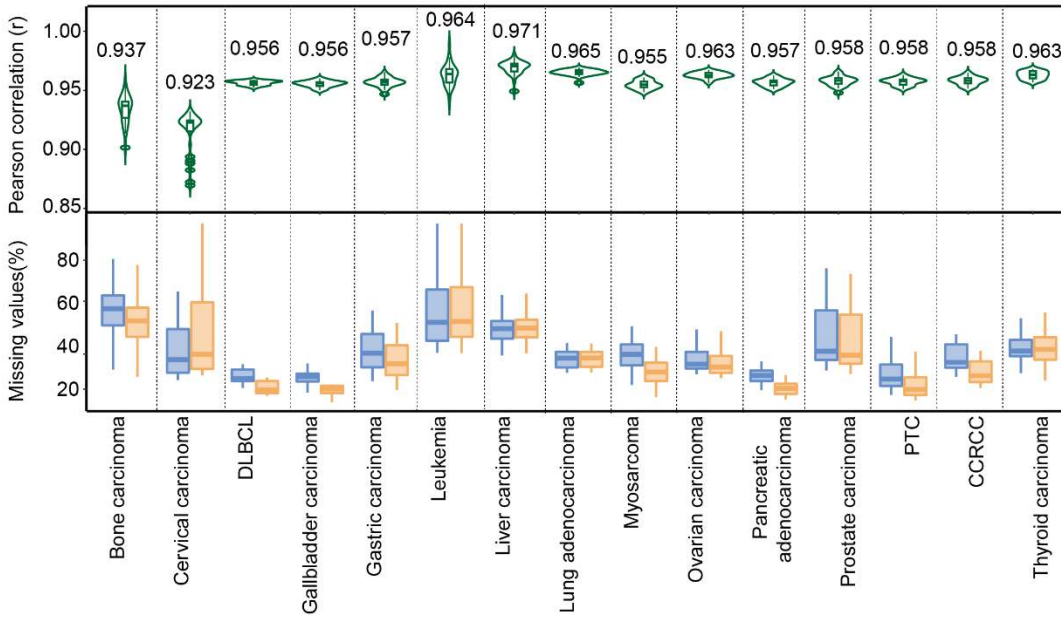
339 (A) The workflow of the subLib strategy. (B) The number of peptides and proteins identified
340 base on tumor-specific subLib and DPHL in 15 tumor types. (C) The distribution of
341 discrimination score (d-score) of the target and decoy of the subset library and DPHL. (D) The
342 tSNE plot shows the samples are well resolved by tissue type.

343

A

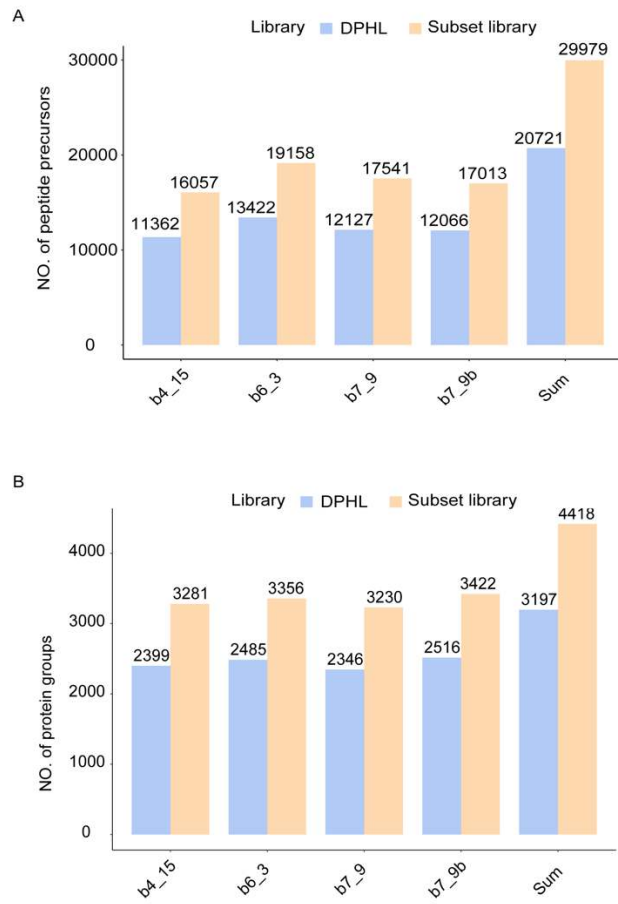


B



344

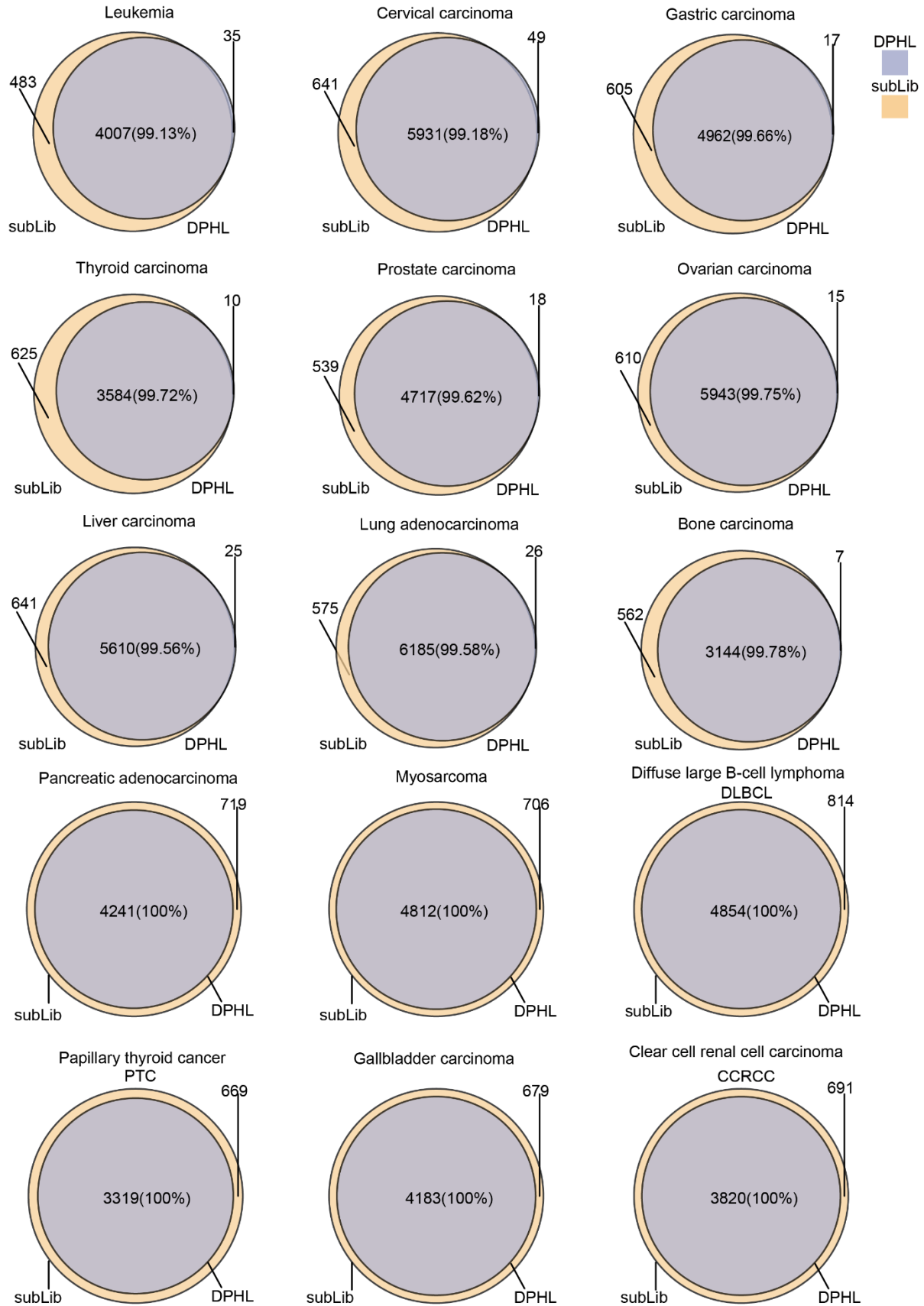
345 **Figure 3. Peptide precursor and protein identification using the optimized subset library**
346 **and DPHL.** (A) The number of peptide precursors and protein groups identified using the
347 optimized subset library and DPHL for each sample of every tumor type. subLib, the optimized
348 subset library. Protein identifications were shown on the right, and peptide precursor
349 identifications were shown on the left. (B) The correlation values on the protein level between
350 identification results of the optimized subset library and DPHL. The percentages of protein
351 missing values identified base on DPHL and the optimized library of each tumor type.
352



353

354 **Figure S1. Identification results of the four representative DIA-MS data in the colorectal**
355 **cancer cohort.**

356



358 **Figure S2. Venn diagrams showing overlap of protein identifications between the optimized**
359 **subset library and DPHL.**

360