

# Package ‘alabaster.base’

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**Title** Save Bioconductor Objects To File

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**Description** Save Bioconductor data structures into file artifacts, and load them back into memory. This is a more robust and 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.

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acquireFile	<i>Acquire file or metadata</i>
-------------	---------------------------------

---

### Description

Acquire a file or metadata for loading. As one might expect, these are typically used inside a load\* function.

### Usage

```
acquireFile(project, path)
```

```
acquireMetadata(project, path)
```

```
## S4 method for signature 'character'
acquireFile(project, path)
```

```
## S4 method for signature 'character'
acquireMetadata(project, path)
```

**Arguments**

project	Any value specifying the project of interest. The default methods expect a string containing a path to a staging directory, but other objects can be used to control dispatch.
path	String containing a relative path to a resource inside the staging directory.

**Details**

By default, files and metadata are loaded from the same staging directory that is written to by `stageObject`. alabaster applications can define custom methods to obtain the files and metadata from a different location, e.g., remote databases. This is achieved by dispatching on a different class of project.

Each custom acquisition method should take two arguments. The first argument is an R object representing some concept of a “project”. In the default case, this is a string containing a path to the staging directory representing the project. However, it can be anything, e.g., a number containing a database identifier, a list of identifiers and versions, and so on - as long as the custom acquisition method is capable of understanding it, the `load*` functions don’t care.

The second argument is a string containing the relative path to the resource inside that project. This should be the path to a specific file inside the project, not the subdirectory containing the file. More concretely, it should be equivalent to the path in the *output* of `stageObject`, not the path to the subdirectory used as the input to the same function.

The return value for each custom acquisition function should be the same as their local counterparts. That is, any custom file acquisition function should return a file path, and any custom metadata acquisition function should return a named list of metadata.

**Value**

`acquireFile` methods return a local path to the file corresponding to the requested resource.

`acquireMetadata` methods return a named list of metadata for the requested resource.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
# Staging an example DataFrame:
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
info <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")
writeMetadata(info, tmp)

# Retrieving the metadata:
meta <- acquireMetadata(tmp, "coldata/simple.csv.gz")
str(meta)
```

```
# Retrieving the file:
acquireFile(tmp, "coldata/simple.csv.gz")
```

---

altLoadObject	<i>Alter the loading function</i>
---------------	-----------------------------------

---

## Description

Allow alabaster applications to specify an alternative loading function in [altLoadObject](#).

## Usage

```
altLoadObject(...)

altLoadObjectFunction(load)
```

## Arguments

...	Further arguments to pass to <a href="#">loadObject</a> or its equivalent.
load	Function that can serve as a drop-in replacement for <a href="#">loadObject</a> .

## Details

[altLoadObject](#) is just a wrapper around [loadObject](#) that responds to any setting of [altLoadObjectFunction](#). This allows alabaster applications to inject customizations into the loading process, e.g., to add more metadata to particular objects. Developers of alabaster extensions should use [altLoadObject](#) (instead of [loadObject](#)) to load child objects when writing their own loading functions, to ensure that application-specific customizations are respected for the children.

To motivate the use of [altLoadObject](#), consider the following scenario.

1. We have created a loading function `loadX` function to load an instance of class `X` in an alabaster extension. This function may be called by [loadObject](#) if instances of `X` are children of other objects.
2. An alabaster application `Y` requires the addition of some custom metadata during the loading process for `X`. It defines an alternative loading function `loadObject2` that, upon encountering a schema for `X`, redirects to a application-specific loader `loadX2`. An example implementation for `loadX2` would involve calling `loadX` and decorating the result with the extra metadata.
3. When operating in the context of application `Y`, the `loadObject2` generic is used to set [altLoadObjectFunction](#). Any calls to [altLoadObject](#) in `Y`'s context will subsequently call `loadObject2`.
4. So, when writing a loading function in an alabaster extension for a class that might contain `X` as children, we use [altLoadObject](#) instead of directly using [loadObject](#). This ensures that, if a child instance of `X` is encountered *and* we are operating in the context of application `Y`, we correctly call `loadObject2` and then ultimately `loadX2`.

Note for application developers: loadX2 should *not* call altLoadObject on the same instance of X. Doing so will introduce an infinite recursion where altLoadObject calls loadX2 that then calls altLoadObject, etc. Rather, application developers should either call loadObject or loadX directly. For child objects, no infinite recursion will occur and either loadObject2 or altLoadObject can be used.

### Value

For altLoadObject, any R object similar to those returned by [loadObject](#).

For altLoadObjectFunction, the alternative function (if any) is returned if load is missing. If load is provided, it is used to define the alternative, and the previous alternative is returned.

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

### Examples

```
old <- altLoadObjectFunction()

# Setting it to something.
altLoadObjectFunction(function(...) {
  print("YAY")
  loadObject(...)
})

# Staging an example DataFrame:
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
out <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")

# And now loading it - this should print our message.
altLoadObject(out, tmp)

# Restoring the old loader:
altLoadObjectFunction(old)
```

---

altStageObject

*Alter the staging generic*

---

### Description

Allow alabaster applications to divert to a different staging generic from [stageObject](#).

## Usage

```
altStageObject(...)
```

```
altStageObjectFunction(generic)
```

## Arguments

...	Further arguments to pass to <a href="#">stageObject</a> or an equivalent generic.
generic	Generic function that can serve as a drop-in replacement for <a href="#">stageObject</a> .

## Details

`altStageObject` is just a wrapper around [stageObject](#) that responds to any setting of `altStageObjectFunction`. This allows applications to inject customizations into the staging process, e.g., to store more metadata to particular objects. Developers of alabaster extensions should use `altStageObject` to stage child objects when writing their `stageObject` methods, to ensure that application-specific customizations are respected for the children.

To motivate the use of `altStageObject`, consider the following scenario.

1. We have created a staging method for class X, defined for the [stageObject](#) generic.
2. An alabaster application Y requires the addition of some custom metadata during the staging process for X. It defines an alternative staging generic `stageObject2` that, upon encountering an instance of X, redirects to a application-specific method. For example, the `stageObject2` method for X could call X's `stageObject` method, add the necessary metadata to the result, and then return the list.
3. When operating in the context of application Y, the `stageObject2` generic is used to set `altStageObjectFunction`. Any calls to `altStageObject` in Y's context will subsequently call `stageObject2`.
4. So, when writing a `stageObject` method for any objects that might include X as children, we use [altStageObject](#) instead of directly using [stageObject](#). This ensures that, if a child instance of X is encountered *and* we are operating in the context of application Y, we correctly call `stageObject2` and then ultimately the application-specific method.

Note for application developers: the alternative `stageObject2` method for X should *not* call `altStageObject` on the same instance of X. Doing so will introduce an infinite recursion where `altStageObject` calls `stageObject2` that then calls `altStageObject`, etc. Rather, developers should call `stageObject` directly in such cases. For child objects, no infinite recursion will occur and either `stageObject2` or `altStageObject` can be used.

## Value

For `altStageObject`, a named list similar to the return value of [stageObject](#).

For `altStageObjectFunction`, the alternative generic (if any) is returned if `generic` is missing. If `generic` is provided, it is used to define the alternative, and the previous alternative is returned.

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun

## Examples

```
old <- altStageObjectFunction()

# Creating a new generic for demonstration purposes:
setGeneric("superStageObject", function(x, dir, path, child=FALSE, ...)
  standardGeneric("superStageObject"))

setMethod("superStageObject", "ANY", function(x, dir, path, child=FALSE, ...) {
  print("Falling back to the base method!")
  stageObject(x, dir, path, child=child, ...)
})

altStageObjectFunction(superStageObject)

# Staging an example DataFrame. This should print our message.
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
out <- altStageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")

# Restoring the old loader:
altStageObjectFunction(old)
```

---

createRedirection	<i>Create a redirection file</i>
-------------------	----------------------------------

---

## Description

Create a redirection to another path in the same staging directory. This is useful for creating short-hand aliases for resources that have inconveniently long paths.

## Usage

```
createRedirection(dir, src, dest)
```

## Arguments

dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
src	String containing the source path relative to dir.
dest	String containing the destination path relative to dir. This may be any path that can also be used in <a href="#">acquireMetadata</a> .

## Details

src should not correspond to an existing file inside dir. This avoids ambiguity when attempting to load src via [acquireMetadata](#). Otherwise, it would be unclear as to whether the user wants the file at src or the redirection target dest.

src may correspond to existing directories. This is because directories cannot be used in [acquireMetadata](#), so no such ambiguity exists.

## Value

A list of metadata that can be processed by [writeMetadata](#).

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun

## Examples

```
# Staging an example DataFrame:
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
info <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")
writeMetadata(info, tmp)

# Creating a redirection:
redirect <- createRedirection(tmp, "foobar", "coldata/simple.csv.gz")
writeMetadata(redirect, tmp)

# We can then use this redirect to pull out metadata:
info2 <- acquireMetadata(tmp, "foobar")
str(info2)
```

---

listDirectory

*List staged objects in a directory*

---

## Description

List all objects in a staging directory by loading their metadata.

## Usage

```
listDirectory(dir, ignore.children = TRUE)
```



**Arguments**

`dir` String containing a path to a staging directory.  
`ignore.children` Logical scalar indicating whether to ignore metadata for child objects.

**Value**

Named list where each entry is itself a list containing the metadata for an object. The name of the entry is the path inside `dir` to the object.

If `ignore.children=TRUE`, metadata is only returned for non-child objects or redirections.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)

library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
meta <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="whee")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=1:5))
meta <- stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

redirect <- createRedirection(tmp, "whoop", "whee/simple.csv.gz")
writeMetadata(redirect, tmp)

all.meta <- listDirectory(tmp)
names(all.meta)
```

---

loadAtomicVector      *Load an atomic vector*

---

**Description**

Load a simple vector consisting of atomic elements from file.

**Usage**

```
loadAtomicVector(info, project, ...)
```

**Arguments**

info            Named list containing the metadata for this object.  
 project        Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see [?acquireFile](#). By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.  
 ...            Further arguments, ignored.

**Value**

The vector described by info, possibly with names.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

["stageObject, integer-method"](#), for one of the staging methods.

**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
meta <- stageObject(setNames(runif(26), letters), tmp, path="bar")
loadAtomicVector(meta, tmp)
```

---

loadBaseFactor

*Load a factor*

---

**Description**

Load a base R [factor](#) from file.

**Usage**

```
loadBaseFactor(info, project, ...)
```

**Arguments**

info            Named list containing the metadata for this object.  
 project        Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see [?acquireFile](#). By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.  
 ...            Further arguments, ignored.

**Value**

The vector described by info, possibly with names.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**["stageObject, factor-method"](#), for the staging method.**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
meta <- stageObject(factor(letters[1:10], letters), tmp, path="bar")
loadBaseFactor(meta, tmp)
```

---

loadBaseList	<i>Load a base list</i>
--------------	-------------------------

---

**Description**

Load a [list](#) from file, possibly containing complex entries.

**Usage**

```
loadBaseList(info, project, parallel = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

<code>info</code>	Named list containing the metadata for this object.
<code>project</code>	Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see <a href="#">?acquireFile</a> . By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.
<code>parallel</code>	Whether to perform reading and parsing in parallel for greater speed. Only relevant for lists stored in the JSON format.

**Details**

This function effectively reverses the behavior of ["stageObject, list-method"](#), loading the [list](#) back into memory from the JSON file. Atomic vectors, arrays and data frames are loaded directly while complex values are loaded by calling the appropriate loading function.

**Value**

The list described by `info`.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

["stageObject,list-method"](#), for the staging method.

**Examples**

```
library(S4Vectors)
ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=letters))

# First staging it:
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
info <- stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")

# And now loading it:
loadBaseList(info, tmp)
```

---

loadDataFrame

*Load a DataFrame*


---

**Description**

Load a [DataFrame](#) from file, possibly containing complex columns and row names.

**Usage**

```
loadDataFrame(info, project, include.nested = TRUE, parallel = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

info	Named list containing the metadata for this object.
project	Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see <a href="#">?acquireFile</a> . By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.
include.nested	Logical scalar indicating whether nested <a href="#">DataFrames</a> should be loaded.
parallel	Whether to perform reading and parsing in parallel for greater speed.

**Details**

This function effectively reverses the behavior of ["stageObject,DataFrame-method"](#), loading the [DataFrame](#) back into memory from the CSV or HDF5 file. Atomic columns are loaded directly while complex columns (such as nested DataFrames) are loaded by calling the appropriate restore method.

One implicit interpretation of using a nested DataFrame is that the contents are not important enough to warrant top-level columns. In such cases, we can skip all columns containing a nested DataFrame by setting `include.nested=FALSE`. This avoids the cost of loading a (potentially large) nested DataFrame when its contents are unlikely to be relevant.

**Value**

The `DataFrame` described by `info`.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

"[stageObject, DataFrame-method](#)", for the staging method.

**Examples**

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])

# First staging it:
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
out <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")

# And now loading it:
loadDataFrame(out, tmp)
```

---

loadDataFrameFactor    *Load an DataFrame factor*

---

**Description**

Load a [Factor](#) where the levels are rows of a [DataFrame](#).

**Usage**

```
loadDataFrameFactor(info, project)
```

**Arguments**

<code>info</code>	Named list containing the metadata for this object.
<code>project</code>	Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see <a href="#">?acquireFile</a> . By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.

**Value**

A [DataFrameFactor](#) described by `info`.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

["stageObject, DataFrameFactor-method"](#), for the staging method.

**Examples**

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(X=LETTERS[1:5], Y=1:5)
out <- DataFrameFactor(df[sample(5, 100, replace=TRUE),,drop=FALSE])

# Staging the object:
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
info <- stageObject(out, tmp, path="test")

# Loading it back in:
loadDataFrameFactor(info, tmp)
```

---

loadDirectory

*Load all non-child objects in a directory*


---

**Description**

As the title suggests, this function loads all non-child objects in a staging directory. All loading is performed using [altLoadObject](#) to respect any application-specific overrides. Children are used to assemble their parent objects and are not reported here.

**Usage**

```
loadDirectory(dir, redirect.action = c("from", "to", "both"))
```

**Arguments**

`dir` String containing a path to a staging directory.

`redirect.action`

String specifying how redirects should be handled:

- "to" will report an object at the redirection destination, not the redirection source.
- "from" will report an object at the redirection source(s), not the destination.
- "both" will report an object at both the redirection source(s) and destination.

**Value**

A named list is returned containing all (non-child) R objects in `dir`.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)

library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
meta <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="whee")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=1:5))
meta <- stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

redirect <- createRedirection(tmp, "whoop", "whee/simple.csv.gz")
writeMetadata(redirect, tmp)

all.meta <- loadDirectory(tmp)
str(all.meta)
```

---

loadObject	<i>Load an object from its metadata</i>
------------	---

---

**Description**

Load an object from its metadata, based on the loading function specified in its schema.

**Usage**

```
loadObject(info, project, ...)

customloadObjectHelper(
  info,
  project,
  ...,
  .locations,
  .memory,
  .fallback = NULL
)
```

**Arguments**

info                      Named list containing the metadata for this object.

project	Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see <code>?acquireFile</code> . By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.
...	Further arguments to pass to the specific loading function listed in the schema.
.locations	Character vector of package names containing application-specific schemas.
.memory	An environment used to cache the loading functions, to avoid extra schema file reads on subsequent calls.
.fallback	Function that accepts a schema string (e.g., "data_frame/v1.json") and returns the path to a schema. If NULL, no fallback is used and an error is raised if the schema cannot be found.

### Details

The `loadObject` function loads an object from file into memory based on the schema specified in `info`, effectively reversing the activity of the corresponding `stageObject` method. It does so by extracting the name of the appropriate loading function from the `_attributes.restore.R` property of the schema; this should be a string that contains a namespaced function, which can be parsed and evaluated to obtain said function. `loadObject` will then call the loading function with the supplied arguments.

### Value

An object corresponding to `info`, as defined by the loading function.

### Comments for extension developers

When writing alabaster extensions, developers may need to load child objects inside the loading functions for their classes. In such cases, developers should use `.loadObject` rather than calling `loadObject` directly. This ensures that any application-level overrides of the loading functions are respected. Once in memory, the child objects can then be assembled into more complex objects by the developer's loading function.

By default, `loadObject` will look through the schemas in `alabaster.schemas` to find the schema specified in `info$`$schema``. Developers of alabaster extensions can temporarily add extra packages to the schema search path by supplying package names in the `alabaster.schema.locations` option; schema files are expected to be stored in the `schemas` subdirectory of each package's installation directory. In the long term, extension developers should request the addition of their packages to `loadObject`'s default search path.

### Comments for application developers

Application developers can override the behavior of `loadObject` by specifying a custom function in `.altLoadObject`. This is typically used to point to a different set of application-specific schemas, which in turn point to (potentially custom) loading functions in their `_application.restore.R` properties. In most applications, the override should be defined with `customloadObjectHelper`, which simplifies the process of specifying a different set of schemas.

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun



**Examples**

```
# Same example as stageObject, but reversed.
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])

# First staging it:
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
out <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")

# Loading it:
loadObject(out, tmp)
```

---

moveObject

*Move a non-child object in the staging directory*


---

**Description**

Pretty much as it says in the title. This only works with non-child objects as children are referenced by their parents and cannot be safely moved in this manner.

**Usage**

```
moveObject(dir, from, to, rename.redirections = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

<code>dir</code>	String containing the path to the staging directory.
<code>from</code>	String containing the path to a non-child object inside <code>dir</code> , as used in <a href="#">acquireMetadata</a> . This can also be a redirection to such an object.
<code>to</code>	String containing the new path inside <code>dir</code> .
<code>rename.redirections</code>	Logical scalar specifying whether redirections pointing to <code>from</code> should be renamed as <code>to</code> .

**Details**

This function will look around `path` for JSON files containing redirections to `from`, and update them to point to `to`. More specifically, if `path` is a subdirectory, it will search in the same directory containing `path`; otherwise, it will search in the directory containing `dirname(path)`. Redirections in other locations will not be removed automatically - these will be caught by [checkValidDirectory](#) and should be manually updated.

If `rename.redirections=TRUE`, this function will additionally move the redirection files so that they are named as `to`. In the unusual case where `from` is the target of multiple redirection files, the renaming process will clobber all of them such that only one of them will be present after the move.

**Value**

The object represented by path is moved, along with any redirections to it. A NULL is invisibly returned.

**Safety of moving operations**

In general, **alabaster.\*** representations are safe to move as only the parent object's `resource.path` metadata properties will contain links to the children's paths. These links are updated with the new to path after running `moveObject` on the parent from.

However, alabaster applications may define custom data structures where the paths are present elsewhere, e.g., in the data file itself or in other metadata properties. If so, applications are responsible for updating those paths to reflect the naming to to.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)

library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
meta <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="whee")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=1:5))
meta <- stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

redirect <- createRedirection(tmp, "whoop", "whee/simple.csv.gz")
writeMetadata(redirect, tmp)

list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
moveObject(tmp, "whoop", "YAY")
list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

---

processMetadata

*Process R-level metadata*

---

**Description**

Stage `metadata` and `mcols` for a `Annotated` or `Vector` object, respectively. This is typically used inside `stageObject` methods for concrete subclasses.

**Usage**

```
processMetadata(x, dir, path, meta.name)
```

```
processMcols(x, dir, path, mcols.name)
```

**Arguments**

x	An <a href="#">Vector</a> object for <code>.processMcols</code> , and a <a href="#">Annotated</a> object for <code>.processMetadata</code> .
dir	String containing the path to a staging directory.
path	String containing the path within <code>dir</code> that is used to save all of <code>x</code> . This should be the same as that passed to the <a href="#">stageObject</a> method.
meta.name	String containing the name of the file to save <a href="#">metadata(x)</a> . If <code>NULL</code> , no saving is performed.
mcols.name	String containing the name of the file to save <a href="#">mcols(x)</a> . If <code>NULL</code> , no saving is performed.

**Details**

If `mcols(x)` has no columns, nothing is saved by `.processMcols`. Similarly, if `metadata(x)` is an empty list, nothing is saved by `.processMetadata`.

**Value**

Both functions return a list containing `resource`, itself a list specifying the path within `dir` where the metadata was saved. Alternatively `NULL` if no saving is performed.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

`.restoreMetadata`, which does the loading.

---

quickLoadObject	<i>Convenience helpers for handling local directories</i>
-----------------	---

---

**Description**

Read and write objects from a local staging directory. These are just convenience wrappers around functions like [loadObject](#), [stageObject](#) and [writeMetadata](#).

**Usage**

```
quickLoadObject(dir, path, ...)
```

```
quickStageObject(x, dir, path, ...)
```

**Arguments**

dir	String containing a path to the directory.
path	String containing a relative path to the object of interest inside dir.
...	Further arguments to pass to <code>loadObject</code> (for <code>quickLoadObject</code> ) or <code>stageObject</code> (for <code>quickStageObject</code> ).
x	Object to be saved.

**Value**

For `quickLoadObject`, the object at path.

For `quickStageObject`, the object is saved to path inside dir. All necessary directories are created if they are not already present. A NULL is returned invisibly.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
local <- tempfile()

# Creating a slightly complicated object:
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
df$C <- DataFrame(D=letters[1:10], E=runif(10))

# Saving it:
quickStageObject(df, local, "FOOBAR")

# Reading it back:
quickLoadObject(local, "FOOBAR")
```

---

quickReadCsv

*Quickly read and write a CSV file*

---

**Description**

Quickly read and write a CSV file, usually as a part of staging or loading a larger object. This assumes that all files follow the `comservatory` specification.

**Usage**

```

quickReadCsv(
  path,
  expected.columns,
  expected.nrows,
  compression,
  row.names,
  parallel = TRUE
)

quickWriteCsv(
  df,
  path,
  ...,
  row.names = FALSE,
  compression = "gzip",
  validate = TRUE
)

```

**Arguments**

path	String containing a path to a CSV to read/write.
expected.columns	Named character vector specifying the type of each column in the CSV (excluding the first column containing row names, if row.names=TRUE).
expected.nrows	Integer scalar specifying the expected number of rows in the CSV.
compression	String specifying the compression that was/will be used. This should be either "none", "gzip".
row.names	For .quickReadCsv, a logical scalar indicating whether the CSV contains row names. For .quickWriteCsv, a logical scalar indicating whether to save the row names of df.
parallel	Whether reading and parsing should be performed concurrently.
df	A <a href="#">DataFrame</a> or data.frame object, containing only atomic columns.
...	Further arguments to pass to <a href="#">write.csv</a> .
validate	Whether to double-check that the generated CSV complies with the conservative specification.

**Value**

For .quickReadCsv, a [DataFrame](#) containing the contents of path.

For .quickWriteCsv, df is written to path and a NULL is invisibly returned.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

## Examples

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1, B="Aaron")

temp <- tempfile()
.quickWriteCsv(df, path=temp, row.names=FALSE, compression="gzip")

.quickReadCsv(temp, c(A="numeric", B="character"), 1, "gzip", FALSE)
```

---

removeObject	<i>Remove a non-child object from the staging directory</i>
--------------	---

---

## Description

Pretty much as it says in the title. This only works with non-child objects as children are referenced by their parents and cannot be safely removed in this manner.

## Usage

```
removeObject(dir, path)
```

## Arguments

<code>dir</code>	String containing the path to the staging directory.
<code>path</code>	String containing the path to a non-child object inside <code>dir</code> , as used in <a href="#">acquireMetadata</a> . This can also be a redirection to such an object.

## Details

This function will search around `path` for JSON files containing redirections to `path`, and remove them. More specifically, if `path` is a subdirectory, it will search in the same directory containing `path`; otherwise, it will search in the directory containing `dirname(path)`. Redirections in other locations will not be removed automatically - these will be caught by [checkValidDirectory](#) and should be manually removed.

## Value

The object represented by `path` is removed, along with any redirections to it. A NULL is invisibly returned.

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)

library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])
meta <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="whee")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=1:5))
meta <- stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")
writeMetadata(meta, tmp)

redirect <- createRedirection(tmp, "whoop", "whee/simple.csv.gz")
writeMetadata(redirect, tmp)

list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
removeObject(tmp, "whoop")
list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)

```

---

restoreMetadata	<i>Restore R-level metadata</i>
-----------------	---------------------------------

---

**Description**

Restore [metadata](#) and [mcols](#) for a [Annotated](#) or [Vector](#) object, respectively. This is typically used inside loading functions for concrete subclasses.

**Usage**

```
restoreMetadata(x, mcol.data, meta.data, project)
```

**Arguments**

x	An <a href="#">Vector</a> or <a href="#">Annotated</a> object.
mcol.data	List of metadata specifying the resource location of the <a href="#">mcols</a> files. This can also be NULL, in which case no <a href="#">mcols</a> are restored.
meta.data	List of metadata specifying the resource location of the <a href="#">metadata</a> files. This can also be NULL, in which case no <a href="#">metadata</a> are restored.
project	Any argument accepted by the acquisition functions, see <a href="#">?acquireFile</a> . By default, this should be a string containing the path to a staging directory.

**Value**

x is returned, possibly with [mcols](#) and [metadata](#) added to it.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**[.processMetadata](#), which does the staging.

saveFormats

*Choose the format for certain objects***Description**

Alter the format used to save DataFrames or base lists in their respective [stageObject](#) methods.

**Usage**

```
saveDataFrameFormat(format)
```

```
saveBaseListFormat(format)
```

**Arguments**

format	String containing the format to use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For <code>saveDataFrameFormat</code>, this may be "csv", "csv.gz" (default) or "hdf5".</li> <li>• For <code>saveBaseListFormat</code>, this may be "json.gz" (default) or "hdf5".</li> </ul> Alternatively NULL, to use the default format.
--------	---

**Details**

[stageObject](#) methods will treat a `format=NULL` in the same manner as the default format. The distinction exists to allow downstream applications to set their own defaults while still responding to user specification. For example, an application can detect if the existing format is NULL, and if so, apply another default via `.saveDataFrameFormat`. On the other hand, if the format is not NULL, this is presumably specified by the user explicitly and should be respected by the application.

**Value**

If `format` is missing, a string containing the current format is returned, or NULL to use the default format.

If `format` is supplied, it is used to define the current format, and the *previous* format is returned.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun



**Examples**

```
(old <- .saveDataFrameFormat())

.saveDataFrameFormat("hdf5")
.saveDataFrameFormat()

# Setting it back.
.saveDataFrameFormat(old)
```

---

stageAtomicVector	<i>Stage atomic vectors</i>
-------------------	-----------------------------

---

**Description**

Stage vectors containing atomic elements (or values that can be cast as such, e.g., dates and times).

**Usage**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Arguments**

x	Any of the atomic vector types, or <a href="#">Date</a> objects, or time objects, e.g., <a href="#">POSIXct</a> .
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.

path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see Details.
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
...	Further arguments that are ignored.

### Details

Dates and POSIX times are cast to strings; the type itself is recorded in the metadata.

### Value

A named list containing the metadata for x. x itself is written to a CSV file inside path.

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

### Examples

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
stageObject(LETTERS, tmp, path="foo")
stageObject(setNames(runif(26), letters), tmp, path="bar")

list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

---

stageObject	<i>Stage assorted objects</i>
-------------	-------------------------------

---

### Description

Generic to stage assorted R objects. More methods may be defined by other packages to extend the **alabaster.base** framework to new classes.

### Usage

```
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, ...)
```

### Arguments

x	A Bioconductor object of the specified class.
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see Details.
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
...	Further arguments to pass to specific methods.

## Details

Methods for the `stageObject` generic should create a subdirectory at the input path inside `dir`. All files (artifacts and metadata documents) required to represent `x` on disk should be created inside `path`. Upon method completion, `path` should contain:

- Zero or one file containing the data inside `x`. Methods are free to choose any format and name within `path` except for the `.json` file extension, which is reserved for JSON metadata documents (see below). The presence of such a file is optional and may be omitted for metadata-only schemas.
- Zero or many subdirectories containing child objects of `x`. Each child object should be saved in its own subdirectory within `dir`, which can have any name that does not conflict with the data file (if present) and does not end with `.json`. This allows developers to decompose complex `x` into their components for more flexible staging/loading.

The return value of each method should be a named list of metadata, which will (eventually) be passed to `writeMetadata` to save a JSON metadata file inside the `path` subdirectory. This list should contain at least:

- `$schema`, a string specifying the schema to use to validate the metadata for the class of `x`. This may be decorated with the `package` attribute to help `writeMetadata` find the package containing the schema.
- `path`, a string containing the relative path to the object's file representation inside `dir`. For clarity, we will denote the input path argument as `PATHIN` and the output path property as `PATHOUT`. These are different as `PATHIN` refers to the directory while `PATHOUT` refers to a file inside the directory.  
If a data file exists, `PATHOUT` should contain the relative path to that file from `dir`. Otherwise, for metadata-only schemas, `PATHOUT` should be set to a relative path of a JSON file inside the `PATHIN` subdirectory, specifying the location in which the metadata is to be saved by `writeMetadata`.
- `is_child`, a logical scalar equal to the input `child`.

This list will usually contain more useful elements to describe `x`. The exact nature of those elements will depend on the specified schema for the class of `x`.

The `stageObject` generic will check if `PATHIN` already exists inside `dir` before dispatching to the methods. If so, it will throw an error to ensure that downstream name clashes do not occur. The exception is if `PATHIN` is `"."`, in which case no check is performed; this is useful for eliminating subdirectories in situations where the project contains only one object.

## Value

`dir` is populated with files containing the contents of `x`. A named list containing the metadata for `x` is returned.

## Saving child objects

The concept of child objects allows developers to break down complex objects into its basic components for convenience. For example, if one `DataFrame` is nested within another as a separate column, the former is a child and the latter is the parent. A list of multiple `DataFrames` will also

represent each DataFrame as a child object. This allows developers to re-use the staging/loading code for DataFrames when reconstructing the complex parent object.

If a stageObject method needs to save a child object, it should do so in a subdirectory of PATHIN (i.e., the input path argument). This is achieved by calling `altStageObject(child, dir, subpath)` where `child` is the child component of `x` and `subdir` is the desired subdirectory path. Note the period at the start of the function, which ensures that the method respects customizations from alabaster applications (see `.altStageObject` for details). We also suggest creating `subdir` with `paste0(path, "/", subname)` for a given subdirectory name, which avoids potential problems with non-`/` file separators.

After creating the child object's subdirectory, the stageObject method should call `writeMetadata` on the output of `altStageObject` to save the child's metadata. This will return a list that can be inserted into the parent's metadata list for the method's return value. All child files created by a stageObject method should be referenced from the metadata list, i.e., the child metadata's PATHOUT should be present in in the metadata list as a resource entry somewhere.

Any attempt to use the stageObject generic to save another non-child object into PATHIN or its subdirectories will cause an error. This ensures that PATHIN contains all and only the contents of `x`.

#### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

#### See Also

`checkValidDirectory`, for validation of the staged contents.

#### Examples

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)

library(S4Vectors)
X <- DataFrame(X=LETTERS, Y=sample(3, 26, replace=TRUE))
stageObject(X, tmp, path="test1")
list.files(file.path(tmp, "test1"))
```

---

stageObject,DataFrame-method

*Stage a DataFrame*

---

#### Description

Stage a DataFrame by saving it to a CSV or HDF5 file. CSV files follow the `comservatory` specification, while the expected layout of a HDF5 file is described in the `hdf5_data_frame` schema in `alabaster.schemas`.

**Usage**

```
## S4 method for signature 'DataFrame'
stageObject(
  x,
  dir,
  path,
  child = FALSE,
  df.name = "simple",
  mcols.name = "mcols",
  meta.name = "other",
  .version = 2
)
```

**Arguments**

x	A <a href="#">DataFrame</a> .
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see <a href="#">Details</a> .
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
df.name	String containing the relative path inside dir to save the CSV/HDF5 file.
mcols.name	String specifying the name of the directory inside path to save <a href="#">mcols(x)</a> . If NULL, per-element metadata is not saved.
meta.name	String specifying the name of the directory inside path to save <a href="#">metadata(x)</a> . If NULL, object metadata is not saved.
.version	Internal use only.

**Details**

All atomic vector types are supported in the columns along with dates and (ordered) factors. Dates and factors are converted to character vectors and saved as such inside the file. Factor levels are saved in a separate data frame, which is referenced in the columns field of the returned metadata.

Any non-atomic columns are saved to a separate file inside path via [stageObject](#), and referenced from the corresponding columns entry. For consistency, they will be replaced in the main file by a placeholder all-zero column.

As a [DataFrame](#) is a [Vector](#) subclass, its R-level metadata can be staged by [.processMetadata](#).

**Value**

A named list containing the metadata for x. x itself is written to a CSV or HDF5 file inside path. Additional files may also be created inside path and referenced from the metadata.

### File formats

If `.saveDataFrameFormat()` == "csv", the contents of `x` are saved to a uncompressed CSV file. If `x` has non-NULL row names, the first saved column in the CSV is named `row_names` and will contain the row names. This should be ignored when indexing columns and comparing them to the corresponding entry of columns in the file's JSON metadata document.

If `.saveDataFrameFormat()` == "csv.gz", the CSV file is compressed (the default). This reduces space and bandwidth requirements at the cost of the (de)compression overhead. It also makes it more difficult to do queries inside the file without decompression of the entire file.

If `.saveDataFrameFormat()` == "hdf5", `x` is saved into a HDF5 file instead of a CSV. Columns are saved into a data group where each column is a dataset named after its positional index. The names of the columns are saved into the `column_names` dataset. If row names are present, a separate `row_names` dataset containing the row names will be generated. This format is most useful for random access and for preserving the precision of numerical data.

### Author(s)

Aaron Lun

### See Also

<https://github.com/LTLA/comservatory>, for the CSV file specification.

The `csv_data_frame` and `hdf5_data_frame` schemas from the **alabaster.schemas** package.

### Examples

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")

list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

---

stageObject,DataFrameFactor-method

*Stage a DataFrameFactor object*

---

### Description

Stage a **DataFrameFactor** object, a generalization of the base factor for **DataFrame** levels.

## Usage

```
## S4 method for signature 'DataFrameFactor'
stageObject(
  x,
  dir,
  path,
  child = FALSE,
  index.name = "index",
  level.name = "levels",
  mcols.name = "mcols"
)
```

## Arguments

x	A <a href="#">DataFrameFactor</a> object.
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see <a href="#">Details</a> .
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
index.name	String containing the name of the file to save the factor indices.
level.name	String containing the name of the subdirectory to save the factor levels.
mcols.name	String specifying the name of the directory inside path to save the <a href="#">mcols</a> . If NULL, the metadata columns are not saved.

## Details

We create one file in path for the levels and another file for the factor indices. The levels file contains a [DataFrame](#) as staged by [stageObject,DataFrame-method](#). Indices are 1-based and reference one record of the levels file. As the [DataFrameFactor](#) is a [Vector](#) subclass, its R-level metadata can be staged by [.processMetadata](#).

## Value

A named list containing the metadata for x. x itself is written to a file inside path. Additional files may also be created inside path and referenced from the metadata.

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun

## See Also

The `data_frame_factor` schema from [alabaster.schemas](#).

## Examples

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(X=LETTERS[1:5], Y=1:5)
out <- DataFrameFactor(df[sample(5, 100, replace=TRUE),,drop=FALSE])

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
stageObject(out, tmp, path="test")

list.files(file.path(tmp, "test"), recursive=TRUE)
```

---

stageObject, factor-method  
*Stage factors*

---

## Description

Pretty much as it says, let's stage a base R [factor](#).

## Usage

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

## Arguments

x	Any of the assorted simple vector types.
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see Details.
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
...	Further arguments that are ignored.

## Value

A named list containing the metadata for x. x itself is written to a file inside path, along with the various levels.

## Author(s)

Aaron Lun



**Examples**

```
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
stageObject(factor(1:10, 1:30), tmp, path="foo")
list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

---

stageObject,list-method

*Stage a base list*


---

**Description**

Save a [list](#) or [List](#) to a JSON or HDF5 file, with external subdirectories created for any of the more complex list elements (e.g., DataFrames, arrays). This uses the [uzuki2](#) specification to ensure that appropriate types are declared.

**Usage**

```
## S4 method for signature 'list'
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, fname = "list", .version = 2)

## S4 method for signature 'List'
stageObject(x, dir, path, child = FALSE, fname = "list")
```

**Arguments**

x	A Bioconductor object of the specified class.
dir	String containing the path to the staging directory.
path	String containing a prefix of the relative path inside dir where x is to be saved. The actual path used to save x may include additional components, see <a href="#">Details</a> .
child	Logical scalar indicating whether x is a child of a larger object.
fname	String containing the name of the file to use to save x. Note that this should not have a .json suffix, so as to avoid confusion with the JSON-formatted metadata.
.version	Internal use only.

**Value**

A named list containing the metadata for x, where x itself is written to a JSON file.

**File formats**

If `.saveBaseListFormat() == "json.gz"`, the list is saved to a Gzip-compressed JSON file (the default). This is an easily parsed format with low storage overhead.

If `.saveBaseListFormat() == "hdf5"`, x is saved into a HDF5 file instead. This format is most useful for random access and for preserving the precision of numerical data.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**See Also**

<https://github.com/LTLA/uzuki2> for the specification.

The `json_simple_list` and `hdf5_simple_list` schemas from the **alabaster.schemas** package.

**Examples**

```
library(S4Vectors)
ll <- list(A=1, B=LETTERS, C=DataFrame(X=1:5))

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
stageObject(ll, tmp, path="stuff")

list.files(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
```

---

transformVectorForHdf5

*Utilities for saving vectors to HDF5*

---

**Description**

Exported for re-use in anything that saves possibly-missing values to HDF5. **alabaster.matrix** is probably the main beneficiary here.

**Usage**

```
transformVectorForHdf5(x)

chooseMissingPlaceholderForHdf5(x)

addMissingPlaceholderAttributeForHdf5(file, name, placeholder)
```

**Arguments**

x	An atomic vector to be saved to HDF5.
file	String containing the path to a HDF5 file.
name	String containing the name of a HDF5 dataset.
placeholder	Scalar value representing a placeholder for missing values.

**Value**

chooseMissingPlaceholderForHdf5 returns a placeholder value for missing values in `x`. For strings, this is guaranteed to be an actual string that does not equal any existing entry. For logicals, this is set to `-1`.

transformVectorForHdf5 will transform an atomic vector in preparation for saving to HDF5, returning a list containing:

- `transformed`, the transformed vector. This may be the same as `x` if no NA values were detected. Note that logical vectors are cast to integers.
- `placeholder`, the placeholder value used to represent NA values. This is `NULL` if no NA values were detected in `x`, otherwise it is the same as the output of `chooseMissingPlaceholderForHdf5`.

addMissingPlaceholderAttributeForHdf5 will add a "missing-value-placeholder" attribute to the HDF5 dataset, containing the placeholder scalar used to represent missing values.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
transformVectorForHdf5(c(TRUE, NA, FALSE))
transformVectorForHdf5(c(1L, NA, 2L))
transformVectorForHdf5(c(1L, NaN, 2L))
transformVectorForHdf5(c("FOO", NA, "BAR"))
transformVectorForHdf5(c("FOO", NA, "NA"))
```

---

validateDirectory	<i>Check if a staging directory is valid</i>
-------------------	--

---

**Description**

Check whether a staging directory is valid in terms of its structure and metadata.

**Usage**

```
validateDirectory(
  dir,
  validate.metadata = TRUE,
  schema.locations = NULL,
  attempt.load = FALSE
)
```

**Arguments**

<code>dir</code>	String containing the path to a staging directory.
<code>validate.metadata</code>	Whether to validate each metadata JSON file against the schema.
<code>schema.locations</code>	Character vector containing the name of the package containing the JSON schemas. Only used if <code>validate.metadata=TRUE</code> ; if <code>NULL</code> , defaults to the locations described in <code>?loadObject</code> .
<code>attempt.load</code>	Whether to validate each object by attempting to load it into memory.

**Details**

This function verifies that the restrictions described in `stageObject` are respected, namely:

- Each object is represented by subdirectory with a single JSON document.
- Each JSON metadata document's `path` property exists and is consistent with the path of the document itself.
- Child objects are nested in subdirectories of the parent object's directory.
- Child objects have the `is_child` property set to true in their metadata.
- Each child object is referenced exactly once in its parent object's metadata.

This function will also check that redirections are valid:

- The `path` property of the redirection does *not* exist and is consistent with the path of the redirection document.
- The redirection target location exists in the directory.

If `validate.metadata=TRUE`, this function will validate each metadata file against its specified JSON schema. Applications may set `schema.locations` to point to an appropriate set of schemas other than the defaults in `alabaster.base`.

If `attempt.load=TRUE`, this function will attempt to load each non-child object into memory. This serves as an additional validation step to check that the contents of each file are valid (at least, according to the current `altLoadObject` function). However, it may be time-consuming and so defaults to `FALSE`. Child objects are assumed to be loaded as part of their parents and are not explicitly checked.

**Value**

`NULL` invisibly on success, otherwise an error is raised.

**Author(s)**

Aaron Lun

**Examples**

```
# Mocking up an object:
library(S4Vectors)
ncols <- 123
df <- DataFrame(
  X = rep(LETTERS[1:3], length.out=ncols),
  Y = runif(ncols)
)
df$Z <- DataFrame(AA = sample(ncols))

# Mocking up the directory:
tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp, recursive=TRUE)
writeMetadata(stageObject(df, tmp, "foo"), tmp)

# Checking that it's valid:
validateDirectory(tmp)
```

---

writeMetadata

*Saving the metadata*


---

**Description**

Helper function to write metadata from a named list to a JSON file. This is commonly used inside [stageObject](#) methods to create the metadata file for a child object.

**Usage**

```
writeMetadata(meta, dir, ignore.null = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

meta	A named list containing metadata. This should contain at least the "\$schema" and "path" elements.
dir	String containing a path to the staging directory.
ignore.null	Logical scalar indicating whether NULL values should be ignored during coercion to JSON.

**Details**

Any NULL values in meta are pruned out prior to writing when ignore.null=TRUE. This is done recursively so any NULL values in sub-lists of meta are also ignored.

Any scalars are automatically unboxed so array values should be explicitly specified as such with [I\(\)](#).

Any starting "/" in meta\$path will be automatically removed. This allows staging methods to save in the current directory by setting path=".", without the need to pollute the paths with a "/" prefix.

The JSON-formatted metadata is validated against the schema in `meta[["$schema"]]` using **json-validate**. The location of the schema is taken from the `package` attribute in that string, if one exists; otherwise, it is assumed to be in the **alabaster.schemas** package. (All schemas are assumed to live in the `inst/schemas` subdirectory of their indicated packages.)

We also use the schema to determine whether `meta` refers to an actual artifact or is a metadata-only document. If it refers to an actual file, we compute its MD5 sum and store it in the metadata for saving. We also save its associated metadata into a JSON file at a location obtained by appending `".json"` to `meta$path`.

For artifacts, the MD5 sum calculation will be skipped if the `meta` already contains a `md5sum` field. This can be useful on some occasions, e.g., to improve efficiency when the MD5 sum was already computed during staging, or if the artifact does not actually exist in its full form on the file system.

### Value

A JSON file containing the metadata is created at `path`. A list of resource metadata is returned, e.g., for inclusion as the `"resource"` property in parent schemas.

### Author(s)

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### Examples

```
library(S4Vectors)
df <- DataFrame(A=1:10, B=LETTERS[1:10])

tmp <- tempfile()
dir.create(tmp)
info <- stageObject(df, tmp, path="coldata")
writeMetadata(info, tmp)
cat(readLines(file.path(tmp, "coldata/simple.csv.gz.json")), sep="\n")
```

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