Chapter 3
RDF Schema

Introduction

- RDF has a very simple data model
- RDF Schema (RDFS) enriches the data model, adding vocabulary and associated semantics for
  - Classes and subclasses
  - Properties and sub-properties
  - Typing of properties
- Support for describing simple ontologies
- Adds an object-oriented flavor
- But with a logic-oriented approach and using "open world" semantics

RDFS is a simple KB Language

Several widely used Knowledge-Base tools can import and export in RDFS, including Stanford’s Protégé KB editor

RDFS Vocabulary

RDFS introduces the following terms, giving each a meaning w.r.t. the rdf data model

- Terms for classes
  - rdfs:Class
  - rdfs:subClassOf
- Terms for properties
  - rdfs:domain
  - rdfs:range
  - rdfs:subPropertyOf
- Special classes
  - rdfs:Resource
  - rdfs:Literal
  - rdfs:Datatype
- Terms for collections
  - rdfs:member
  - rdfs:Container
  - rdfs:ContainerMembershipProperty
- Special properties
  - rdfs:comment
  - rdfs:seeAlso
  - rdfs:isDefinedBy
  - rdfs:label
Modeling the semantics in logic

- We could represent any triple with a binary predicate, e.g.
  - type(john, human)
  - age(john, 32)
  - subclass(human, animal)
- But traditionally we model a class as a unary predicate
  - human(john)
  - age(john, 32)
  - subclass(human, animal)

Classes and Instances

- We must distinguish between
  - Concrete “things” (individual objects) in the domain: Discrete Math, Richard Chang, etc.
  - Sets of individuals sharing properties called classes: lecturers, students, courses etc.
- Individual objects that belong to a class are referred to as instances of that class
- The relationship between instances and classes in RDF is through rdf:type

Classes are Useful

Classes let us impose restrictions on what can be stated in an RDF document using the schema
  - As in programming languages
    - E.g. A+1, where A is an array
    - Disallow nonsense from being stated

Preventing nonsensical Statements

- Discrete Math is taught by Calculus
  - We want courses to be taught by lecturers only
  - Restriction on values of the property “is taught by” (range restriction)
- Room ITE228 is taught by Richard Chang
  - Only courses can be taught
  - This imposes a restriction on the objects to which the property can be applied (domain restriction)
Class Hierarchies

- Classes can be organized in hierarchies
  - A is a subclass of B if every instance of A is also an instance of B
  - We also say that B is a superclass of A
- A subclass graph needn’t be a tree
  - A class may have multiple superclasses
- In logic:
  - \( \text{subclass}(p, q) \iff p(x) \Rightarrow q(x) \)
  - \( \text{subclass}(p, q) \land p(x) \Rightarrow q(x) \)

Domain and Range

- The domain and range properties let us associate classes with a property’s subject and object, e.g.
  - Only a course can be taught
    - \( \text{domain(isTaughtBy, course)} \)
  - Only an academic staff member can teach
    - \( \text{range(isTaughtBy, academicStaffMember)} \)
- Semantics in logic:
  - \( \text{domain(pred, aclass)} \land \text{pred(subj, obj)} \Rightarrow \text{aclass(subj)} \)
  - \( \text{range(pred, aclass)} \land \text{pred(subj, obj)} \Rightarrow \text{aclass(obj)} \)

Property Hierarchies

- Hierarchical relationships for properties
  - E.g., “is taught by” is a subproperty of “involves”
  - If a course C is taught by an academic staff member A, then C also involves A
- The converse is not necessarily true
  - E.g., A may be the teacher of the course C, or a TA who grades student homework but doesn’t teach
- Semantics in logic
  - \( \text{subproperty}(p, q) \land p(\text{subj}, \text{obj}) \Rightarrow q(\text{sub}, \text{obj}) \)
  - E.g., \( \text{subproperty}(\text{mother}, \text{parent}), \text{mother}(p1, p2) \Rightarrow \text{parent}(p1, p2) \)

RDF Layer vs RDF Schema Layer

- Discrete Math is taught by Richard Chang
- The schema is itself written in a formal language, RDF Schema, that can express its ingredients:
  - subClassOf, Class, Property, subPropertyOf, Resource, etc.
### RDF Schema in RDF

- RDFS's modeling primitives are defined using resources and properties (RDF itself is used!)
- To declare that "lecturer" is a subclass of "academic staff member"
  - Define resources `lecturer`, `academicStaffMember`, and `subClassOf`
  - Define property `subClassOf`
  - Write triple `(subClassOf, lecturer, academicStaffMember)`
- We use the XML-based syntax of RDF

### Core Classes

- **rdfs:Resource**: class of all resources
- **rdfs:Class**: class of all classes
- **rdfs:Literal**: class of all literals (strings)
- **rdf:Property**: class of all properties.
- **rdf:Statement**: class of all reified statements

### Core Properties

- **rdf:type**: relates a resource to its class
  - The resource is declared to be an instance of that class
- **rdfs:subClassOf**: relates a class to one of its superclasses
  - All instances of a class are instances of its superclass
- **rdfs:subPropertyOf**: relates a property to one of its superproperties

### Core Properties

- **rdfs:domain**: specifies the domain of a property P
  - The class of those resources that may appear as subjects in a triple with predicate P
  - If the domain is not specified, then any resource can be the subject
- **rdfs:range**: specifies the range of a property P
  - The class of those resources that may appear as values in a triple with predicate P
Examples

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:about="#lecturer">
  <rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#staffMember"/>
</rdfs:Class>

<rdfs:Property rdf:ID="phone">
  <rdfs:domain rdf:resource="#staffMember"/>
  <rdfs:range rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Literal"/>
</rdfs:Property>
```

Relationships: Core Classes & Properties

- `rdfs:subClassOf` and `rdfs:subPropertyOf` are transitive, by definition
- `rdfs:Class` is a subclass of `rdfs:Resource`
  - Because every class is a resource
- `rdfs:Resource` is an instance of `rdfs:Class`
  - `rdfs:Resource` is the class of all resources, so it is a class
- Every class is an instance of `rdfs:Class`
  - For the same reason
RDF and RDFS Property Instances

- `rdf:subject`: relates a reified statement to its subject
- `rdf:predicate`: relates a reified statement to its predicate
- `rdf:object`: relates a reified statement to its object
- `rdf:Bag`: the class of bags
- `rdf:Seq`: the class of sequences
- `rdf:Alt`: the class of alternatives
- `rdfs:Container`: a superclass of all container classes, including the three above

Utility Properties

- `rdfs:seeAlso`: relates a resource to another resource that explains it
- `rdfs:isDefinedBy`: a subproperty of `rdfs:seeAlso` that relates a resource to the place where its definition, typically an RDF schema, is found
- `rdfs:comment`: Comments, typically longer text, can be associated with a resource
- `rdfs:label`: A human-friendly label (name) is associated with a resource

Ex: University Lecturers – Prefix

```xml
<rdf:RDF
  xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:rdfs="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
>
>```

Ex: University Lecturers -- Classes

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="staffMember"
<rdfs:comment>The class of staff members</rdfs:comment>
</rdfs:Class>

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="academicStaffMember"
<rdfs:comment>The class of academic staff members</rdfs:comment>
<rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#staffMember"/>
</rdfs:Class>

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="lecturer"
<rdfs:comment>All lecturers are academic staff members.</rdfs:comment>
<rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#academicStaffMember"/>
</rdfs:Class>

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="course"
<rdfs:comment>The class of courses</rdfs:comment>
</rdfs:Class>
```

Ex: University Lecturers -- Properties

```xml
<rdfs:Property rdf:ID="isTaughtBy"
<rdfs:comment>Assigns lecturers to courses.</rdfs:comment>
<rdfs:domain rdf:resource="#course"/>
<rdfs:range rdf:resource="#lecturer"/>
</rdfs:Property>

<rdfs:Property rdf:ID="teaches"
<rdfs:comment>Assigns courses to lecturers.</rdfs:comment>
<rdfs:domain rdf:resource="#lecturer"/>
<rdfs:range rdf:resource="#course"/>
</rdfs:Property>
```

Ex: University Lecturers -- Instances

```xml
<uni:lecturer rdf:ID="949318"
uni:name="Richard Chang"
uni:title="Associate Professor">
<uni:teaches rdf:resource="#CIT1111"/>
<uni:teaches rdf:resource="#CIT3112"/>
</uni:lecturer>

<uni:lecturer rdf:ID="949352"
uni:name="Grigoris Antoniou"
uni:title="Professor">
<uni:teaches rdf:resource="#CIT1112"/>
<uni:teaches rdf:resource="#CIT1113"/>
</uni:lecturer>

<uni:course rdf:ID="CIT1111"
uni:courseName="Discrete Mathematics">
<uni:isTaughtBy rdf:resource="#949318"/>
</uni:course>

<uni:course rdf:ID="CIT1112"
uni:courseName="Concrete Mathematics">
<uni:isTaughtBy rdf:resource="#949352"/>
</uni:course>
```

Example: A University

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="lecturer"
<rdfs:comment>The class of lecturers. All lecturers are academic staff members.</rdfs:comment>
</rdfs:Class>
```

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="academicStaffMember"
<rdfs:comment>The class of academic staff members.
</rdfs:Class>
```

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="course"
<rdfs:comment>The class of courses</rdfs:comment>
</rdfs:Class>
```
RDF and RDFS Namespaces

- The RDF, RDFS and OWL namespaces specify some constraints on the ‘languages’
  - http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#
  - http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#
  - http://www.w3.org/2002/07/owl#
- Strangely, each uses terms from all three to define its own terms
- Don’t be confused: the real semantics of the terms isn’t specified in the namespace files
RDF Namespace example

This example shows how RDFS terms are used to say something important about the RDF predicate property

```xml
<rdf:Property
    rdf:ID="predicate"
    rdfs:comment="Identifies the property of a statement in reified form"/>
<rdfs:domain rdf:resource="#Statement"/>
<rdfs:range rdf:resource="#Property"/>
```

RDF Namespace

Define rdf:Resource and rdf:Class as instances of rdfs:Class & rdf:Class as a subclass of rdf:Resource

```xml
<rdf:RDF
    ... xmlns:dc="http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/"
    ...
    <rdfs:Class rdf:about="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Class">
        <rdfs:isDefinedBy rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"/>
        <rdfs:label>Class</rdfs:label>
        <rdfs:comment>The class of classes.</rdfs:comment>
        <rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Resource"/>
    </rdfs:Class>
    ...
```

RDFS Namespace

```xml
<rdf:Property rdf:about="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#subClassOf">
    <rdfs:isDefinedBy rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"/>
    <rdfs:label>subClassOf</rdfs:label>
    <rdfs:comment>The subject is a subclass of a class.</rdfs:comment>
    <rdfs:range rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Class"/>
    <rdfs:domain rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Class"/>
</rdf:Property>
```
Namespaces vs. Semantics

- Consider `rdfs:subClassOf`
  - The namespace specifies only that it applies to classes and has a class as a value
  - The meaning of being a subclass not specified
- The meaning cannot be expressed in RDF
  - If it could RDF Schema would be unnecessary
- External definition of semantics required
  - Respected by RDF/RDFS processing software

RDFS vs. OO Models

- In OO models, an object class defines the properties that apply to it
  - Adding a new property means modifying the class
- In RDF, properties are defined globally and aren’t encapsulated as attributes in the class definition
  - One can define new properties without changing the class
  - Properties can have properties
    - `mother rdfs:subPropertyOf :parent; rdf:type :FamilyRelation.`
    - You can’t narrow the domain and range of properties in a subclass

Example

```rdfs
@prefix rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#> .
@prefix rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#> .
@prefix bio: <http://example.com/biology#> .
bio:Animal a rdfs:Class.
bio:offspring a rdfs:Property;
rdfs:domain bio:Animal;
rdfs:range bio:Animal.
:fido a bio:Dog.
:john a bio:Human;
bio:offspring :fido.
```

Example

```rdfs
Bio:child rdfs:subPropertyOf bio:offspring;
rdfs:domain bio:Human;
rdfs:range bio:Human.
Bio:puppy rdfs:subPropertyOf bio:offspring;
rdfs:domain bio:Dog;
rdfs:range bio:Dog.
```

There is no way to say that the offspring of humans are humans and the offspring of dogs are dogs.

What do we know after each of the last two triples are asserted?

Suppose we also assert:
- :john bio:puppy :rover
- :john bio:child :fido
Not like types in OO systems

- Classes differ from types in OO systems in how they are used.
  - They are not constraints on well-formedness
- The lack of negation and the open world assumption make it impossible to detect contradictions
  - Can’t say that Dog and Human are disjoint classes
  - Not knowing that there are individuals who are both doesn’t mean it’s not true

No disjunctions or union types

What does this mean?

bio:Cat rdfs:subClassOf bio:Animal.
bio:hasPet a rdfs:Property;
  rdfs:domain bio:Human;
  rdfs:range bio:Dog;
  rdfs:range bio:Cat.

What do we want to say?

- Only a dog or a cat can be the object of a hasPet property.
- Dogs and cats and maybe other animals are possible as pets.
- Dogs and cats and maybe other things, not necessarily animals, are possible as pets.
- All dogs and all cats are pets.
- It is possible for some dogs and for some cats to be pets.
Classes and individuals are not disjoint

- In OO systems a thing is either a class or object
  - Many KR systems are like this: you are either an instance or a class, not both.
- Not so in RDFS
  bio:Species rdf:type rdfs:Class.
  :fido rdf:type bio:Dog.
- Adds richness to the language but causes problems, too
  - In OWL lite and OWL DL you can't do this.
  - OWL has its own notion of a Class, owl:Class

Inheritance is simple

- No defaults, overriding, shadowing
- What you say about a class is necessarily true of all sub-classes
- A class' properties are not inherited by its members.
  - Can't say "Dog's are normally friendly" or even "All dogs are friendly"
  - The meaning of the Dog class is a set of individuals

Set Based Model Theory Example

World

Model

Interpretation

{... list of facts about individuals ...}

T-box

Mary drives Z123ABC

Set Based Model Theory Example

World

Model

Interpretation

{... list of facts about individuals ...}

Mary drives Z123ABC
### Is RDF(S) better than XML?

**Q:** For a specific application, should I use XML or RDF?

**A:** It depends…

- **XML’s model is**
  - a tree, i.e., a strong hierarchy
  - applications may rely on hierarchy position
  - relatively simple syntax and structure
  - not easy to combine trees

- **RDF’s model is**
  - a loose collections of relations
  - applications may do “database”-like search
  - not easy to recover hierarchy
  - easy to combine relations in one big collection
  - great for the integration of heterogeneous information

### Problems with RDFS

- **RDFS too weak** to describe resources in sufficient detail, e.g.:  
  - No *localised range and domain* constraints  
    - Can’t say that the range of hasChild is person when applied to persons and elephant when applied to elephants
  - No *existence/cardinality* constraints  
    - Can’t say that all *instances* of person have a mother that is also a person, or that persons have exactly 2 parents
  - No *transitive, inverse or symmetrical* properties  
    - Can’t say that isPartOf is a transitive property, that hasPart is the inverse of isPartOf or that touches is symmetrical

- **We need RDF terms providing these and other features.**

### Conclusions

- **RDF is a simple data model based on a graph**
  - Independent on any serialization (e.g., XML or N3)
- **RDF has a formal semantics providing a dependable basis**
  - for reasoning about the meaning of RDF expressions
- **RDF has an extensible URI-based vocabulary**
- **RDF has an XML serialization and can use values represented as XML schema datatypes**
- **Anyone can make statements about any resource** (open world assumption)
- **RDFS builds on RDF’s foundation by adding vocabulary with well defined semantics** (e.g., Class, subClassOf, etc.)
- **OWL addresses some of RDFS’s limitations adding richness (and complexity).**