Chapter 3

RDF Schema
Introduction

- RDF has a very simple data model
- RDF Schema (RDFS) enriches the data model, adding vocabulary & 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 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 RDF triple with a binary predicate in logic, 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 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 belonging to a class are referred to as **instances** of that class

- Relationship between instances and classes in RDF is through **rdf:type**

- Note similarity to *classes* and *objects* in an OO prog. language (but RDF classes stand for **sets**)
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 by detecting contradictions

- Allow us to infer a type of an object from how it is used -- like type inference in a programming language
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 and only if every instance of A is also an instance of B
  - We also say that B is a superclass of A
- Subclass graph needn’t be a tree
  - A class may have multiple superclasses
- In logic:
  - \( \text{subclass}(p, q) \iff p(x) \Rightarrow q(x) \)
  - \( \text{subclass}(p, q) \land p(x) \Rightarrow q(x) \)
The domain & range properties let us associate classes with a property’s subject and object.

- Only a course can be taught
  - domain(isTaughtBy, course)

- Only an academic staff member can teach
  - range(isTaughtBy, academicStaffMember)

- Semantics in logic:
  - domain(pred, aclass) ∧ pred(subj, obj) ⇒ aclass(subj)
  - range(pred, aclass) ∧ pred(subj, obj) ⇒ 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
  - subproperty(p, q) ∧ p(subj, obj) ⇒ q(sub, obj)
  - e.g., subproperty(mother, parent), mother(p1, p2) ⇒ 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 modelling 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)
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 domain of property $P$
  - The class of those resources that may appear as subjects in a triple with predicate $P$
  - If domain not specified, any resource can be subject

- **rdfs:range**: specifies range of a property $P$
  - The class of those resources that may appear as object in a triple with predicate $P$
  - If range not specified, any resource can be object
Examples (in Turtle)

:lecturer a rdfs:Class;
    rdfs:subClassOf :staffMember .

:phone a rdfs:Class;
    rdfs:domain :staffMember;
    rdfs:range rdfs:Literal .
- **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 class of all resources, so it is a class
- Every class is an instance of **rdfs:Class**
  - For the same reason
Subclass Hierarchy of RDFS Primitives

- **rdfs:Resource**
  - **rdfs:subClassOf**
  - **rdfs:Class**
    - **rdfs:subClassOf**
      - **rdfs:Datatype**
  - **rdfs:subClassOf**
    - **rdf:Property**
  - **rdfs:subClassOf**
    - **rdfs:Literal**
      - **rdfs:subClassOf**
        - **rdf:XMLLiteral**

Arrows represent the rdfs:subClassOf relation.
Instance Relationships of RDFS Primitives

arrows represent the rdf:type relation
RDF and RDFS Property Instances

arrows represent the rdf:type relation
Reification and Containers

- **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.
Syntactically it’s all just RDF. The data part only uses RDF vocabulary and the schema part uses RDFS vocabulary.
Ex: University Lecturers – Prefix

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

>
<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>The class of lecturers. 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

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

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

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="lecturer">
    <rdfs:comment>
        The class of lecturers. All lecturers are academic staff members.
    </rdfs:comment>
    <rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#academicStaffMember"/>
</rdfs:Class>
Example: A University

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

<rdf:Property rdf:ID="isTaughtBy">
  <rdfs:comment>
    Inherits its domain ("course") and range ("lecturer")
    from its superproperty "involves"
  </rdfs:comment>
  <rdfs:subPropertyOf rdf:resource="#involves"/>
</rdf:Property>
```
Example: A University

```xml
<rdf:Property rdf:ID="phone">
  <rdfs:comment>
    It is a property of staff members and takes literals as values.
  </rdfs:comment>
  <rdfs:domain rdf:resource="#staffMember"/>
  <rdfs:range rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Literal"/>
</rdf:Property>
```
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:RDF
  xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:rdfs="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
  xmlns:owl="http://www.w3.org/2002/07/owl#"
  xmlns:dc="http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/>

<owl:Ontology
  rdf:about="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
  dc:title="The RDF Schema vocabulary (RDFS)="/>

<rdfs:Class rdf:about="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#Resource">
  <rdfs:isDefinedBy rdf:resource="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#="/>
  <rdfs:label>Resource</rdfs:label>
  <rdfs:comment>The class resource, everything.</rdfs:comment>
</rdfs:Class>

...
@prefix rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#> .
@prefix rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#> .
@prefix owl: <http://www.w3.org/2002/07/owl#> .
@prefix dc: <http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/> .

<http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
  a owl:Ontology ;
  dc:title "The RDF Vocabulary (RDF)" ;
  dc:description "This is the RDF Schema for the RDF vocabulary defined in the RDF namespace." .

rdf:type a rdf:Property ;
  rdfs:isDefinedBy <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#> ;
  rdfs:label "type" ;
  rdfs:comment "The subject is an instance of a class." ;
  rdfs:range rdfs:Class ;
  rdfs:domain rdfs:Resource .
RDF Namespace example

rdf:Statement a rdfs:Class ;
   rdfs:subClassOf rdfs:Resource ;
   rdfs:comment "The class of RDF statements." .

rdf:subject a rdf:Property ;
   rdfs:domain rdf:Statement ;
   rdfs:range rdfs:Resource .

rdf:predicate a rdf:Property ;
   rdfs:domain rdf:Statement ;
   rdfs:range rdfs:Resource .
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:Property>
```

*predicate* is a property from a Statement to a Property
Define rdf:Resource and rdf:Class as instances of rdfs:Class & rdf:Class as a subclass of rdf:Resource

```
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="Resource"
    rdfs:comment="The most general class"/>

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="Class"
    rdfs:comment="The concept of classes. All classes are resources"/>
    <rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#Resource"/>
</rdfs:Class>
```
RDF Namespace

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

```xml
<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="Resource"
    rdfs:comment="The most general class"/>

<rdfs:Class rdf:ID="Class"
    rdfs:comment="The concept of classes. All classes are resources"/>
    <rdfs:subClassOf rdf:resource="#Resource"/>
</rdfs:Class>
```
@prefix rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#> .
@prefix rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#> .
...
<http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#> a owl:Ontology ;
   dc:title "The RDF Schema vocabulary (RDFS)" .

rdfs:Resource a rdfs:Class ;
   rdfs:comment "The class resource, everything." .

rdfs:Class a rdfs:Class ;
   rdfs:subClassOf rdfs:Resource .

rdfs:subClassOf a rdf:Property ;
   rdfs:isDefinedBy <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#> ;
   rdfs:label "subClassOf" ;
   rdfs:comment "The subject is a subclass of a class." ;
   rdfs:range rdfs:Class ;
   rdfs:domain rdfs:Class .
...

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 defined globally and not encapsulated as attributes in class definitions
  - We can define new properties w/o changing class
  - Properties can have properties
  - But: can’t narrow domain & range of properties in a subclass
Example

@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.


:fid a bio:Dog.
:john a bio:Human;
    bio:offspring :fid.

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

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.

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
- Lack of *negation* and *open world assumption* in RDF+RDFS makes detecting contradictions impossible!
  - Can’t say that Dog and Human are disjoint classes
  - Not knowing any individuals who are both doesn’t mean it’s not possible
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.
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.

Consider adding:
:john bio:hasPet :spot
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.

:john bio:hasPet :spot =>
What do we want to say?

- Many different possibilities
  - Only a dog or cat can be an object of 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’s possible for some dogs and some cats to be pets

- Not all of these can be said in RDF+RDFS

- We can express all of these in OWL *(I think)*
What do we want to say?

Diagram:
- **animal**
  - **human**: subclass
  - **dog**: subclass
  - **cat**: subclass

- **pet**: subclass
- **hasPet**
  - property
  - subclass
  - range
  - domain
What do we want to say?

- Animal
  - Subclass: human, dog, cat
- Pet
- Property: hasPet
- Domain: John hasPet Spot
What do we want to say?

All dogs are pets
All cats are pets
All pets are animals

:john bio:hasPet :spot
=>
What do we want to say?

All dogs are pets
All cats are pets
All pets are animals

:john bio:hasPet :spot
=>
What do we want to say?

- animal
  - subclass
  - domain
  - range

- pet
  - subclass
  - domain
  - range

- human
  - subclass
  - type

- dog
  - subclass
  - type

- cat
  - subclass
  - type

- john
  - hasPet

- spot
  - hasPet

- property
  - subclass

- hasPet
  - subclass
  - range
  - domain
  - type
Classes and individuals are not disjoint

- In OO systems a thing is either a class or object
  - Many KR systems are like this also
- Not so in RDFS

  bio:Species rdf:type rdfs:Class.
  bio:Dog rdf:type rdfs:Species;
  rdfs:subClassOf bio:Animal.
  :fido rdf:type bio:Dog.

- Adds richness to language but causes problems
  - In OWL DL you can’t do this
  - OWL has it’s 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’s properties are not inherited by its members
  - Can’t say “Dog’s are normally friendly” or even “All dogs are friendly”
  - Meaning of the Dog class is a set of individuals
  - Sets cannot be friendly
Set Based Model Theory Example

World

- Daisy isA Cow
- Cow kindOf Animal
- Mary isA Person
- Person kindOf Animal
- Z123ABC isA Car
- Mary drives Z123ABC

Model

- Daisy
- Cow
- Mary
- Person
- Z123ABC

Interpretation

- a
- b

{... list of facts about individuals ...}
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
RDFS too weak to describe resources in detail

- No *localised range and domain* constraints
  Can’t say range of hasChild is person when applied to persons and elephant when applied to elephants

- No *existence/cardinality* constraints
  Can’t say all *instances* of person have a mother that is a person, or that persons have exactly two parents

- No *transitive, inverse or symmetrical* properties
  Can’t say isPartOf is a transitive property, hasPart is the inverse of isPartOf or that touches is symmetrical

We need RDF terms providing these and other features: this is where OWL comes in
RDF Conclusions

- Simple **data model** based on a **graph**, independent of serializations (e.g., XML or N3)
- Has a **formal semantics** providing a dependable basis for reasoning about the meaning of RDF expressions
- Has an XML serialization, can use XML schema datatypes
- **Open world assumption:** anyone can make statements about any resource
- RDFS adds vocabulary with well defined semantics (e.g., Class, subClassOf, etc.)
- OWL addresses some of RDFS’s limitations adding richness (and complexity)