Relational Database Design: Part I

Introduction to Databases
CompSci 316 Fall 2014
Relational model: review

• A database is a collection of relations (or tables)
• Each relation has a set of attributes (or columns)
• Each attribute has a name and a domain (or type)
• Each relation contains a set of tuples (or rows)
Keys

• A set of attributes $K$ is a key for a relation $R$ if
  • In no instance of $R$ will two different tuples agree on all attributes of $K$
    • That is, $K$ can serve as a “tuple identifier”
  • No proper subset of $K$ satisfies the above condition
    • That is, $K$ is minimal

• Example: User ($uid$, $name$, $age$, $pop$)
  • $uid$ is a key of User
  • $age$ is not a key (not an identifier)
  • {$uid$, $name$} is not a key (not minimal)
Schema vs. instance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>uid</th>
<th>name</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Bart</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Milhouse</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>857</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>456</td>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Is name a key of User?
  • Yes? Seems reasonable for this instance
  • No! User names are not unique in general

• Key declarations are part of the schema
More examples of keys

• **Member** (uid, gid)
  • {uid, gid}
  ✏ A key can contain multiple attributes

• **Address** (street_address, city, state, zip)
  • {street_address, city, state}
  • {street_address, zip}
  ✏ A relation can have multiple keys!
    • We typically pick one as the “primary” key, and **underline** all its attributes, e.g., Address (**street_address**, city, state, zip)
Use of keys

• More constraints on data, fewer mistakes
• Look up a row by its key value
  • Many selection conditions are “key = value”
• “Pointers” to other rows (often across tables)
  • Example: Member (uid, gid)
    • uid is a key of User
    • gid is a key of Group
    • A Member row “links” a User row with a Group row
  • Many join conditions are “key = key value stored in another table”
Database design

• Understand the real-world domain being modeled
• Specify it using a database design model
  • More intuitive and convenient for schema design
  • But not necessarily implemented by DBMS
  • A few popular ones:
    • Entity/Relationship (E/R) model
    • Object Definition Language (ODL)
    • UML (Unified Modeling Language)
• Translate specification to the data model of DBMS
  • Relational, XML, object-oriented, etc.
• Create DBMS schema
But what about ORM?

• Automatic **object-relational mappers** are made popular by rapid Web development frameworks
  • For example, with Python SQLAlchemy:
    • You declare Python classes and their relationships
    • It automatically converts them into database tables
    • If you want, you can just work with Python objects, and never need to be aware of the database schema or write SQL

• But you still need designer discretion in all but simple cases

• Each language/library has its own syntax for creating schema and for querying/modifying data
  • Quirks and limitations cause portability problems
  • They are not necessarily easier to learn than SQL
Entity-relationship (E/R) model

- Historically and still very popular
- Concepts applicable to other design models as well
- Can think of as a “watered-down” object-oriented design model
- Primarily a design model—not directly implemented by DBMS
- Designs represented by E/R diagrams
  - We use the style of E/R diagram covered by the GMUW book; there are other styles/extensions
  - Very similar to UML diagrams
**E/R basics**

- **Entity**: a “thing,” like an object
- **Entity set**: a collection of things of the same type, like a relation of tuples or a class of objects
  - Represented as a rectangle
- **Relationship**: an association among entities
- **Relationship set**: a set of relationships of the same type (among same entity sets)
  - Represented as a diamond
- **Attributes**: properties of entities or relationships, like attributes of tuples or objects
  - Represented as ovals
An example E/R diagram

- Users are members of groups

- A key of an entity set is represented by underlining all attributes in the key
  - A key is a set of attributes whose values can belong to at most one entity in an entity set—like a key of a relation
Attributes of relationships

• Example: a user belongs to a group since a particular date

• Where do the dates go?
  • With Users?
    • But a user can join multiple groups on different dates
  • With Groups?
    • But different users can join the same group on different dates
  • With IsMemberOf!
More on relationships

• There could be multiple relationship sets between the same entity sets
  • Example: Users IsMemberOf Groups; Users Likes Groups

• In a relationship set, each relationship is uniquely identified by the entities it connects
  • Example: Between Bart and “Dead Putting Society”, there can be at most one IsMemberOf relationship and at most one Likes relationship

☞ What if Bart joins DPS, leaves, and rejoins? Can we capture historical membership information as well?
Multiplicity of relationships

- **$E$** and **$F$**: entity sets
- **Many-many**: Each entity in $E$ is related to 0 or more entities in $F$ and vice versa
  - Example:

- **Many-one**: Each entity in $E$ is related to 0 or 1 entity in $F$, but each entity in $F$ is related to 0 or more in $E$
  - Example:

- **One-one**: Each entity in $E$ is related to 0 or 1 entity in $F$ and vice versa
  - Example:

- “One” (0 or 1) is represented by an arrow
- “Exactly one” is represented by a rounded arrow
Roles in relationships

• An entity set may participate more than once in a relationship set

-May need to label edges to distinguish roles

• Examples
  • Users may be parents of others; label needed
  • Users may be friends of each other; label not needed
\(n\)-ary relationships

- Example: a user must have an initiator in order to join a group

Rule for interpreting an arrow into entity set \(E\) in an \(n\)-ary relationship:

- Pick one entity from each of the other entity sets; together they must be related to at most one entity

- Exercise: hypothetically, what do these arrows imply?
\textit{n-ary versus binary relationships}

- Can we model \textit{n-ary} relationships using just binary relationships?

- No; for example:
  - Ralph is in both abc and gov
  - Lisa has served as initiator in both abc and gov
  - Ralph was initiated by Lisa in abc, but not by her in gov
Next: two special relationships

... is part of/belongs to ...

... is a kind of ...

http://blogs.library.duke.edu/renovation/files/2012/08/Rubenstein-Library-First-Floor-Floorplan.jpg
http://www.sharky-jones.com/Sharkyjones/Artwork/taxonomy%20artwork/Class1.jpg
Weak entity sets

Sometimes, an entity’s identity depends on some others’
• The key of entity set $E$ comes not completely from its own attributes, but from the keys of one or more other entity sets
  • $E$ must link to them via many-one or one-one relationship sets
• Example: Rooms inside Buildings are partly identified by Buildings’ name
• $E$ is called a weak entity set, drawn as a double rectangle
• The relationship sets through which $E$ obtains its key are called supporting relationship sets, drawn as double diamonds
Weak entity set examples

• Seats in rooms in building

- **Rooms:***
  - number
  - capacity

- **Buildings:***
  - name
  - year

- **Seats:***
  - number
  - L/R?

• Why must double diamonds be many-one/one-one?
  • With many-many, we would not know which entity provides the key value!
Remodeling $n$-ary relationships

- An $n$-ary relationship set can be replaced by a weak entity set (called a connecting entity set) and $n$ binary relationship sets.

Note that the multiplicity constraint for IsMemberOf is lost.
ISA relationships

• Similar to the idea of subclasses in object-oriented programming: subclass = special case, fewer entities, and possibly more properties
  • Represented as a triangle (direction is important)
• Example: paid users are users, but they also get avatars (yay!)

![Diagram of ISA relationships]

- automatically “inherits” key, attributes, relationships
Summary of E/R concepts

- Entity sets
  - Keys
  - Weak entity sets

- Relationship sets
  - Attributes of relationships
  - Multiplicity
  - Roles
  - Binary versus \( n \)-ary relationships
    - Modeling \( n \)-ary relationships with weak entity sets and binary relationships
  - ISA relationships
Case study 1

• Design a database representing cities, counties, and states
  • For states, record name and capital (city)
  • For counties, record name, area, and location (state)
  • For cities, record name, population, and location (county and state)

• Assume the following:
  • Names of states are unique
  • Names of counties are only unique within a state
  • Names of cities are only unique within a county
  • A city is always located in a single county
  • A county is always located in a single state
Case study 1: first design

- County area information is repeated for every city in the county
  - Redundancy is bad (why?)
- State capital should really be a city
  - Should “reference” entities through explicit relationships
Case study 1: second design

- Technically, nothing in this design prevents a city in state $X$ from being the capital of another state $Y$, but oh well...
Case study 2

• Design a database consistent with the following:
  • A station has a unique name and an address, and is either an express station or a local station
  • A train has a unique number and an engineer, and is either an express train or a local train
  • A local train can stop at any station
  • An express train only stops at express stations
  • A train can stop at a station for any number of times during a day
  • Train schedules are the same everyday
Case study 2: first design

- Nothing in this design prevents express trains from stopping at local stations
  - We should capture as many constraints as possible
- A train can stop at a station only once during a day
  - We should not introduce unintended constraints
Case study 2: second design

Is the extra complexity worth it?