
Application of OWL 1.1 to Systems Engineering

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Use of Knowledge Representation and Reasoning in Product Development

- **Current Systems Engineering languages, standards, and tools are**
 - Restricted in (certain aspects of) their expressiveness and do not provide formal semantics
 - Yet many activities involve (some form of) reasoning, e.g., requirements verification

- **Long history of attempts to use formal methods for engineering**
 - Too hard to use, don't scale

- **Can OWL 1.1 provide a semantic integration framework?**
 - For engineering domain, with ontology capturing meaning independent of interpretation by subject matter experts?
 - So automated reasoning can be used to check design properties such as consistency and conformance with specification?
 - Not to replace SysML, UML, and engineering tools, but incorporate them into an integrated framework

We Are Developing an Air System Ontology in Protégé 4.0 Using the Fact++ Reasoner and DOLCE Ultra Lite (DUL)

The screenshot displays the Protégé 4.0 interface with three main panels:

- Asserted Class Hierarchy: PhysicalArtifact:** A tree view showing the ontology structure. The hierarchy starts with 'Thing' at the root, followed by 'Entity', 'Event', 'InformationRealization', 'Object', 'Agent', 'PhysicalObject', 'PhysicalAgent', 'PhysicalArtifact', 'AirVehicle', 'AirVehicleComponentPart', 'AirVehicleFunctionalSubsy', 'Substance', 'SocialObject', 'Quality', 'Shape', 'Specification', 'Weight', 'Region', 'Amount', 'PhysicalAttribute', 'SocialAttribute', 'SpaceRegion', and 'TimeInterval'. The 'PhysicalArtifact' class is highlighted.
- Class Annotations: PhysicalArtifact:** A panel showing annotations for the selected class. It includes a 'comment' field with the text: "This axiomatization is weak, but allows to talk of artifacts in a very general sense, i.e. including recycled objects, objects with an intentional functional change, natural objects that are given a certain function, even though they are not modified or structurally designed, etc. Immaterial (non-physical) artifacts can be modelled as situations, as collections, or as social object, depending on the task of an ontology project." and a 'label' field with the text: "Artefatto"@it.
- Class Description: PhysicalArtifact:** A panel showing the class description. It includes sections for 'Equivalent classes', 'Superclasses', and 'Inherited anonymous classes'. The 'Superclasses' section lists 'PhysicalObject' and 'isDescribedBy some Plan'. The 'Inherited anonymous classes' section lists various roles and relationships such as 'isParticipantIn some Event', 'hasRole only Role', 'isParticipantIn only Event', 'hasPart only Object', 'isPartOf only Object', 'hasPart only PhysicalObject', 'hasLocation only Entity', and 'precedes only Entity'.

...use of a foundation ontology saves a lot of time

Achievements

- **Used class constructors to define (requirements) classes of physical objects with structural and measurable properties**
- **Resulting ontology has about 300 classes**
- **Verified that requirements class is consistent**
- **Defined (design) classes characterized by generic instances**
- **Gone outside the logic to database that represents results of measurement analysis & simulation to conclude additional properties of design instance**
- **Verified that resulting extended generic design instance still satisfies requirements**

Benefits and Shortcomings of OWL 1.1

- **OWL 1.1 with DUL classes works well for representation of product structure and (static) properties**
 - Used *partOf* relations, *Quality*, with values in *Region*
- **New OWL 1.1 features crucial**
 - Complex role inclusions
 - Transfer of properties across part-whole relations
 - Extended support for datatypes
 - Numerous design constraints relate to concrete values such as weight, speed, temperature, distance, ...
 - Complex datatypes, representing, e.g., shapes or performance measures
 - Extended annotation
 - E.g., for provenance of information

Benefits and Shortcomings of OWL 1.1

- **Some requirements not (easily) expressible OWL DL**
 - Extended reasoning with datatypes and values, e.g., aggregation
 - Weight of product is sum of weights of components
 - Behavioral and other dynamic requirements
 - I.e., statements involving state change
 - Interfacing and integrating with other systems
 - Storage and representation systems such as DBs
 - Testing and measurement systems such as simulators

Lessons Learned

- **OWL 1.1 is not a replacement for systems engineering language and tools**
 - But is a good candidate for semantic integration
- **Potential for reasoning in OWL for systems engineering is great**
 - Achieved reasoning experiments for requirements consistency, and design satisfaction of requirements
- **Further language and tool development is needed**
 - Ontology management
 - Explanation and annotation
 - Modularization
 - Architecture to integrate with other computational and reasoning systems