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Answer Set Programming: A Declarative Approach to Solving Challenging Search Problems

Ilkka Niemelä

Department of Information and Computer Science
School of Science
Aalto University
Ilkka.Niemela@aalto.fi

Answer Set Programming (ASP)

- Basic principles outlined in the late 1990s
- Now well represented at research conferences and workshops (IJCAI, AAAI, ECAI, KR, . . .)
- Competitive implementations available
- Growing number of applications
- An approach to modeling and solving **knowledge intensive search problems** with defaults, exceptions, definitions:
  planning, configuration, model checking, network management, linguistics, bioinformatics, combinatorics, . . .

Content

- Introduction to Answer Set Programming (ASP)
- Stable Model Semantics
- Solving Problems with ASP
- ASP Solver Technology
- Systems, Applications, Literature

Part I

Introduction to ASP

Answer Set Programming

- Term coined by Vladimir Lifschitz in the late 1990s.
- Roots: KR, logic programming, nonmonotonic reasoning.
- Based on some formal system with semantics that assigns a theory a collection of answer sets (models).
- An **ASP solver**: computes answer sets for a theory.
- Solving a problem in ASP:
  Encode the problem as a theory such that **solutions** to the problem are given by **answer sets** of the theory.

ASP—cont'd

- Solving a problem using ASP

$$\xrightarrow[\text{instance}]{\text{Problem}} \boxed{\text{Encoding}} \xrightarrow{\text{Theory}} \boxed{\text{ASP solver}} \xrightarrow[\text{(Solutions)}]{\text{Models}}$$

-

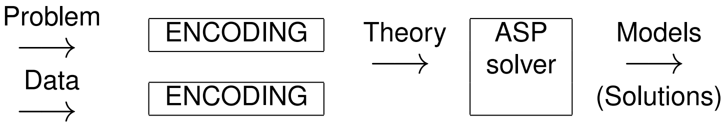
Possible formal system	Models
Propositional logic	Truth assignments
CSP	Variable assignments
Logic programs	Stable models
Model expansion	First-order structures

Example. k-coloring problem with SAT

- Given a graph (V, E) find an assignment of one of k colors to each vertex such that no two adjacent vertices share a color.
- Encoding 3-coloring using propositional logic
  - For each vertex $v \in V$ include the clauses:
    $v_1 \vee v_2 \vee v_3$
    $\neg v_1 \vee \neg v_2$
    $\neg v_1 \vee \neg v_3$
    $\neg v_2 \vee \neg v_3$
  - and for each edge $(v, u) \in E$ the clauses:
    $\neg v_1 \vee \neg u_1$
    $\neg v_2 \vee \neg u_2$
    $\neg v_3 \vee \neg u_3$
- 3-colorings of a graph (V, E) and models of the encoding correspond: vertex v colored with color i iff v_i true in a model.

ASP Using Logic Programs

- Uniform encoding:
  separate problem specification and data
- Compact, easily maintainable representation
- Integrating KR, DB, and search techniques
- Handling dynamic, knowledge intensive applications:
  data, frame axioms, exceptions, defaults, closures,
  inductive definitions



Coloring Problem (Uniform Encoding)

```
% Problem encoding
1 { colored(V,C):color(C) } 1 :- vtx(V).
:- edge(V,U), color(C), colored(V,C), colored(U,C).

% Data
vtx(a). ...
edge(a,b). ...
color(r). color(g). ...
```

☞ **Legal colorings** of the graph given as data and **stable models** of the problem encoding and data correspond: a vertex v colored with a color c iff `colored`(v, c) holds in a stable model.

What is ASP Good for?

Knowledge intensive search problems with defaults, exceptions, inductive definitions:

- Constraint satisfaction
- Planning, routing
- Computer-aided verification
- Security analysis
- Linguistics
- Network management
- Product configuration
- Combinatorics
- Diagnosis

Roots of ASP

- Logic programming: framework for merging KR, DB, and search
- PROLOG style logic programming systems not directly suitable for ASP:
  - search for proofs (not models) and produce answer substitutions
  - not entirely declarative
- In late 80s new semantical basis for “negation-as-failure” in LPs based on nonmonotonic logics: **Stable model semantics** [Gelfond and Lifschitz 1988]

Roots of ASP

- Implementations of stable model semantics led to ASP
  - Smodels [N. and Simons 1996]
- Basic ASP principles
  - V.W. Marek and M. Truszczynski. Stable models and an alternative logic programming paradigm. The Logic Programming Paradigm: a 25-Year Perspective, pages 375-398. Springer, Berlin, 1999.
  - I. N. Logic programs with stable model semantics as a constraint programming paradigm. Annals of Mathematics and Artificial Intelligence, 25(3,4):241-273, 1999.
- The term ASP coined by V. Lifschitz in 1999

Part II

Stable Model Semantics

LPs with Stable Models Semantics

- Consider first normal logic program rules

$$A \leftarrow B_1, \ldots, B_m, \text{not } C_1, \ldots, \text{not } C_n$$

- Seen as constraints on an answer set (stable model):
  - if $B_1, \ldots, B_m$ are in the set and
  - none of $C_1, \ldots, C_n$ is included,

  then A must be included in the set
- A stable model is a set of atoms
  (i) which satisfies the rules and
  (ii) where each atom is **justified** by the rules
  (negation by default; CWA)

Stable Models — cont'd

- Program:
  $b \leftarrow$
  $f \leftarrow b, \text{not } eb$
  $eb \leftarrow p$

  Stable model:
  $\{b, f\}$

- Another candidate model: $\{b, eb\}$
  satisfies the rules but is not a proper stable model:
  eb is included for no reason.
- Justifiability of stable models is captured by the notion of a **reduct** of a program.
  ☞ The stable model semantics [Gelfond/Lifschitz,1988].

Definite Programs

- For the reduct we need to consider first definite programs, i.e. normal programs without negation (not).
- Such a program P has a unique least model $LM(P)$ satisfying the rules.
- $LM(P)$ can be constructed, e.g., by forward chaining.

Examples.

P_1 :	P_2 :	P_3 :
$p \leftarrow$	$p \leftarrow q$	$p \leftarrow q$
$q \leftarrow p$	$q \leftarrow p$	$q \leftarrow p$
		$p \leftarrow$
$LM(P_1) = \{p, q\}$	$LM(P_2) = \{\}$	$LM(P_2) = \{p, q\}$

Stable Models — cont'd

- Consider the propositional (variable free) case:
  P — ground program
  S — set of ground atoms
- Reduct P^S (Gelfond-Lifschitz)
  - delete each rule having a body literal not C with $C \in S$
  - remove all negative body literals from the remaining rules
- P^S is a definite program (and has a unique least model $LM(P^S)$)
- **S is a stable model of P iff $S = LM(P^S)$.**

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Example. Stable models

S	P	P^S	$LM(P^S)$
$\{b, f\}$	$b \leftarrow$	$b \leftarrow$	$\{b, f\}$
	$f \leftarrow b, \text{not } eb$	$f \leftarrow b$	
	$eb \leftarrow p$	$eb \leftarrow p$	
$\{b, eb\}$	$b \leftarrow$	$b \leftarrow$	$\{b\}$
	$f \leftarrow b, \text{not } eb$		
	$eb \leftarrow p$	$eb \leftarrow p$	

- The set $\{b, eb\}$ is not a stable model of P but $\{b, f\}$ is the (unique) stable model of P

Example. Stable models

- A program can have **none**, one, or **multiple** stable models.
- Program: $p \leftarrow \text{not } q$, $q \leftarrow \text{not } p$ — Two stable models: $\{p\}$, $\{q\}$
- Program: $p \leftarrow \text{not } p$ — No stable models

Programs with variables

- Variables are needed for uniform encodings
- Semantics: **Herbrand models**
- A rule is seen as a shorthand for the set of its ground instantiations over the Herbrand universe of the program
- The **Herbrand universe** is the set of terms built from the constants and functions in the program

Example. Programs with variables

- For the program P:

  ```
  edge(1,2).
  edge(1,3).
  edge(2,4).
  path(X,Y) :- edge(X,Y).
  path(X,Y) :- edge(X,Z), path(Z,Y).
  ```

  The Herbrand universe is { `1,2,3,4` }.
- Hence, the rule `path(X,Y) :- edge(X,Y).` in P represents the set of ground instantiations:

  ```
  path(1,1) :- edge(1,1).
  path(1,2) :- edge(1,2).
  path(2,1) :- edge(2,1).
  path(2,2) :- edge(2,2).
  path(1,3) :- edge(1,3).
  ...
  ```

Stable Models — cont'd

- A stratified program (no recursion through negation) has a unique stable model (canonical model).
- It is **linear time to check** whether a set of atoms is a stable model of a ground program.
- It is **NP-complete to decide** whether a ground program has a stable model.
- Normal programs (without function symbols) give a **uniform encoding** to every NP search problem.

Extensions to Normal Programs

- An **integrity constraint** is a rule without a head:

$$\leftarrow B_1, \ldots, B_m, \text{not } C_1, \ldots, \text{not } C_n$$

  - It can be seen as a shorthand for

$$F \leftarrow \text{not } F, B_1, \ldots, B_m, \text{not } C_1, \ldots, \text{not } C_n$$

  - and it eliminates stable models where the body $B_1, \ldots, B_m, \text{not } C_1, \ldots, \text{not } C_n$ is satisfied.

- **Classical negation**
  can be handled by normal programs (renaming):

$p \leftarrow \text{not } \neg p$	corresponds to	$p \leftarrow \text{not } p'$ $\leftarrow p, p'$

Extensions to Normal Programs

- **Encoding of choices**
  - A key point in ASP
  - Choices can be encoded using normal rules with unstratified negation

$$
\begin{aligned}
a &\leftarrow \text{not } a', b, \text{not } c \\
a' &\leftarrow \text{not } a
\end{aligned}
$$

  - **Choice rules**, however, provide a much more intuitive encoding:

$$\{a\} \leftarrow b, \text{not } c$$

  - Disjunctive rules: $a \vee a' \leftarrow b, \text{not } c$
    - Higher expressivity and complexity (Σ_2^p)
    - Special purpose implementations (`dlv`,`claspD`)
    - Can be implemented also using an ASP solver for normal programs as the **core engine** (`GnT`)

Extensions — cont'd

- Many extensions implemented using an ASP solver as the **core engine**:
  - preferences
  - nested logic programs
  - circumscription, planning, diagnosis, ...
  - HEX-programs
  - DL-programs
- Aggregates (count, sum, ...)
- Optimization
- Function symbols
- Built-in predicates and functions:

```
nextstate(Y,X) :- time(X), time(Y), Y = X + 1.
```

Example. Rules in `lparse`

- Cardinality constraints

```
2 { hd_1,...,hd_n } 4
```

- Weight constraints

```
200 [ hd_1 = 60,...,hd_n = 130]
```

A.k.a. **pseudo-Boolean constraints**:

$$60hd_1 + \cdots + 130hd_n \geq 200$$

- Optimization

```
minimize [ hd_1 = 100,...,hd_n = 180 ].
```

- Conditional literals:
  expressing sets in cardinality and weight constraints

```
1 {colored(V,C):color(C)} 1 :- vtx(V).
```

Part III

Solving Problems using ASP

Programming Methodology

- Uniform encodings: separate data and problem encoding
- Basic methodology: **generate and test**
  - **Generator rules**: provide candidate answer sets (typically encoded using choice constructs)
  - **Tester rules**: eliminate non-valid candidates (typically encoded using integrity constraints)
  - **Optimization statements**: Criteria for preferred answer sets (typically using cost functions)

Example: Coloring

```
% Problem encoding

% Generator rule
1 {colored(V,C):color(C)} 1 :- vtx(V).

% Tester rule
:- edge(V,U), color(C), colored(V,C), colored(U,C).

% Optimization statement
minimize {colored(V,r):vtx(V)}.

% Data
vtx(a). ...
edge(a,b). ...
color(r). color(g). ...
```

Example: Review assignment

```
% Data
reviewer(r1),...
paper(p1), ...
classA(r1,p1), ... % Preferred papers
classB(r1,p2), ... % Doable papers
coi(r1,p3), ...    % Conflicts of interest

% Problem encoding

% Generator rule
% Each paper is assigned 3 reviewers
3 { assigned(P,R):reviewer(R) } 3 :- paper(P).
```

Review Assignment — cont'd

```
% Tester rules
% No paper assigned to a reviewer with coi
:- assigned(P,R), coi(R,P).
% No reviewer has an unwanted paper.
:- paper(P), reviewer(R),
   assigned(P,R), not classA(R,P), not classB(R,P).
% No reviewer has more than 8 papers
:- 9 { assigned(P,R): paper(P) }, reviewer(R).
% Each reviewer has at least 7 papers
:- { assigned(P,R): paper(P) } 6, reviewer(R).
% No reviewer has more than 2 classB papers
:-  3 { assignedB(P1,R): paper(P1) }, reviewer(R).
assignedB(P,R) :- classB(R,P), assigned(P,R).
% Minimize the number of classB papers
minimize [ assignedB(P,R):paper(P):reviewer(R) ].
```

Fixed Points

- The stable model semantics captures inherently **minimal fixed points** enabling compact encodings of **closures and inductive definitions**
- **Example.** Reachability from node s.

```
r(s).
r(V) :- edge(U,V), r(U).
edge(a,b). ...
```

- The program captures reachability:
  it has a unique stable model S s.t. v is reachable from s iff $r(v) \in S$.
- **Example.** Transitive closure of a relation $q(X, Y)$

```
t(X,Y) :- q(X,Y).
t(X,Y) :- q(X,Z), t(Z,Y).
```

ASP vs Other Approaches

- SAT, CSP, (M)IP
  - Similarities: search for models (assignments to variables) satisfying a set of constraints.
  - Differences: no logical variables, fixed points, database, DDB or KR techniques available, search space given by variable domains.
- LP, CLP:
  - Similarities: database and DDB techniques.
  - Differences: Search for proofs (not models), non-declarative features.

Part IV

ASP Solver Technology

ASP Solvers

- ASP solvers need to handle two challenging tasks
  - complex data
  - search
- The approach has been to use
  - **logic programming and deductive data base techniques** for the former
  - **SAT/CSP related search techniques** for the latter
- In the current systems: separation of concerns

  ☞ A two level architecture

Architecture of ASP Solvers

Typically a two level architecture employed

- **Grounding** step handles complex data:
  - Given program P with variables, generate a set of ground instances of the rules which preserves the models.
  - LP and DDB techniques employed.
- **Model search** for ground programs:
  - Special-purpose search procedures
  - Exploiting SAT/SMT solver technology

Typical ASP System Tool Chain

program (variables) $\rightarrow$ $\boxed{\text{Grounder}}$ $\rightarrow$ ground program $\rightarrow$ $\boxed{\text{Model finder}}$ $\rightarrow$ stable models

- Grounder:
  - (deductive) DB techniques
  - built-in predicates/functions (e.g. arithmetic)
  - function symbols
- Model finder:
  - SAT technology (propagation, conflict driven clause learning)
  - Special propagation rules for rules
  - Support for cardinality and weight constraints and optimization built-in

SAT and ASP

- ASP systems have much more expressive modelling languages than SAT: variables, built-ins, aggregates, optimization
- For model finding for ground normal programs results carry over: efficient unit propagation techniques, conflict driven learning, backjumping, restarting, ...
- ASP model finders have special (unfounded set based) propagation rules for recursive rules
- ASP model finders have **built-in support for aggregates** (cardinality and weight constraints) and optimization
- One pass compact translations to SAT and SMT available: progress in SAT and SMT solver technology can also be exploited directly in ASP model finding.

Part V

Systems, Applications, Literature

Some ASP Systems

Grounders:

`dlv`	`http://www.dbai.tuwien.ac.at/proj/dlv/`
`gringo`	`http://potassco.sourceforge.net/`
`lparse`	`http://www.tcs.hut.fi/Software/smodels/`
`XASP`	with XSB `http://xsb.sourceforge.net`

Model finders (disjunctive programs):

`claspD`	`http://potassco.sourceforge.net/`
`dlv`	`http://www.dbai.tuwien.ac.at/proj/dlv/`
`GnT`	`http://www.tcs.hut.fi/Software/gnt/`

Some ASP Systems

Model finders (non-disjunctive programs):

`ASSAT`	`http://assat.cs.ust.hk/`
`clasp`	`http://potassco.sourceforge.net/`
`CMODELS`	`http://userweb.cs.utexas.edu/users/tag/cmodels/`
`LP2DIFF`	`http://www.tcs.hut.fi/Software/lp2diff/`
`LP2SAT`	`http://www.tcs.hut.fi/Software/lp2sat/`
`Smodels`	`http://www.tcs.hut.fi/Software/smodels/`
`SUP`	`http://userweb.cs.utexas.edu/users/tag/sup/`

- For systems, performance, benchmarks, and examples, see for instance the latest **ASP competition**:
  `http://dtai.cs.kuleuven.be/events/ASP-competition/`

Applications

- Planning
  For example, USAdvisor project at Texas Tech:
  A decision support system for the flight controllers of space shuttles
- Product configuration
  –Intelligent software configurator for Debian/Linux
  –WeCoTin project (Web Configuration Technology)
  –Spin-off (`http://www.variantum.com/`)
- Computer-aided verification
  –Partial order methods
  –Bounded model checking

Applications—cont'd

- Data and information Integration
- Semantic web reasoning
- Team building at Gioia Tauro Seaport
- Repairing large-scale biological networks
- ASP-based music composition system (`anton-demo.wav`)
- VLSI routing, planning, combinatorial problems, network management, network security, security protocol analysis, linguistics ...
- WASP Showcase Collection
  `http://www.kr.tuwien.ac.at/research/projects/WASP/showcase.html`

Some Literature

- C. Baral. Knowledge Representation, Reasoning and Declarative Problem Solving. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- V. Lifschitz. Foundations of Logic Programming. `http://www.cs.utexas.edu/~vl/papers/flp.ps`
- V. Lifschitz. Introduction to Answer Set Programming. `http://www.cs.utexas.edu/~vl/papers/esslli.ps`
- T. Eiter, G. Ianni, and T. Krennwallner. A Primer on Answer Set Programming. `http://www.kr.tuwien.ac.at/staff/tkren/pub/2009/rw2009-asp.pdf`

Conclusions

ASP = KR + DB + search

- ASP emerging as a viable KR tool
- Efficient implementations under development
- Expanding functionality and ease of use
- Growing range of applications

Topics for Further Research

- Intelligent grounding
- Model computation without full grounding
- Program transformations, optimizations
- Model search
- Distributed and parallel implementation techniques
- Language extensions
- Programming methodology
- Testing techniques
- Tool support: debuggers, IDEs