Chapter 8
The Enhanced Entity-Relationship (EER) Model
Chapter 8 Outline

- Subclasses, Superclasses, and Inheritance
- Specialization and Generalization
- Constraints and Characteristics of Specialization and Generalization Hierarchies
- Modeling of UNION Types Using Categories
Chapter 8 Outline (cont’d.)

- A Sample UNIVERSITY EER Schema, Design Choices, and Formal Definitions
- Example of Other Notation: Representing Specialization and Generalization in UML Class Diagrams
- Data Abstraction, Knowledge Representation, and Ontology Concepts
The Enhanced Entity-Relationship (EER) Model

- Enhanced ER (EER) model
  - Created to design more accurate database schemas
    - Reflect the data properties and constraints more precisely
  - More complex requirements than traditional applications
Subclasses, Superclasses, and Inheritance

- EER model includes all modeling concepts of the ER model
- In addition, EER includes:
  - Subclasses and superclasses
  - Specialization and generalization
  - Category or union type
  - Attribute and relationship inheritance
Subclasses, Superclasses, and Inheritance (cont’d.)

- **Enhanced ER** or **EER diagrams**
  - Diagrammatic technique for displaying these concepts in an EER schema

- **Subtype** or **subclass** of an entity type
  - Subgroupings of entities that are meaningful
  - Represented explicitly because of their significance to the database application
Subclasses, Superclasses, and Inheritance (cont’d.)

- Terms for relationship between a superclass and any one of its subclasses
  - Superclass/subclass
  - Supertype/subtype
  - Class/subclass relationship

- Type inheritance
  - Subclass entity inherits all attributes and relationships of superclass
Figure 8.1
EER diagram notation to represent subclasses and specialization.

Three specializations of EMPLOYEE:
{SECRETARY, TECHNICIAN, ENGINEER}  
{MANAGER}  
{HOURLY_EMPLOYEE, SALARIED_EMPLOYEE}
Specialization and Generalization

- **Specialization**
  - Process of defining a set of subclasses of an entity type
  - Defined on the basis of some distinguishing characteristic of the entities in the superclass

- **Subclass can define:**
  - Specific attributes
  - Specific relationship types
Figure 8.2
Instances of a specialization.
Specialization and Generalization (cont’d.)

- Certain attributes may apply to some but not all entities of the superclass.
- Some relationship types may be participated in only by members of the subclass.
Generalization

- Reverse process of abstraction
- **Generalize** into a single **superclass**
  - Original entity types are special subclasses
- **Generalization**
  - Process of defining a generalized entity type from the given entity types
Constraints and Characteristics of Specialization and Generalization Hierarchies

- Constraints that apply to a single specialization or a single generalization
- Differences between specialization/generalization lattices and hierarchies
Constraints on Specialization and Generalization

- May be several or one subclass
- Determine entity subtype:
  - **Predicate-defined** (or **condition-defined**) subclasses
  - **Attribute-defined** specialization
  - **User-defined**
Constraints on Specialization and Generalization (cont’d.)

- **Disjointness constraint**
  - Specifies that the subclasses of the specialization must be disjoint

- **Completeness (or totalness) constraint**
  - May be **total** or **partial**

- Disjointness and completeness constraints are independent
Specialization and Generalization Hierarchies and Lattices

- **Specialization hierarchy**
  - Every subclass participates as a subclass in only one class/subclass relationship
  - Results in a **tree structure** or **strict hierarchy**

- **Specialization lattice**
  - Subclass can be a subclass in more than one class/subclass relationship
Figure 8.7
A specialization lattice with multiple inheritance for a UNIVERSITY database.
Specialization and Generalization Hierarchies and Lattices (cont’d.)

- **Multiple inheritance**
  - Subclass with more than one superclass
  - If attribute (or relationship) originating in the same superclass inherited more than once via different paths in lattice
    - Included only once in shared subclass

- **Single inheritance**
  - Some models and languages limited to single inheritance
Utilizing Specialization and Generalization in Refining Conceptual Schemas

- **Specialization process**
  - Start with entity type then define subclasses by successive specialization
  - **Top-down conceptual refinement process**
- **Bottom-up conceptual synthesis**
  - Involves generalization rather than specialization
Modeling of UNION Types Using Categories

- Union type or a category
  - Represents a single superclass/subclass relationship with more than one superclass
  - Subclass represents a collection of objects that is a subset of the UNION of distinct entity types
  - Attribute inheritance works more selectively
  - Category can be total or partial
- Some modeling methodologies do not have union types
A Sample UNIVERSITY EER Schema, Design Choices, and Formal Definitions

The UNIVERSITY Database Example

- UNIVERSITY database
  - Students and their majors
  - Transcripts, and registration
  - University’s course offerings
Figure 8.9
An EER conceptual schema for a UNIVERSITY database.
Design Choices for Specialization/Generalization

- Many specializations and subclasses can be defined to make the conceptual model accurate.
- If subclass has few specific attributes and no specific relationships:
  - Can be merged into the superclass.
Design Choices for Specialization/Generalization (cont’d.)

- If all the subclasses of a specialization/generalization have few specific attributes and no specific relationships
  - Can be merged into the superclass
  - Replace with one or more type attributes that specify the subclass or subclasses that each entity belongs to
Design Choices for Specialization/Generalization (cont’d.)

- Union types and categories should generally be avoided
- Choice of disjoint/overlapping and total/partial constraints on specialization/generalization
  - Driven by rules in miniworld being modeled
Formal Definitions for the EER Model Concepts

- **Class**
  - Set or collection of entities
  - Includes any of the EER schema constructs of group entities

- **Subclass**
  - Class whose entities must always be a subset of the entities in another class

- **Specialization**
  - Set of subclasses that have same superclass
Formal Definitions for the EER Model Concepts (cont’d.)

- **Generalization**
  - Generalized entity type or superclass

- **Predicate-defined**
  - Predicate on the attributes of is used to specify which entities in \( C \) are members of \( S \)

- **User-defined**
  - Subclass that is not defined by a predicate
Formal Definitions for the EER Model Concepts (cont’d.)

- **Category**
  - Class that is a subset of the union of n defining superclasses

- **Relationship type**
  - Any class can participate in a relationship
Example of Other Notation

- Representing specialization and generalization in UML class diagrams
  - Basic notation
    - See Figure 8.10
  - Base class
    - Root superclass
  - Leaf classes
    - Subclasses (leaf nodes)
Figure 8.10
A UML class diagram corresponding to the EER diagram in Figure 8.7, illustrating UML notation for specialization/generalization.
Data Abstraction, Knowledge Representation, and Ontology Concepts

- Goal of knowledge representation (KR) techniques
  - Accurately model some domain of knowledge
  - Create an ontology that describes the concepts of the domain and how these concepts are interrelated
- Goals of KR are similar to those of semantic data models
  - Important similarities and differences
Classification and Instantiation

- **Classification**
  - Systematically assigning similar objects/entities to object classes/entity types

- **Instantiation**
  - Inverse of classification
  - Generation and specific examination of distinct objects of a class
Classification and Instantiation (cont’d.)

- Exception objects
  - Differ in some respects from other objects of class
  - KR schemes allow such class properties
- One class can be an instance of another class (called a meta-class)
  - Cannot be represented directly in EER model
Identification

- Abstraction process
- Classes and objects are made uniquely identifiable by means of some identifier
- Needed at two levels
  - To distinguish among database objects and classes
  - To identify database objects and to relate them to their real-world counterparts
Specialization and Generalization

- **Specialization**
  - Classify a class of objects into more specialized subclasses

- **Generalization**
  - Generalize several classes into a higher-level abstract class
  - Includes the objects in all these classes
Aggregation and Association

- **Aggregation**
  - Abstraction concept for building composite objects from their component objects

- **Association**
  - Associate objects from several independent classes

- **Main structural distinction**
  - When an association instance is deleted
    - Participating objects may continue to exist
Figure 8.11
Aggregation. (a) The relationship type INTERVIEW. (b) Including JOB_OFFER in a ternary relationship type (incorrect). (c) Having the RESULTS_IN relationship participate in other relationships (not allowed in ER). (d) Using aggregation and a composite (molecular) object (generally not allowed in ER but allowed by some modeling tools). (e) Correct representation in ER.
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Ontologies and the Semantic Web

- Documents contain less structure than database information does

- **Semantic Web**
  - Allow meaningful information exchange and search among machines

- **Ontology**
  - Specification of a *conceptualization*

- **Specification**
  - Language and vocabulary terms used to specify conceptualization
Summary

- Enhanced ER or EER model
  - Extensions to ER model that improve its representational capabilities
  - Subclass and its superclass
  - Category or union type
- Notation and terminology of UML for representing specialization and generalization