RQL: A Declarative Query Language for RDF*

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ABSTRACT

Real-scale Semantic Web applications, such as Knowledge Portals and E-Marketplaces, require the management of large volumes of metadata, i.e., information describing the available Web content and services. Better knowledge about their meaning, usage, accessibility or quality will considerably facilitate an automated processing of Web resources. The Resource Description Framework (RDF) enables the creation and exchange of metadata as normal Web data. Although voluminous RDF descriptions are already appearing, sufficiently expressive declarative languages for querying both RDF descriptions and schemas are still missing. In this paper, we propose a new RDF query language called RQL. It is a typed functional language (a la OQL) and relies on a formal model for directed labeled graphs permitting the interpretation of superimposed resource descriptions by means of one or more RDF schemas. RQL adapts the functionality of semistructured/XML query languages to the peculiarities of RDF but, foremost, it enables to uniformly query both resource descriptions and schemas. We illustrate the RQL syntax, semantics and typing system by means of a set of example queries and report on the performance of our persistent RDF Store employed by the RQL interpreter.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.2.3 [**Information Systems**]: Database Management-Query Languages

General Terms

Management, Languages, Standardization

1. INTRODUCTION

In the next evolution step of the Web, termed the *Semantic Web* [10], vast amounts of information resources (data, documents, programs) will be made available along with various kinds of descriptive information, i.e., *metadata*. Better knowledge about the meaning, usage, accessibility or quality of web resources will considerably facilitate automated processing of available Web content/services. The Resource Description Framework (RDF) [39, 12] enables the creation and exchange of resource metadata as any other Web data. More precisely, RDF provides i) a *Standard Representation Language* for metadata based on *directed labeled graphs* in which nodes are called *resources* (or *literals*) and edges are called *properties*; ii) a *Schema Definition Language* (RDFS) [12], for creating vocabularies of labels for these graph nodes (called *classes*) and edges (called *property types*); and iii) an *XML syntax* for expressing metadata and schemas in a form that is both humanly readable and machine understandable. The most distinctive feature of the model of RDF is its ability to superimpose several descriptions for the same Web resources in a variety of application contexts (e.g., advertisement, recommendation, copyrights, content rating, push channels, etc.). Yet, declarative languages for smoothly querying both RDF resource descriptions and related schemas, are still missing.

This ability is particularly useful for real-scale Semantic Web applications such as *Knowledge Portals* and *E-Marketplaces* that require the management of voluminous RDF description bases. For instance, in Knowledge Portals such as Open Directory Project (ODP), CNET, XMLTree[1], various information resources such as sites, articles, etc. are aggregated and classified under large hierarchies of thematic categories or topics. These descriptions are exploited by push channels aiming at personalizing Portal access (e.g., on a specific theme), using standards like the RDF Site Summary [9]. Furthermore, the entire catalog of Portals can be exported in RDF, as in the case of Open Directory, comprising around 170M of Subject Topics and 700M of indexed URIs. Unfortunately, searching Portal catalogs is still limited to keyword-based retrieval or theme navigation. The same is true for white (or yellow) pages of emerging E-Marketplaces, where descriptions involve not only information about potential buyers and sellers, but also about provided/requested Web services (i.e., programs). Standards like UDDI [22] and ebXML [27] intend to support registries with service advertisements using keywords for categorization under geographical (e.g., ISO 19119), industry (e.g., NAICS) or product (e.g., UNSPSC) classification taxonomies. There is an ongoing effort to express service descriptions and schemas in RDF (e.g., see the RDF version of WSDL [55]) and take benefit from existing RDF support (e.g., query engines) in service matchmaking (i.e., matching service offers with service requests).

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[1] See www.dmoz.org, home.cnet.com, www.xmltree.com respectively.

It becomes evident that managing voluminous *RDF description bases* and *schemas* with existing low-level APIs and file-based implementations [50] does not ensure fast deployment and easy maintenance of real-scale Semantic Web applications. Still, we want to benefit from database technology in order to support *declarative access* and *logical and physical RDF data independence*. In this way, Semantic Web applications have to specify in a high-level language only *which* resources need to be accessed, leaving the task of determining *how* to efficiently store or access their descriptions to the underlying *RDF database engine*.

Motivated by the above issues, we propose a new query language for RDF descriptions and schemas. Our language, called *RQL*, relies on a formal graph model that captures the RDF modeling primitives (i.e., labels on both graph nodes and edges, taxonomies of labels) and permits the interpretation of superimposed resource descriptions. In this context, *RQL* adapts the functionality of semistructured or XML query languages [1] to the peculiarities of RDF but also extends this functionality in order to *uniformly query* both RDF descriptions and schemas. Thus, users are able to query resources described according to their preferred schema, while discovering, in the sequel, how the same resources are also described using another classification schema. To illustrate our claims, we are using as a running example a cultural community Web Portal (see Section 2). Then, we make the following contributions:

- In Section 3, we introduce a formal data model and type system for *description bases* created according to the RDF Model & Syntax and Schema specifications [39, 12]. In order to support superimposed RDF descriptions, the main modeling challenge is to represent properties as *self-existent* individuals, as well as to introduce a graph instantiation mechanism permitting multiple classification of resources.
- In Section 4, we propose *RQL*, the first declarative language for querying RDF description bases. *RQL* is a typed language following a functional approach (a la OQL [15]). Its functionality is illustrated by means of numerous useful RDF queries. The novelty of *RQL* lies in its ability to smoothly combine schema and data querying while exploiting all RDF modeling features.
- In Section 5, we describe our persistent RDF Store (RSSDB) for loading resource descriptions in an object-relational DBMS by exploiting the available RDF schema knowledge. In particular, we illustrate the performance of RSSDB for storing and querying voluminous RDF descriptions, such as the ODP catalog. For this purpose, we rely on a benchmark of RDF query templates depicting the core *RQL* functionality.

Finally, in Section 6 we summarize our contribution and draw directions for further research.

2. MOTIVATING EXAMPLE

In this section, we briefly recall the main modeling primitives proposed in the Resource Description Framework (RDF) Model & Syntax and Schema (RDFS) specifications [39, 12] using as a running example a cultural Portal catalog. To build this catalog, we need to describe cultural resources (e.g., Museum Web sites, Web pages with exhibited artifacts) both from a Portal administrator and a museum specialist perspective. The former is essentially interested in administrative metadata (e.g., mime-types, file sizes, modification dates) of resources on the Web, whereas the latter needs to focus more on their semantic description using notions such as Artist, Artifact, Museum and their possible relationships. These semantic descriptions[2] can be constructed using existing ontologies (e.g., the International Council of Museums CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model[3]) or vocabularies (e.g., the Open Directory Topics[4]) and cannot always be extracted automatically from resource content or links.

The lower part of Figure 1 depicts the descriptions created for two Museum Web sites (resources `&r4` and `&r7`) and three images of artifacts available on the Web (resources `&r2`, `&r3` and `&r6`). We hereforth use the prefix `&` to denote the involved resource URIs (i.e., resource identity). Let us first consider resource `&r4`. On the one hand, it is described as an `ExtResource` having two properties: `title` with value the string "Reina Sofia Museum" and `last_modified` with value the date 2000/06/09. On the other, `&r4` is also classified under `Museum`, in order to capture its semantic relationships with other Web resources such as artifact images. For instance, we can state that `&r2` is an instance of class `Painting` and has a property `exhibited` with value the resource `&r4` and a property `technique` with string value "oil on canvas". Resources `&r2`, `&r3` and `&r6` are *multiply classified*: under `ExtResource` and under `Painting` and `Sculpture` respectively. Finally, in order to interrelate artifact resources, some intermediate resources for artists (i.e., which are not on the Web) need to be generated, as for instance, `&r1` and `&r5`. More precisely, `&r1` is a resource instance of class `Painter` and its URI is given internally by the Portal description base. Associated with `&r1` are: a) two `paints` properties with values the resources `&r2` and `&r3`; and b) a `fname` property with value "Pablo" and a `lname` property with value "Picasso". Hence, diverse descriptions of the same Web resources (e.g., `&r2` as `ExtResource` and `Museum`) are easily and naturally represented in RDF as *directed labeled graphs*. The labels for graph nodes (i.e., classes or literal types) and edges (i.e., properties) are defined in RDF schemas.

The upper part of Figure 1 depicts two such schemas, intended for museum specialists and Portal administrators respectively. The scope of the declarations is determined by the corresponding *namespace* definition of each schema, e.g., **ns1** (`www.icom.com/schema1.rdf`) and **ns2** (`www.oclc.com/-schema2.rdf`). The uniqueness of schema labels is ensured by using namespaces as prefixes of the corresponding class and property names (for simplicity, we will hereforth omit namespaces). In the former schema, the property `creates`, is defined with domain the class `Artist` and range the class `Artifact`. Note that properties serve to represent *attributes* (or *characteristics*) of resources as well as *relationships* (or *roles*) between resources. Furthermore, both classes and properties can be organized into taxonomies carrying inclusion semantics (multiple specialization is also supported). For example, the class `Painter` is a subclass of `Artist` while the property `paints` (or `sculpts`) refines `creates`. In a nutshell, *RDF properties are self-existent individuals* (i.e., decoupled from class definitions) and are by default *unordered* (e.g., there is no order between the properties `fname` and `lname`), *optional* (e.g., the property `material` is not used),

[2] Note that the complexity of semantic descriptions depends on the nature of resources (e.g., sites, documents, data, programs) and the breadth of the community domains of discourse (e.g., targeting horizontal or vertical markets).

[3] www.ics.forth.gr/proj/isst/Activities/CIS/cidoc

[4] www.dmoz.org

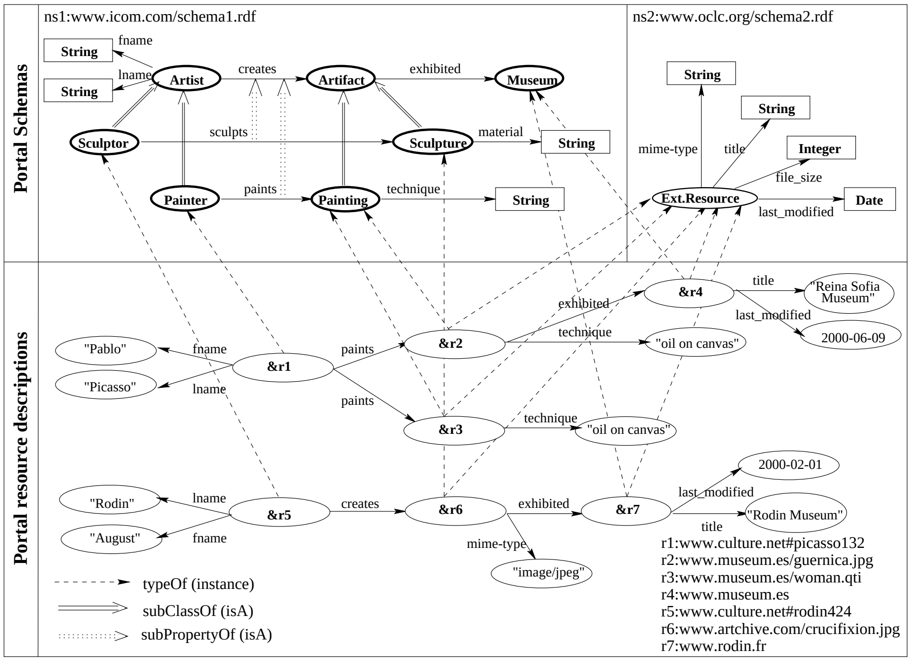


Figure 1: An example of RDF resource descriptions for a Cultural Portal

multi-valued (e.g., we have two paints properties), and they can be *inherited* (e.g., creates). Note that, although multiple resource classification can be expressed by multiple class specialization, it is an unrealistic alternative, since it implies that, for each class C in our cultural schema, a common subclass of C and ExtResource has to be created. However, in a Web setting, resources are usually described by various communities using their independently developed schemas.

2.1 RDF/S vs. Well-Known Data Models

The RDF modeling primitives are reminiscent of knowledge representation languages like Telos [47, 49] as well as of data models proposed for net-based applications such as Superimposed Information Systems [25, 41] and LDAP Directory Services [34, 8]. It becomes clear that the RDF modeling primitives are substantially different from those defined in object or relational database models [3]:

- *Classes do not define object or relation types*: an instance of a class is just a resource URI without any value/state (e.g., the URI &r2 is an instance of Painting regardless of any property associated to it);
- *Resources (URIs) may belong to different classes* not necessarily pairwise related by specialization: the instances of a class may have associated quite different properties, while there is no other class on which the union of these properties is defined (e.g., the different properties of &r2 and &r4 which both are instances of ExtResource);
- *Properties may also be refined* by respecting a minimal set of constraints i.e., domain and range compatibilities (e.g., the property creates).

In addition, less rigid models, such as those proposed for semistructured or XML databases [1], also fail to capture the semantics of RDF description bases. Clearly, most semistructured formalisms, such as OEM [48] or UnQL [13], are totally schemaless (allowing arbitrary labels on edges or nodes but not both). Moreover, semistructured systems offering typing features (e.g., pattern instantiation) like YAT [20, 21], cannot exploit the RDF class (or property) hierarchies. Finally, RDF schemas have substantial differences from XML DTDs [11] or the more recent XML Schema proposal [53, 42]: due to multiple classification, resources may have quite irregular structures (e.g., the different descriptions of &r2 and &r4) modeled only through an exception mechanism a la SGML [33] in the XML proposals. Last but not least, they can't distinguish between *entity labels* (e.g., Artist) and *relationship labels* (e.g., creates). On the other hand, XML element content models (i.e., regular expressions) cannot be expressed in RDF since properties are - by default - *unordered*, *optional* and *multi-valued*. As a consequence, query languages proposed for semistructured or XML data (e.g., LOREL [4], StruQL [28], XML-QL [26], XML-GL [16], Quilt [23] or the recent XQuery language [17]) fail to interpret the semantics of RDF node or edge labels. The same is true for the languages proposed to query standard database schemas (e.g., SchemaSQL [38], XSQL [36], Noodle [46]).

Similar difficulties are encountered in logic-based frameworks, which have been proposed for RDF manipulation. For instance, SiLRI [24] proposes some RDF reasoning mechanisms using F-logic [37]. Although powerful, this approach does not capture the peculiarities of RDF: refinement of properties is not allowed (since slots are locally defined within classes), container values are not supported (since it relies on a pure object model), while resource descriptions having heterogeneous types cannot be accommodated (due to strict typing). Metalog [43] uses Datalog to model RDF properties as binary predicates and suggests an extension of the RDFS specification with variables and logical connectors (and, or, not, implies). However, storing and querying RDF descriptions with Metalog almost totally disregards RDF schemas. Furthermore, the recently proposed query language for DAML+OIL [54, 29] (a Description Logic extension of RDF/S) has substantially limited expressive power compared to *RQL*: only existential quantification is supported, disjunction is expressible only through the implicit existential quantification while (safe) negation, nested queries and aggregate functions are not supported.

Finally, a number of languages [45, 51, 52] have been proposed for querying RDF descriptions and schemas under the form of triples (i.e., atomic statements). These languages consider a flat relational representation of RDF statements (i.e., a SQL table with attributes subject, predicate, and object), as a logical model for issuing queries on RDF graphs. Simple RQL queries (i.e., without transitive closure on class/property hierarchies) can be easily rewritten into these languages, leaving to the users the arduous task of expressing path navigation with explicit join conditions.

3. A FORMAL MODEL FOR RDF

In this section we introduce a graph data model bridging and reconciling W3C RDF Model & Syntax with Schema specifications [39, 12]. Compared to the RDF/S specifications, the main contribution of our formal model is the introduction of a type system for RDF schemas, as well as the representation of RDF statements as atomic or complex data values. Then the connection between the two worlds, is ensured by an almost standard type interpretation function. These are two crucial issues for defining the semantics and optimization features of RDF query languages such as RQL. We believe that our model gives a valuable input to ongoing W3C formalization efforts of RDF [31].

RDF resource descriptions [39] are represented as *directed labeled graphs* whose nodes are called *resources* (or *literals*) and edges are called *properties*. RDFS schemas [12] essentially define vocabularies of labels for graph nodes, called *classes* or *literal types* and edges called *property types*. Both kinds of labels can be organized into taxonomies carrying inclusion semantics (i.e., class or property subsumption).

More formally, each RDF schema uses a finite set of class names C and property names P. Properties are then defined using class names or literal types so that: for each $p \in P$, $domain(p) \in C$ and $range(p) \in C \cup \mathcal{L}$, where $\mathcal{L}$ is a set of *Literal type names* like *string*, *integer*, *date*, etc. We denote by $H = (N, \prec)$ a hierarchy of class and property names, where $N = C \cup P$. H is *well-formed* if $\prec$ is a smallest partial ordering such that: if $p_1, p_2 \in P$ and $p_1 \prec p_2$, then $domain(p_1) \preceq domain(p_2)$ and $range(p_1) \preceq range(p_2)$. Additionally, we impose a *unique name assumption* on H.

In the RDF jargon, a *statement* is composed of a named edge (a property) and two end nodes (a resource and a value). Each statement can be represented by a *triple* having a *subject* (e.g., `&r1`), a *predicate* (e.g., `fname`), and an *object* (e.g., "Pablo"). The subject and object should be of classes compatible (under specialization) with the domain and range of the predicate[5] (e.g., the `rdf:typeof &r1` is declared to be the class `Painter`). Note that type declarations in RDF are not only limited to relating resources and classes, but also to relating schema classes or properties with meta-classes (e.g., `rdfs:Class` and `rdf:Property` are the two default RDF meta-classes). Moreover, meta-classes may also appear in the domain and range of properties. Although not illustrated in Figure 1, RDF also supports structured values called *containers* for grouping statements, namely `rdf:Bag` (i.e., multi-sets) and `rdf:Sequence` (i.e., tuples), as well as higher-order statements (i.e., *reification*) which are not treated here. In the rest of the paper, the term *description base* will be used to denote a set of RDF statements and the term *description schema* to denote one or more *well-formed* hierarchies of RDF names used to label RDF statements. Compared to the current status of the W3C RDF/S specifications [39, 12], our model imposes a single domain and range constraint on properties (i.e., they are not anymore considered as relations) and provides a richer and still flexible type system. Readers are referred to [32] for formal definitions of the imposed constraints. These constraints guarantee that the *union of two well-formed RDF schema hierarchies* is *always well-formed* w.r.t. the inclusion semantics of class and property subsumption.

3.1 A Type System for RDF

RDFS schemas (a) do not impose a strict typing on the descriptions (e.g., a resource may be liberally described using properties which are loosely-coupled with classes); (b) permit superimposed descriptions of the same resources (e.g., by classifying resources under multiple classes which are not necessarily related by subclass relationships); (c) can be easily extended to meet the description needs of specific (sub-)communities (e.g., through specialization of both entity classes and properties).

Thus, RDF data can be literals, resource URIs, container values or class and property names. The type system foreseen by our model is given below:

$$\tau = \tau_C \mid \tau_P \mid \tau_M \mid \tau_U \mid \tau_L \mid \{\tau\} \mid [1:\tau_1, 2:\tau_2, \ldots, n:\tau_n] \mid (1:\tau_1 + 2:\tau_2 + \ldots + n:\tau_n)$$

where τ_C is a class, τ_P is a property, τ_M is a metaclass, τ_L is a literal type in $\mathcal{L}$, τ_U is the type for resource URIs also including namespace URIs, $\{.\}$ is the Bag type, $[.]$ is the Sequence type, and $(.)$ is the Alternative type. Alternatives in our model capture the semantics of union (or variant) types [14], and they are also ordered (i.e., integer labels play the role of union member markers). Since there exists a predefined ordering of labels for sequences and alternatives, labels can be omitted (for bags, labels are meaningless). Furthermore, no subtyping relation is defined in RDFS. The set of all types we can construct is denoted by T.

This type system allows us to manipulate RDFS schema classes and properties (as well as meta-classes) as self-existent individuals. Moreover, it captures containers with both homogeneous and heterogeneous member types and thus represents - for example - n-ary relations returned by queries. For instance, *unnamed ordered tuples* denoted by $[v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_n]$ (where v_i is of some type τ_i) can be defined as sequences of type $[\tau_1, \tau_2, \ldots, \tau_n]$. Unlike traditional object data models, RDF classes and data properties (i.e., relationships and attributes of resources) are interpreted as unary relations of type $\{\tau_U\}$ and as binary relations of type $\{[\tau_U, \tau_U]\}$ (for relationships) or $\{[\tau_U, \tau_L]\}$ (for attributes) respectively. In addition, properties whose domain and range is a meta-class are interpreted as: $\{[(\tau_C + \tau_P), (\tau_C + \tau_P)]\}$. Finally, an assignment of a finite set of resources (of type τ_U) to each class name (of type τ_C)[6] is captured by a *population function* $\pi : C \rightarrow 2^U$. In the same way, we can capture instantiation of meta-classes with class and property names. The set of all values that one can construct from the class or property

[5] Note that declaring vs. inferring valid classes for endpoint resources of properties, is a major difference between the existing RDF Schema specification [12] and the ongoing RDF Model Theory [31]. We believe that inferring imposes serious modeling limitations. For instance, if a *title* is attributed to `&r2` then this resource will be automatically classified under all the classes declared in the domain of *title*. However, classifying `&r2` as `Painting` and/or `ExtResource` should be under the entire responsibility of application developers.

[6] Due to multiple classification we consider here a non-disjoint object id (URI) assignment to classes.

names, the resource URIs and the literals using our type system is denoted by V and the *interpretation* function $\llbracket . \rrbracket$ of types is defined in a straightforward manner. In the rest of the paper, we will use the terms *class* and *property extent* to denote their corresponding interpretations.

3.2 RDF Description Bases and Schemas

Definition 1. *An RDFS schema is a quintuple* $RS = (V_S, E_S, \psi, \lambda, H)$ *where:* V_S *is the set of nodes and* E_S *is the set of edges,* H *is a well-formed hierarchy of class and property names* $H = (N, \prec)$, $N = C \cup P$, λ *is a labeling function* $\lambda : V_S \cup E_S \to T$, *and* ψ *is an incidence function* $\psi : E_S \to V_S \times V_S$.

The nodes and edges of a schema are uniquely identified by their names in N (possibly using namespace URIs for disambiguation). The *incidence function* captures the `rdfs:domain` and `rdfs:range` declarations of properties. The *labeling function* relates the class and property names with one of the types T previously presented. Note that both functions are *total* in $V_S \cup E_S$ and E_S respectively. This does not exclude the case of schema nodes which are not connected through an edge.

Definition 2. *An RDF description base, instance of a schema* RS, *is a quintuple* $RD = (V_D, E_D, \psi, \nu, \lambda)$, *where:* V_D *is a set of nodes and* E_D *is a set of edges,* ψ *is the incidence function* $\psi : E_D \to V_D \times V_D$, ν *is a value function* $\nu : V_D \to V$, *and* λ *is a labeling function* $\lambda : V_D \cup E_D \to 2^N \cup \{Bag, Seq, Alt\}$ *which satisfies the following:*

- *for each node* n *in* V_D, λ *returns either a set of class names* $c \in C$ *or one of the container type names (Seq, Bag, Alt), and the value of* n *belongs to the interpretation of each* c: $\nu(n) \in \llbracket c \rrbracket$;
- *for each edge* ϵ *in* E_D *going from a node* n *to a node* n', λ *returns a property name* $p \in P$, *and values* n *and* n' *belongs to the interpretation of* p: $[\nu(n), \nu(n')] \in \llbracket p \rrbracket$.

The *valuation function* relates the nodes and edges of RDF statements with one of the values in V. The *labeling function* captures the `rdf:type` declaration, linking the RDF data graph with the RDF schema graph. More precisely, the labeling function returns either the name of container type or the name of one or more classes which may be defined in several well-formed hierarchies of names. In contrast to traditional object models, all class names annotating resource nodes have a unique type τ_C. Finally, atomic nodes valuated with literals belong to the interpretation of concrete types like *string*, *integer*, *date*, etc.

4. THE RDF QUERY LANGUAGE: RQL

RQL is a typed query language relying on a functional approach (a la OQL [15]). It is defined by a set of basic queries and iterators which can be used to build new ones through functional composition. *RQL* supports *generalized path expressions*, [18, 19, 4] featuring variables on labels for both nodes (i.e., classes) and edges (i.e., properties). The smooth combination of *RQL* schema and data path expressions is a key feature for satisfying the needs of several Semantic Web applications such as Knowledge Portals and e-Marketplaces. For the complete *RQL* syntax, formal semantics and type inference rules, readers are referred to the *RQL* online documentation.[7]

4.1 Basic Queries

The core *RQL* queries essentially provide the means to access RDF description bases with minimal knowledge of the employed schema(s). These queries can be used to implement a simple browsing interface for RDF description bases. For instance, in Knowledge Portals, for each topic (i.e., class), one can navigate to its subtopics (i.e., subclasses) and eventually discover the resources (or their total number) which are directly classified under them. Similar needs are exhibited for the classification schemas used in E-Marketplace registries.

To traverse class/property hierarchies defined in a schema, *RQL* provides functions such as `subClassOf` (for transitive subclasses) and `subClassOf^` (for direct subclasses). For example, the query `subClassOf^`(*Artist*) returns a bag with the class names *Painter* and *Sculptor*. Similar functions exist for properties (i.e., `subPropertyOf` and `subPropertyOf^`). Then, for a specific property we can find its definition by applying the functions `domain` (of type $(\tau_C + \tau_M)$) and `range` (of type τ_L for attributes and $(\tau_C + \tau_M)$ for relationships). For instance, `domain(` *creates* `)` returns the class name *Artist*.

We can access the interpretation of classes by just writing their name. For instance, the query `Artist` returns a bag containing the URIs `www.culture.net#rodin424` (&r5) and `www.culture.net#picasso132` (&r1), since these resources belong to the extent of *Artist*. It should be stressed that, by default, we use an *extended* class (or property) interpretation, that is, the union of the set of proper instances of a class with those of all its subclasses. Thus, *RQL* allows to query complex descriptions using only few abstract labels (i.e., the top-level classes or properties). In order to obtain the proper instances of a class (i.e., only the nodes labeled with the class name), *RQL* provides the special operator ("^"): e.g,. `^Artist`.

Additionally, *RQL* uses as entry-points to an RDF description base not only the names of classes but also the names of properties. For instance, by considering properties as binary relations, the basic query `creates` returns the bag of ordered pairs of resources belonging to the extended interpretation of *creates*:

source	*target*
&r5	&r6
&r1	&r2
&r1	&r3

For cases when same names are used in different schemas one can use a `namespace` clause (in the style of XQuery [17]) to explicitly resolve such naming conflicts e.g.,

```
ns:title
Using Namespace ns=&www.olcl.org/schema2.rdf#
```

More generally, the whole schema can be queried as normal data using the names of appropriately defined metaclasses. This is the case of the default RDF meta-classes `Class` and `Property`. Using them as basic *RQL* queries, we obtain in our example, the names of all the classes (of type τ_C) and properties (of type τ_P) illustrated in the upper part of Figure 1. Moreover, we can use the name of the built-in meta-class `DProperty`, in order to retrieve only data properties (i.e., involving data resources). Since RDF allows for instantiation links between classes, this query functionality can be easily extended to user defined meta-schemas (e.g., DAML+OIL [54]). To retrieve the class (or meta-class) name under which a resource (or class) is classified one can use the function `typeof`: e.g., `typeof(www.artchive.com/-`

[7] 139.91.183.30:9090/RDF/RQL/

`crucifixion.jpg`) will return a bag with the class names *Sculpture* and *ExtResource* (due to multiple classification).

Common set operators (`union`, `intersect`, `minus`) applied to collections of the same type are also supported. For example, the query ”*Sculpture* `intersect` *ExtResource*” returns a bag with the URI `www.artchive.com/crucifixion.jpg` (&r6), since, according to our example, it is the only resource classified under both classes. However, the following query returns a type error since the function `range` is defined on names of properties and not on names of classes:[8]

`bag`(`range`(*Artist*)) `union` `subclassof`(*Artifact*)

As we can see from the above query, besides class or property extents, *RQL* also permits the manipulation of RDF container values. More precisely, we can explicitly construct Bags and Sequences using the basic *RQL* queries `bag` and `seq`. For instance, to find both the domain and range of property *creates* one can issue the query:

`seq` (`domain`(*creates*), `range`(*creates*))

To access a member of a Sequence we can use the operator "`[ ]`" with an appropriate position index. If the specified member element does not exist, the query returns a runtime error. The Boolean operator `in` can be used for membership test in Bags.

For data filtering *RQL* relies on standard Boolean predicates as `=`, `<`, `>` and `like` (for string pattern matching). All operators can be applied on literal values (i.e., strings, integers, reals, dates) or resource URIs. For example, "X = &www.artchive.com/crucifixion.jpg" is an equality condition between resource URIs. It should be stressed that this also covers comparisons between class or property names. For example, the condition "*Painter* `<` *Artist*" returns `true` since the first operand is a subclass of the second. This is equivalent to the basic boolean query *Painter* `in` `subclassof` (*Artist*). Disambiguation is performed in each case by examining the type of operands (e.g., literal value vs. URI equality, lexicographical vs. class ordering, etc.).

Last but not least, *RQL* is equipped with a complete set of aggregate functions (`min`, `max`, `avg`, `sum` and `count`). For instance, we can inspect the cardinality of class extents (or bags) using the `count` function: `count`(*Painting*).

To conclude this subsection, note that basic *RQL* queries allow us to retrieve the contents of any kind of collection with RDF data or schema information. *RQL* provides a `select-from-where` filter to iterate over these collections and introduce variables. Given that the whole description base or related schemas can be viewed as a collection of nodes/edges, *path expressions* can be used in *RQL* filters to traverse RDF graphs at arbitrary depths.

4.2 Schema Queries

In this subsection, we focus on querying RDF schemas, regardless of any underlying instances. More precisely, we show how *RQL* extends the notion of generalized path expressions [18, 19, 4] to entire class (or property) inheritance paths in order to implement schema browsing or filtering using appropriate conditions. We believe that declarative query support for navigating through taxonomies of classes and properties is quite useful for real-scale Portal catalogs and E-Marketplace registries, which employ large description schemas. Consider, for instance the following query, where, given a specific schema property we want to find all related schema classes:

Q1: *Which classes can appear as domain and range of the property creates?*

`select` $\$C1$, $\$C2$ `from` $\{\$C1\}$creates$\{\$C2\}$

$\$C1$	$\$C2$
Artist	Artifact
Artist	Painting
Artist	Sculpture
Painter	Artifact
Painter	Painting
Painter	Sculpture
Sculptor	Artifact
Sculptor	Painting
Sculptor	Sculpture

In the `from` clause of the filter, we use a basic *schema path expression* composed of the property name *creates* (i.e., an edge label) and two class variables $\$C1$ and $\$C2$ (i.e., variables over node labels). The {} notation is used in *RQL* path expressions to introduce appropriate schema or data variables (see also next Subsection). In general, class variables are prefixed by \$ and - by default - range over the extent of the RDF meta-class *Class*. The type of these variables is τ_C, i.e., names of available schema classes. Since RDF properties can be applied to any subclass of their domain and range (due to polymorphism), the expression $\{\$C1\}creates\{\$C2\}$ simply denotes that $\$C1$ and $\$C2$ iterate over `subclassof` (`domain`(*creates*)) and `subclassof` (`range`(*creates*)), respectively (including the hierachy roots). In other words, it is equivalent to the filtering condition "$C1 <=$ `domain`(*creates*) `and` $C2 <=$ `range`(*creates*)" evaluated over *Class* × *Class* (i.e., *Class*$\{C1\}$, *Class*$\{C2\}$). We can observe that the above path expression essentially traverses the `rdf:SubClassOf` links in the schema graph. It should be stressed that such a kind of *RQL* path expressions can be composed not only of edge labels like *creates*, but also of node labels like *Artist*. $Artist\{\$C\}$ is a shortcut for `subclassof`(*Artist*)$\{C\}$ (including the root *Artist*).

The `select` clause defines a projection over the variables of interest (e.g., $\$C1$, $\$C2$). Moreover, we can use "`select *`" to include in the result the values of all variables introduced in the `from` clause. This projection will construct an ordered tuple (i.e., a sequence), whose arity depends on the number of used variables. The result of the filter is a bag. In **Q1** the type of the result is $\{[\tau_C, \tau_C]\}$. It should be stressed that RDF container values are not strictly typed: their members can be any name, URI, literal or other container value. The union types provided by the *RQL* type system permit the representation of heterogeneous query results. The closure property of *RQL* is ensured by the supported basic queries for container values (see previous subsection). For simplicity, we will present query results in this paper using an internal relational representation (e.g., as $\neg$1NF relations), instead of RDF containers. Readers can execute all example queries with the *RQL* online demo[9] to see the results under the RDF/XML syntax for container values or an HTML form produced after XSLT processing.

Let us now see how we can retrieve all related schema properties for a specific class:

[8] It should be stressed that XML query languages like XQuery [17] can be extended with RDF-specific function libraries as those provided by *RQL* (e.g., `range`, `subclassof`). However, due to the XML and RDF model mismatch they are not able to ensure type safety of the supported functions. For instance, the above query expressed in XQuery will return all the subclasses of *Artifact* and not a type error.

[9] http://139.91.183.30:9090/RDF/RQL/

Q2: *Find all properties (and their range) that are applicable on class Painter.*

```
select  @P, range(@P)
from    {$C}@P
where   $C = Painter
```

$@P$	`range`$(@P)$
creates	Artifact
paints	Painting
lname	string
fname	string

In the `from` clause of **Q2**, we use another *schema path expression* composed of a class variable $\$C$ (i.e., over node labels) and a property variable $@P$ (i.e., over edge labels). In general, property variables are prefixed by @ and by default they range over the extent of the built-in meta-class *DProperty*, containing all data properties. The type of these variables is τ_P, i.e., names of available schema properties. Then, for each possible valuation p of $@P$, the class variable $\$C$ ranges over `subclassof`(`domain`(p)). The condition in the `where` clause will filter $@P$ valuations to keep only those properties for which class *Painter* is equal to their domain (e.g., *paints*) or is a valid subclass of their domain (e.g., *creates*, *lname*, *fname*). In other terms, **Q2** is equivalent to the filtering condition `domain`(P)>=*Painter* evaluated over *DProperty* (i.e., *DProperty*{P}). We can observe that the above path expression traverses the `rdfs:domain` and `rdfs:range` links in conjunction with the `rdfs:SubClassOf` links in the schema graph. Note that in the result of **Q2**, `range` is of type union $(\tau_C + \tau_L)$ since data properties may range to classes (i.e., they represent relationships) and literal types (i.e., they represent attributes).

We introduce in path expressions the notation $\{x;C\}$ that filters data nodes x (i.e., resources) which are labeled with a class name C (i.e., the `rdf:type` links). In other terms, it is equivalent to the filtering condition " C `in` `typeof`(x)". By extension, $\{;C\}$ simply denotes a filtering condition of schema nodes (i.e., classes) identified by a name C and taking into account the `rdfs:SubClassOf` links. For instance, in the expression $\{;Painter\}@P$ the domain of $@P$ is denoted to be *Painter* or any of its superclasses and it implies the filtering condition "Painter `>=` `domain`(@P)". It is essentially, a shorthand notation for **Q2** by avoiding to introduce an iterator $\$C$ (i.e., class variable) over the `subclassof`(`domain`(@P))).

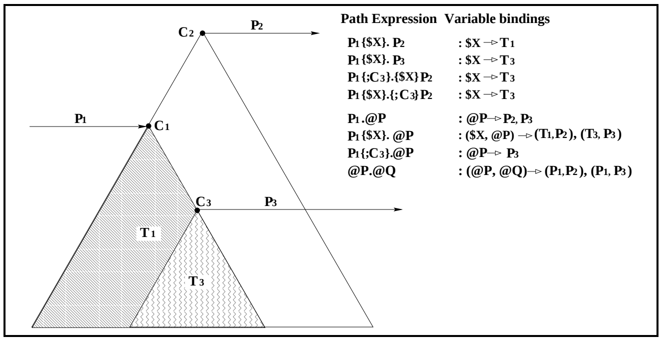
To illustrate the expressive power of the *RQL* schema querying capabilities combined with its functional semantics, consider the following query:

Q3: *Find all information related to class Painter (i.e., its superclasses as well as direct or inherited properties).*

```
seq(Painter, superclassof^(Painter),
   (select @P, domain(@P), range(@P)
    from    {;Painter}@P))
```

To collect all relevant information we explicitly construct in **Q3** a sequence with three elements. The first element is a constant (*Painter*) interpreted by the *RQL* type system as a class name (i.e., of type τ_C). The second element is a bag containing the names of the direct superclasses of *Painter* (i.e., of type $\{\tau_C\}$). The third element is a bag of sequences with three elements: the first of type property names (τ_P) and the other two of type union (i.e., Alternative) of class and literal type names (as in **Q2**).

We conclude this subsection, with a query illustrating how *RQL* schema paths can be composed to perform more complex schema navigation. It should be stressed that this kind of query cannot be expressed in existing languages with schema querying capabilities (e.g., XSQL [36]).



Path Expression	Variable bindings
$P_1\{\$X\}.P_2$	: $\$X \to T_1$
$P_1\{\$X\}.P_3$	: $\$X \to T_3$
$P_1\{;C_3\}.\{\$X\}P_2$	: $\$X \to T_3$
$P_1\{\$X\}.\{;C_3\}P_2$	: $\$X \to T_3$
$P_1.@P$	: $@P \to P_2, P_3$
$P_1\{\$X\}.@P$	: $(\$X, @P) \to (T_1,P_2), (T_3, P_3)$
$P_1\{;C_3\}.@P$	: $@P \to P_3$
$@P.@Q$	: $(@P, @Q) \to (P_1,P_2), (P_1, P_3)$

Figure 2: *RQL* Schema Path Compositions

Q4: *What properties can be reached (in one step) from the range classes of creates?*

```
select  $Y, @P, range(@P)
from    creates{$Y}.@P
```

$\$Y$	$@P$	`range`$(@P)$
Artifact	exhibited	Museum
Painting	exhibited	Museum
Sculpture	exhibited	Museum
Painting	technique	string
Sculpture	material	string

In **Q4**, the "." notation implies a join condition between the range classes of the property *creates* and the domain of $@P$ valuations: for each class name Y in the range of creates, we look for all properties whose domain is $\$Y$ or a superclass: $\$Y <= domain(@P)$ and $\$Y <= range(creates)$. In other words, this join condition will enable us to follow properties which can be applied to range classes of *creates* (i.e., either because they are directly defined or because they are inherited) to any subclass of the range of *creates*. Schema path expressions may also be exclusively composed of property variables (with or without variables on domains and ranges). For instance, $@P.@Q$ will retrieve all two-step schema paths emanating from the subclasses of the domain of $@P$ and whose second part is either inherited from / defined on superclasses / subclasses of the domain of $@Q$. The complete set of *RQL* schema path expressions is given in Figure 2, where for each kind of expression, we give the part of the schema graph over which the involved variables range.

4.3 Data Queries

In this subsection, we illustrate how *RQL* generalized path expressions can be used to navigate/filter RDF description bases without taking into account the (domain and range) restrictions implied by the properties defined in an RDF/S schema. This is quite useful since, in most real-scale Knowledge Portals or E-Marketplaces, resources can be multiply classified and several properties coming from different class hierarchies may be used to describe the same resources. In this context, *RQL* generalized path expressions may be liberally composed from node and edge labels featuring both data or schema variables. As explained in the following, the "." notation is used to introduce appropriate join conditions between the left and the right part of the expression depending on the type of each path component (i.e., node vs. edge labels, data vs. schema variables). Consider, for instance, the following query:

Q5: *Find the Museum resources that have been modified after year 2000.*

```
select  X, Y
from    Museum{X}.last_modified{Y}
where   Y >= 2000-01-01
```

In the from clause we use a *data path expression* with a class name *Museum* and a property name *last_modified*. The introduced data variables X and Y range respectively over the extent of the class *Museum* (i.e., traversing the rdf:type links connecting schema and data graphs) and the *target* values of the extent of the *last_modified* property (i.e., traversing properties in the RDF data graph). The "." used to concatenate the two path components, implies a join condition between the *source* values of the extent of *last_modified* and X. Hence, **Q5** is equivalent to the query $Museum\{X\}, \{Z\}last\_modified\{Y\}$ where $X = Z$. As we can see in Figure 1, the *last_modified* property has been defined with *domain* the class *ExtResource* but, due to multiple classification, X may be valuated with resources also labeled with any other class name (e.g., *Museum*, *Artifact*, etc.). Yet, in our model X has the unique type τ_U, Y has type the literal type *date*, and the result of **Q5** is of type $\{[\tau_U, date]\}$. According to our example, **Q5** returns the sites www.museum.es (&r4) with last modification date 2000-06-09 and www.rodin.fr (&r7) with date 2000-02-01.

More complex forms of navigation through RDF description bases are possible, using several data path expressions.

Q6: *Find the names of Artists whose Artifacts are exhibited in museums, along with the related Museum titles.*

```
select  V, R, Y, Z
from    {X}creates.exhibited{Y}.title{Z},
        {X}fname{V}, {X}lname{R}
```

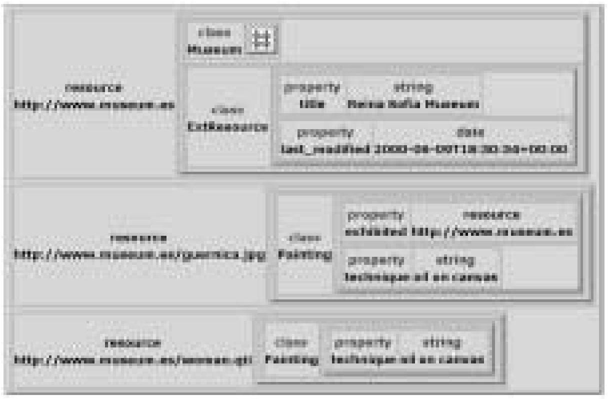
In the from clause we use three data path expressions. Variable X (Y) ranges over the *source* (*target*) values of the *creates* (*exhibited*) property. Then, the reuse of variable X in the other two path expressions simply introduces implicit (equi-)joins between the extents of the properties *fname*/*lname* and *creates*, on their *source* values. Since the *range* of property *exhibited* is the class *Museum* we don't need to further restrict the labels for the Y values in this query.

Note that due to multiple classification of nodes (e.g., www.museum.es (&r4) is both a *Museum* and *ExtResource*) we can query paths in a data graph that are not explicitly declared in the schema. For instance, *creates.exhibited.title* is not a valid schema path since the *domain* of the title property is the class *ExtResource* and not *Museum*. Still, we can query the corresponding data paths by ignoring the schema classes labeling the endpoint instances of the properties (in the style of LOREL [4], or XQuery [17]). This is achieved by using only data variables on path nodes like X, Y and Z. However, the flexibility of *RQL* path expressions enables us to *turn on* or *off* schema information during data filtering with the use of appropriate class and property variables. This functionality is illustrated in the following query:

Q7: *Find the source and target values of properties emanating from ExtResources.*

```
select  X,Y
from    {X;ExtResource}@P{Y}
```

X	Y
&r6	"image/jpg"
&r7	"Rodin Museum"
&r4	"Reina Sofia Museum"
&r7	2000-06-09
&r4	2000-02-01



class Museum

resource http://www.museum.es

class ExtResource

property title string Reina Sofia Museum

property last_modified date 2000-06-09T18:30:34+00:00

resource http://www.museum.es/guernica.jpg

class Painting

property exhibited resource http://www.museum.es

property technique string oil on canvas

resource http://www.museum.es/woman.gif

class Painting

property technique string oil on canvas

Figure 3: The result of Q8 in HTML form

The *mixed path expression* of **Q7**, features both data (X, Y) and schema variables on graph edges (@P). The notation $X;ExtResource$ denotes a restriction of X to the resources that are (transitive) instances of (i.e., labeled by) class *ExtResource*. @P is of type τ_P and is valuated to all properties having as a domain *ExtResource* or one of its superclasses (see **Q2**). Finally, Y is range-restricted, for each successful binding of @P, to the corresponding target values. X is of type τ_U while Y type is a union of all the range types of ExtResource properties. According to the schema of Figure 1, @P is valuated to *file_size*, *title*, *mime-type*, and *last_modified*, while Y will be of type (*integer* + *string* + *date*).[10] It should be stressed that the data path expression $ExtResource\{X\}.@P\{Y\}$ returns as result not only the values of the properties having as a domain *ExtResource* but also those with domain any class under which instances of *ExtResource* are multiply classified (e.g., *exhibited*, *technique*).

4.4 Combining Schema with Data Queries

In the previous subsections, we have presented the main *RQL* path expressions allowing us to browse and filter description bases with or without schema knowledge, or, alternatively to query exclusively the schemas. Additionally, *RQL* filters admit arbitrary mixtures of different kinds of path expressions. In this way, one can start querying resources according to one schema, while discovering in the sequel how the same resources are described using another schema. To our knowledge, none of the existing query languages has the power of *RQL* path expressions. This functionality is illustrated by the following examples.

Q8: *Find the descriptions of resources whose URI matches "www.museum.es".*

```
select  X, (select $W, (select  @P, Y
                        from    {X;$W}@P{Y})
            from $W{X})
from    Resource{X}
where   X like "www.museum.es"
```

In **Q8** we are interested to discover for each matching resource (*Resource* is considered as the top class of all schema classes) the classes under which it is classified and then for each class the properties which are used along with their respective values. This grouping functionality is captured by the two nested queries in the select clause of the external query. Note the use of string predicates such as like on

[10] In case we want to filter Y values in the where clause, *RQL* supports appropriate coercions of union types in the style of POQL [2] or Lorel [4].

resource URIs. Then for each successful valuation of X, in the outer query, variable $\$W$ iterates over the classes having X in their extent. Finally, for each successful valuation of X and $\$W$, in the inner query, variable $@P$ iterates over the properties which may have $\$W$ as domain and X as source value in their extent. According to the example of Figure 1 the type of Y is the union $(\tau_U + string + date)$. The final result of **Q8** is given in Figure 3. In cases where a grouped form of RQL results is not desirable, we can easily generate a flat triple-based representation (i.e., subject, predicate, object) of resource descriptions, as in the following query:

Q9: *Find the description, under the form of triples, of resources excluding properties related to the class ExtResource.*

```
((select X, @P, Y from {X}@P{Y})
  union
 (select X, type, $W from $W{X}))
 minus
((select X, @P, Y from {X;ExtResource}@P{Y})
  union
 (select X, type, ExtResource from ExtResource{X}))
```

In **Q9** we essentially perform a set difference between the entire set of resource descriptions (i.e., the attributed properties and their values, as well as, the class instantiation properties) and the descriptions of resources which are instances of class *ExtResource*. The only subtle issue in **Q9** is the typing of the two union query results. First, the inferred type for the constants `type` and *ExtResource* (in the select clause of the two union subqueries) is τ_P (i.e., a property name) and τ_C (i.e., class name). Second, variables Y and $\$W$ (in the select clause of the first union) is of type $(\tau_U + string + float + integer + date)$ and τ_C. In this case, the union operation is performed between subqueries of different types. The RQL type system is equipped with rules allowing us to infer appropriate union types whenever it is required for query evaluation, as for example, $(\tau_U + string + float + integer + date + \tau_C)$. Note that set-based queries as **Q9** are not supported by the so-called triple-based query languages [45, 51, 52].

5. THE RDF SCHEMA-SPECIFIC DATABASE

We have implemented RDF storage and querying on top of the PostgreSQL object-relational DBMS (ORDBMS).[11] The architecture of our persistent RDF Store (RSSDB) is illustrated in Figure 4. It comprises three main components: the RDF validator and loader (**VRP**), the RDF description database (**DBMS**) and the query language interpreter (**RQL**). In the following, we elaborate on the database representation employed by RSSDB, as well as, the performance results in storing and querying voluminous RDF description bases. Readers are referred to [6] for a detailed presentation of the system architecture and components.

5.1 Database Representation

In order to load RDF metadata in a ORDBMS, we consider a database representation depending on the employed RDF schemas (similar to the *attribute-based* approach for storing XML data [30]). Many proposals [44, 40] use a single table to represent RDF metadata under the form of triples. These approaches provide a generic representation applicable to all RDF schemas, where both RDF schemas and resource descriptions are stored in two tables called *Resources* and *Triples*. The former represents each resource, whereas the latter represents statements about the resources identified by a unique id. Compared to this representation, our scheme is more flexible as it takes into account the specificity of the schemas (see [7] for a performance analysis).

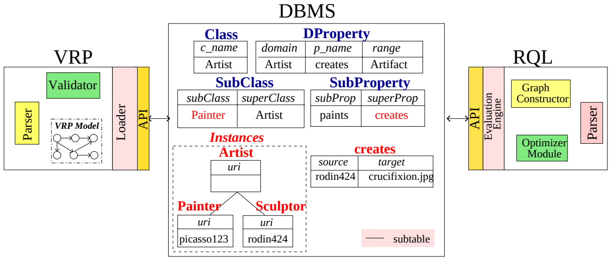


Figure 4: Overview of the ICS-FORTH RSSDB

In our approach, the core RDF/S model is represented by four tables (see Figure 4), namely, `Class`, `Property`, `SubClass` and `SubProperty` which capture the class and property hierarchies defined in an RDF schema. The main goal is the separation of RDF schema information from data information, as well as the distinction between unary and binary relations holding the instances of classes and properties. More precisely, class tables store the URIs of resources, while property tables store the URIs of the source and target nodes of the property. Indices (i.e., B-trees) are constructed on the attributes `URI`, `source` and `target` of the above tables, as well as on all the attributes of the tables `Class`, `Property`, `SubClass` and `SubProperty`.

Since no representation is good for all purposes, variations of a basic representation are required to take into account the specific characteristics of the employed schema classes and properties, as well as those of the intended query functionality. Our aim here is to reduce the total number of created instance tables. This is justified by the fact that some commercial ORDBMSs (and not PostgreSQL) permit only a limited number of tables. Furthermore, numerous tables (e.g., the ODP catalog implies the creation of 252840 tables, i.e., one for each topic) have a significant overhead on the response time of all queries (i.e., to find and open a table, its attributes, etc.). A variant we have experimented with for storing the ODP catalog, is the representation of all class instances by a unique table `Instances`. This table has two attributes, namely `uri` and `classid`, for storing the uri's of the resources and the id's of the classes which the resources belong to. The benefits of this variant are illustrated in the following section. These benefits arise as a consequence of the fact that most ODP classes (i.e., topics) have few or no instances at all (more than 90% of the ODP topics contain less than 30 URIs). Another variant could be the representation of properties with range a literal type, as attributes of the tables created for the domain of this property. Consequently, new attributes will be added to the created class tables. The tables created for properties whose range is a class will remain unchanged. The above representation is applicable to RDF schemas where attribute-properties are single-valued and they are not specialized. Multi-valued attributes can always be represented in a pure relational schema by separate tables but this implies an extra translation cost by the RQL interpreter. More on RQL query evaluations plans can be found in [35].

5.2 Performance Tests

For our performance study we used as a testbed the RDF dump of the Open Directory Catalog (01-16-2001 version). Experiments have been carried out on a Sun with two Ultra-

[11] www.postgresql.org

Query	Description	Algebraic Expression	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
QB1	Find the range (or domain) of a property	$\sigma_{id=\texttt{propid}}(P)$	0.0012		
QB2	Find the direct subclasses of a class	$\sigma_{superid=\texttt{clsid}}(SC)$	0.0012	0.0022	0.0124
QB3	Find the transitive subclasses of a class	$\mathit{repeat} \quad W_i \leftarrow (W_{i-1}$ $\ltimes_{id=superid} SC) - W_{i-1}$ $\mathit{until} \quad W_i = W_{i-1}$	0.0463	0.0612	341.98
QB4	Check if a class is a subclass of another class	$\mathit{repeat} \quad W_i \leftarrow (W_{i-1}$ $\ltimes_{id=subid} SC) - W_{i-1}$ $\mathit{until} \quad W_i = W_{i-1} \vee \texttt{clsid} \in W_i$	0.0333	0.0415	0.0662
QB5	Find the direct extent of a class (or property)	$\sigma_{id=\texttt{clsid}}(I)$	0.0015	0.0028	0.027
QB6	Find the transitive extent of a class (or property)	$\cup_{clsid \in \texttt{Q3}}(\sigma_{id=clsid}(I))$	0.0508	0.1118	482.45
QB7	Find if a resource is an instance of a class	$\sigma_{URI=\texttt{r} \wedge id=\texttt{clsid}}(I)$	0.0016	0.0016	0.00174
QB8	Find the resources having a property with a specific (or range of) value(s)	$\sigma_{target=\texttt{val}}(t_{\texttt{propid}})$	0.0013	0.0069	0.0466
QB9	Find the instances of a class that have a given property	$(\sigma_{id=\texttt{clsid}}(I)) \ltimes_{source=URI}$ $(t_{\texttt{propid}}) \ltimes_{subjid=id}(R)$	0.031	0.0338	0.1059
QB10	Find the properties of a resource and their values	$\cup_{propid \in P}(\sigma_{source=\texttt{r}}(t_{\texttt{propid}}))$	0.0071	0.0071	0.0076
QB11	Find the classes under which a resource is classified	$\sigma_{URI=\texttt{r}}(I)$	0.0013	0.0015	0.0015

Table 1: Benchmark Query Templates for RDF Description Bases

SPARC-II 450MHz processors and 1 GB of main memory, using PostgreSQL (7.0.2). We have loaded 15 ODP hierarchies with a total number of 252825 topics stored in 51MB of RDF/XML files as well as the corresponding descriptions of 1770781 resources (672MB). Note that only 82744 resources were actually classified under multiple ODP classes/topics.

We have measured the database size required to load the ODP schema and resource descriptions in terms of triples. As expected, the size of the DBMS scales linearly with the number of schema and data triples. The tests show that each schema triple requires on the average *0.086KB*. The average time for loading a schema triple is about *0.0021 sec.* When indices are constructed, the average storage volume per schema triple becomes *0.1734KB* and the average loading time becomes *0.0025 sec.* The average space required to store a data triple is *0.123KB*. Note that we could obtain better storage volumes by encoding the resource URIs as integers, but this solution comes with extra loading and join costs (between the class and property tables) for the retrieval of the URIs. The tests also show that the average time for loading a data triple is about *0.0033 sec* whithout indices and *0.2566KB* with indices while the average loading time becomes *0.0043 sec.*

To summarize, after loading the entire ODP catalog, the size of tables is 32MB for `Class` (252825 tuples), 8KB for `Property` (5 tuples), 11MB for `SubClass` (252825 tuples) and the total size of indices on these tables is 44MB. The size of table `Instances` is 150MB (1770781 tuples) whereas that of the indices created on it is 140 MB.

The left part of Table 1 describes the RDF query templates that we used for our experiments, as well as their algebraic expressions using the first variation of our core representation scheme of section 5.1, i.e., employing a unique table for representing all class instances (capital letters abbreviate the table names of Figure 4). This benchmark illustrates the core functionality of *RQL*: a) pure schema queries on class and property definitions (`QB1`-`QB4`); b) queries on resource descriptions using available schema knowledge (`QB5`-`QB9`); and c) schema queries for specific resource descriptions (`QB10`, `QB11`). In this context, the most frequently asked queries for Portals like ODP are: `QB2`,`QB3`,`QB5`,`QB8` and `QB9`. The right part of Table 1 displays the resulting execution time (in sec) in up to three different result cases per query. Depending on the particular query templates, the different cases refer to different characteristics of the class or property in question, such as number of subclasses, length of path from a class to its leaves, etc. For the sake of accuracy, we carried out all benchmark queries several times: one initially to warm up the database buffers and then nine times to obtain the average execution time of a query.

Queries `QB3` and `QB6`, as expected are expensive, because they involve a transitive closure computation over the subclass hierarchy. The execution time depends on the size of the intermediate join results, as well as on the number of iterations. The advantage of this representation over the generic representation in terms of query evaluation performance is drastic in the presence of complex path expressions. Indeed, the latter representation implies expensive self joins of a large table, namely *Triples*. In [32] we compared the performance of queries `QB8` and `QB9` with the two representations. Our specific representation outperformed the generic representation by a factor of almost 10^5.

We conclude this section with one remark concerning the encoding of class and property names. Recall that schema or mixed *RQL* path expressions need to recursively traverse a given class (or property) hierarchy. We can transform such traversal queries into interval queries on a linear domain, that can be answered efficiently by standard DBMS index structures (e.g., B-trees). This can be done by replacing class (or property) names by *ids* using an appropriate encoding, such as the one used in [5]. We are currently working on the choice of a such a linear representation of node or edge labels allowing us to optimize queries that involve different kinds of traversals in a hierarchy.

6. SUMMARY AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we presented a data model capturing the most salient features of RDF and a declarative query language, *RQL*, for uniformly querying both RDF schema and resource descriptions. We reported on the design and implementation of a system for storing and querying voluminous RDF description bases, called RSSDB, and gave some performance results using the ORDBMS PostgreSql. There currently exist two distinct implementations of *RQL*, one by ICS-FORTH (*139.91.183.30:9090/RDF/RQL*) and the other by Aidministrator (*sesame.aidministrator.nl/rql/*). As a matter of fact, *RQL* is a generic tool actually used by several EU projects (i.e., C-Web, MesMuses, Arion and Onto-Knowledge[12]) aiming at building, accessing and personalizing Community Knowledge Portals.

The optimization of *RQL* query evaluation is a challenging issue and a topic of our current research. In particular, we study the translation of *RQL* into SQL3 queries in the presence of path expressions interleaving schema with data querying, as well as appropriate encoding schemes for class and property taxonomies in order to optimize transitive closure queries over deep hiearchies of names.

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