Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence 2654

Edited by J. G. Carbonell and J. Siekmann

Subseries of Lecture Notes in Computer Science

Springer
Berlin
Heidelberg
New York
Hong Kong
London
Milan
Paris
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Ute Schmid

Inductive Synthesis of Functional Programs

Universal Planning, Folding of Finite Programs, and Schema Abstraction by Analogical Reasoning

Springer

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Cataloging-in-Publication Data applied for

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek
Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

CR Subject Classification (1998): I.2.2, I.2.3, I.2.4, I.2.8, D.1.2, F.3.1, F.4.1, D.2.11

ISSN 0302-9743
ISBN 3-540-40174-1 Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York

Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York
a member of BertelsmannSpringer Science+Business Media GmbH

http://www.springer.de

Printed in Germany

Typesetting: Camera-ready by author, data conversion by Boller Mediendesign

Coverillustration: "Nachtigall II" by Heinrich Neuy

Printed on acid-free paper SPIN: 10932261 06/3142 5 4 3 2 1 0

For My Parents and
In Memory of My Grandparents

Foreword

Analogical reasoning is ubiquitous, whether in everyday common sense reasoning, in scientific discovery, or anywhere in between. Examples of analogical reasoning range from scientific theory creation, such as Bohr's planetary model of the atom, to problem solving where a teacher's solution of an illustrative example problem is used to guide the student in solving new, similar problems. Psychologists have studied how people reason analogically, though often severely simplifying the reasoning task in order to run controlled experiments. Artificial intelligence researchers, including this writer, have built computational models that exhibit various forms of analogical transfer, ranging from simple copy-and-modify processes to complex derivational-trace tracking and rejustifying reasoning steps for new problems. The underlying issues are not simple. For instance, in drawing an analogy, what should be kept invariant, what should be modified or mapped, and what should be discarded? At what level of reasoning is analogy most profitably applied – i.e., should the solution to a problem be transferred and modified, should the derivation of the solution be transferred instead, or should the underlying principles invoked in the derivation be the primary transfer vehicle? How does analogical reasoning interact with classical deduction or with inductive reasoning? And how can a solution drawn analogically be formally verified or refuted, in the sense of formal proof checking? These and other key issues lie at the heart of analogical reasoning research.

Artificial intelligence researchers and cognitive psychologists have addressed subsets of the analogical reasoning challenge. However, until now there has not been a true marriage of the psychological and the computational in the realm of analogical reasoning. Although both camps cite each other and mutually benefit from new results, Ute Schmid is the first to develop, implement, test, and evaluate analogical reasoning models in depth based directly on data from subjects performing that reasoning.

This book is a very thorough and clear report of Dr. Schmid's deep analysis of inductive and analogical reasoning, combining key aspects of artificial intelligence and algorithms on the one hand, and cognitive psychology on the other. Compared with related work, the comprehensive nature of the analogical reasoning model is evident: The case-based reasoning (CBR) community focuses primarily on indexing and retrieving relevant past cases, rather than

deriving new solutions or solving significantly different problems. Earlier analogical reasoning work focused directly on problem solving – how to use past solutions for similar problems to help construct the solution to the new problem. Veloso combined CBR and analogical reasoning, enabling large-scale problem solving from second-principles. Subsequently, analogical reasoning has seen new extensions such as Melis's method for analogical construction of mathematical proofs and the use of analogy in intelligent tutoring systems. This book combines all the aspects of analogical reasoning, extends it to include other forms of inductive and deductive reasoning, and directly ties the computational methods to psychological results.

June 2003 Jaime Carbonell

Preface

In this book a novel approach to inductive synthesis of recursive functions is proposed, combining universal planning, folding of finite programs, and schema abstraction by analogical reasoning. In a first step, an example domain of small complexity is explored by universal planning. For example, for all possible lists over four fixed natural numbers, their optimal transformation sequences into the sorted list are calculated and represented as a DAG. In a second step, the plan is transformed into a finite program term. Plan transformation mainly relies on inferring the data type underlying a given plan. In a third step, the finite program is folded into (a set of) recursive functions. Folding is performed by syntactical pattern-matching and corresponds to inducing a special class of context-free tree grammars. It is shown that the approach can be successfully applied to learn domain-specific control rules. Control rule learning is important to gain the efficiency of domain-specific planners without the need to hand-code the domain-specific knowledge. Furthermore, an extension of planning based on a purely relational domain description language to function applications is presented. This extension makes planning applicable to a larger class of problems that are of interest for program synthesis.

As a last step, a hierarchy of program schemes (patterns) is generated by generalizing over already synthesized recursive functions. Generalization can be considered as the last step of problem solving by analogy or programming by analogy. Some psychological experiments were performed to investigate which kind of structural relations between problems can be exploited by human problem-solvers. Anti-unification is presented as an approach to mapping and generalizing program structures. It is proposed that the integration of planning, program synthesis, and analogical reasoning contributes to cognitive science research on skill acquisition by addressing the problem of extracting generalized rules from some initial experience. Such (control) rules represent domain-specific problem-solving strategies.

All parts of the approach are implemented in Common Lisp.

Acknowledgements. Research is a kind of work one can never do completely alone. Over the years I profited from the guidance of several professors who supervised or supported my work, namely Fritz Wysotzki, Klaus Eyferth, Bernd Mahr, Jaime Carbonell, Arnold Upmeyer, Peter Pepper, and

Gerhard Strube. I learned a lot from discussions with them, with colleagues, and students, such as Jochen Burghardt, Bruce Burns, the group of Hartmut Ehrig, Pierre Flener, Hector Geffner, Peter Geibel, Peter Gerjets, Jürgen Giesl, Wolfgang Grieskamp, Maritta Heisel, Ralf Herbrich, Laurie Hiyakumoto, Petra Hofstedt, Rune Jensen, Emanuel Kitzelmann, Jana Koehler, Steffen Lange, Martin Mühlpfordt, Brigitte Pientka, Heike Pisch, Manuela Veloso, Ulrich Wagner, Bernhard Wolf, and Thomas Zeugmann (sorry to everyone I forgot). I am very grateful for the time I could spend at Carnegie Mellon University. Thanks to Klaus Eyferth and Bernd Mahr who motivated me to go, to Gerhard Strube for his support, to Fritz Wysotzki who accepted my absence from teaching, and, of course, to Jaime Carbonell who was my very helpful host. My work profited much from the inspiration I got from talks, classes, and discussions, and from the very special atmosphere suggesting that everything is all right as long as "the heart is in the work." I thank all my diploma students who supported the work reported in this book – Dirk Matzke, Rene Mercy, Martin Mühlpfordt, Marina Müller, Mark Müller, Heike Pisch, Knut Polkehn, Uwe Sinha, Imre Szabo, Janin Toussaint, Ulrich Wagner, Joachim Wirth, and Bernhard Wolf. Additional thanks to some of them and Peter Pollmanns for proof-reading parts of the draft of this book. I owe a lot to Fritz Wysotzki for giving me the chance to move from cognitive psychology to artificial intelligence, for many interesting discussions, and for critically reading and commenting on the draft of this book. Finally, thanks to my colleagues and friends Berry Claus, Robin Hörnig, Barbara Kaup, and Martin Kindsmüller, to my family, and my husband Uwe Konerding for support and high-quality leisure time, and to all authors of good crime novels.

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