

Edited by G. Goos and J. Hartmanis

Advisory Board: W. Brauer D. Gries J. Stoer



M. Bidoit H.-J. Kreowski P. Lescanne
F. Orejas D. Sannella (Eds.)

Algebraic System Specification and Development

A Survey and Annotated Bibliography

Springer-Verlag

Berlin Heidelberg New York
London Paris Tokyo
Hong Kong Barcelona
Budapest

Series Editors

Gerhard Goos
GMD Forschungsstelle
Universität Karlsruhe
Vincenz-Priessnitz-Straße 1
W-7500 Karlsruhe, FRG

Juris Hartmanis
Department of Computer Science
Cornell University
Upson Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA

Volume Editors

Michel Bidoit
LIENS, CNRS and Ecole Normale Supérieure
45, rue d'Ulm, F-75230 Paris Cedex 05, France

Hans-Jörg Kreowski
Fachbereich Mathematik und Informatik, Universität Bremen
Postfach 330440, W-2800 Bremen 33, FRG

Pierre Lescanne
CRIN and INRIA, Campus Scientifique
B. P. 239, F-54506 Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France

Fernando Orejas
Facultat d'Informàtica, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya
Pau Gargallo, 5, 08028 Barcelona, Spain

Donald Sannella
Department of Computer Science, University of Edinburgh
Mayfield Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3JZ, Scotland

CR Subject Classification (1991): D.2.1.-2., D.2.4, D.2.6, D.2.10-m, D.3.1-3,
F.3.1-2, I.1

ISBN 3-540-54060-1 Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York
ISBN 0-387-54060-1 Springer-Verlag New York Berlin Heidelberg

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Printed in Germany

Printing and binding: Druckhaus Beltz, Hemsbach/Bergstr.
2145/3140-543210 - Printed on acid-free paper

Preface

Methods for the algebraic specification of abstract data types were proposed in the early seventies in the USA and Canada and became a major research issue in Europe shortly afterwards. Since then the algebraic approach has come to play a central role in research on formal program specification and development, as its range of applications was extended to the specification of complete software systems, to the formal description of the program development process, and to the uniform definition of syntax and semantics of programming languages. Today this approach extends beyond just software to the development of integrated hardware and software systems. These flourishing activities in the area of algebraic specifications have led to an abundance of approaches, theories and concepts, which have universal algebra, category theory and logic as a common mathematical basis.

The present volume is an annotated bibliography which attempts to provide an up-to-date overview of past and present work on algebraic specification. No attempt is made to provide a coherent introduction to the topic for beginners; the intention is rather to provide a guide to the current literature for researchers in algebraic specification and neighbouring fields. Some indications of how the different approaches are related are included, together with some ideas concerning possible future directions.

This volume arose out of the work of the COMPASS Basic Research Working Group, funded by the European Community under the Basic Research Action programme, ref. no. 3264 (see [Kri 90a], [KP 90]) and coordinated by Bernd Krieg-Brückner of the Universität Bremen. The name COMPASS stands for “a COMPrehensive Algebraic approach to System Specification and development”. An early version of this document was included in the original COMPASS project proposal as a review of the state of the art [Kri 89a]. The current version is the result of suggestions for improvements from the participants in the COMPASS project, assembled and edited into a more or less coherent form by five editors. Since the COMPASS working group includes most of the leading European experts in algebraic specification, the result should be a relatively comprehensive overview of the main work in the field. But because of the somewhat haphazard way in which this volume arose, there are inevitable gaps and inaccuracies. We apologize for these in advance, and in particular to anybody whose work has inadvertently been omitted. In spite of its deficiencies, we hope that it nevertheless represents a useful snapshot of the current state of the art.

Acknowledgements

We thank those members of the COMPASS working group who contributed to the original grant proposal and/or who later submitted suggestions for improvements. The members of COMPASS are listed overleaf. Thanks also to Oliver Schoett for suggestions for improvement, and to Monika Lekuse for help with the editing. Special thanks to Bernd Krieg-Brückner for coordinating COMPASS.

The COMPASS Working Group

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona: *Fernando Orejas*; Silvia Clérici, Marisa Navarro (San Sebastian), Roberto Nieuwenhuis, Pilar Nivelá, Ricardo Peña, Vera Sacristan, Ana Sanchez (San Sebastian)

Technische Universität Berlin: *Hartmut Ehrig, Peter Pepper*; Paul Boehm, Ingo Claßen, Christian Dimitrovici, Gottfried Eggers, Andreas Fett, Werner Fey, Martin Große-Rhode, Horst Hansen, Michael Löwe, Catharina Riekhoff, Wolfram Schulte, Dietmar Wolz

Technische Universität Braunschweig: *Hans-Dieter Ehrich*; Martin Gogolla

Universität Bremen: *Bernd Krieg-Brückner (Coordinator), Hans-Jörg Kreowski*; Berthold Hoffmann, Stefan Kahrs, Junbo Liu, Detlef Plump, Zhenyu Qian

Universität Dortmund: *Harald Ganzinger*; Hubert Bertling, Michael Hanus, Renate Schäfers

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Technische Universität München: *Manfred Broy*; Michael Breu, Frank Dederichs, Heinrich Hußmann, Rainer Weber

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Universität Passau: *Martin Wirsing*; Ruth Breu, Michael Gengenbach, Alfons Geser, Thomas Grünler, Rolf Hennicker, Friederike Nickl, Peter Padawitz, Thomas Streicher

Scientific Correspondents: Jan Bergstra, Amsterdam; Didier Bert, Grenoble; Bruno Courcelle, Bordeaux; Ole-Johan Dahl, Oslo; Joseph Goguen, Oxford; Friedrich W. von Henke, Ulm; Klaus P. Jantke, Leipzig; Franz Lichtenberger, Linz; Jacques Loeckx, Saarbrücken; Tom Maibaum, London; Bernhard Möller, München; Ugo Montanari, Pisa; Peter Mosses, Aarhus; Tobias Nipkow, Cambridge; Olaf Owe, Oslo; Ernst-Rüdiger Olderog, Oldenburg; Francesco Parisi-Presicce, L'Aquila; Axel Poigné, St. Augustin; Horst Reichel, Dresden; Amílcar Sernadas, Lisbon; Gerd Smolka, Stuttgart; Andrzej Tarlecki, Warsaw; Muffy Thomas, Glasgow

Contents

Introduction	1
1 Basic Foundations	7
1.1 Basic Semantic Constructions and Constraints	7
1.2 Structure and Refinement	8
1.2.1 Structuring Operators	9
1.2.2 Parameterized Specifications and Module Specifications	10
1.2.3 Vertical Development and Implementation Relations	12
1.3 Expressive Power of Specification Approaches	13
2 Models and Logics	15
2.1 Partiality and Non-Strictness	15
2.2 Order-Sortedness and Polymorphism	16
2.3 Higher-Order Functions and Infinite Objects	18
2.4 Non-Determinism and Concurrency	19
2.5 Institutions	22
3 Development Concepts	25
3.1 Requirements Engineering	25
3.2 Transformation of Specifications	26
3.3 Reusability	29
3.4 Exception Handling	30
3.5 Specification Languages	31
4 Support Tools	35
4.1 Specification Environments and Development Systems	35
4.2 Executable Specifications and Prototyping	37
4.2.1 Techniques Based on Rewriting	37
4.2.2 Graph Reduction	37
4.3 Theorem Proving	38
4.3.1 First-Order Logic	38
4.3.2 First-Order Logic with Equality	39
4.3.3 Higher-Order Logic	39
4.3.4 Computer-Aided Proof Checking	39
4.4 Term Rewriting	41
4.4.1 Notions of Term Rewriting	41
4.4.2 Unification and Matching	42

4.4.3	Termination of Rewrite Systems	44
4.4.4	Completion	45
5	Applications	49
5.1	Software Development Process	49
5.1.1	Formalization of the Development Process	50
5.1.2	Applications Within the Development Process	50
5.1.3	Software Modularity	51
5.2	Programming Languages	52
5.2.1	Semantics of Programming Languages	52
5.2.2	Functional Programming	53
5.2.3	Logic Programming	54
5.2.4	Object-Oriented Programming	54
5.3	Databases and Knowledge Bases	56
	Bibliography	59