

SQL DATA DEFINITION: KEY CONSTRAINTS

CS121: Relational Databases

- Table Constraints
- Primary Key Constraints
- Null-value Constraints
- Unique Constraints
- Referential Integrity Constraints
- Foreign Key Constraints

Data Definition

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- Covered most of SQL data manipulation operations
- Continue exploration of SQL data definition features
 - ▣ Specifying tables and their columns (lecture 4)
 - ▣ Declaring views of the logical-level schema (lecture 6)
 - ▣ Specifying constraints on individual columns, or entire tables
 - ▣ Providing stored procedures to manipulate data
 - ▣ Specifying security access constraints
 - ▣ ...and more!

Data Definition (2)

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- We will focus on the mechanics of data definition
- For now, ignoring a very important question:
 - ▣ Exactly what *is* a “good” database schema, anyway??!
- General design goals:
 - ▣ Should be able to fully represent all necessary details and relationships in the schema
 - ▣ Try to *eliminate* the ability to store invalid data
 - ▣ Many other design goals too (security, performance)
 - Sometimes these design goals conflict with each other...
- DBMSes can enforce *many* different constraints
 - ▣ Want to leverage this capability to ensure correctness

Catalogs and Schemas

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- SQL provides hierarchical grouping capabilities for managing collections of tables
 - ▣ Also separate namespaces for different collections of tables
- Standard mechanism has three levels:
 - ▣ Catalogs
 - ▣ Schemas
 - ▣ Tables
 - ▣ Each level is assigned a name
 - ▣ Within each container, names must be unique
- Allows multiple applications to use the same server
 - ▣ Even multiple instances of a particular application

Catalogs and Schemas (2)

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- Every table has a full name:
 - ▣ catalog.schema.table
- Database systems vary widely on implementation of these features!
 - ▣ Catalog functionality not covered by SQL specification
 - ▣ Schema and table levels are specified
 - ▣ Most DBMSes offer some kind of grouping
- Common behaviors:
 - ▣ “Databases” generally correspond to catalogs
 - `CREATE DATABASE web_db;`
 - ▣ Schema-level grouping is usually provided
 - `CREATE SCHEMA blog_schema;`

Using a Database

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- Normally, must connect to a database server to use it
 - ▣ Specify a username and password, among other things
- Each database connection has its own environment
 - ▣ “Session state” associated with that client
 - ▣ Can specify the catalog and schema to use
 - e.g. **USE bank**; to use the banking database
 - e.g. Specifying database **user_db** to the MySQL client
 - ▣ All operations will use that catalog and schema by default
 - ▣ Can frequently override using full names for tables, etc.

Creating Tables

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- General form:

```
CREATE TABLE name (  
    attr1 type1,  
    attr2 type2,  
    ...  
);
```

- SQL provides a variety of standard column types
 - ▣ INT, CHAR (N), VARCHAR (N), DATE, etc.
 - ▣ (see Lecture 4 for more details about basic column types)
- Table and column names must follow specific rules
- Table must have a unique name within schema
- All columns must have unique names within the table

Table Constraints

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- By default, SQL tables have *no* constraints
 - ▣ Can insert multiple copies of a given row
 - ▣ Can insert rows with **NULL** values in any column
- Can specify columns that comprise primary key

```
CREATE TABLE account (  
    account_number CHAR(10) ,  
    branch_name     VARCHAR(20) ,  
    balance         NUMERIC(12, 2) ,  
    PRIMARY KEY (account_number)  
);
```

- ▣ No two rows can have same values for primary key
- ▣ A table can have only one primary key

Primary Key Constraints

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- Alternate syntax for primary keys

```
CREATE TABLE account (  
    account_number CHAR(10)          PRIMARY KEY,  
    branch_name     VARCHAR(20) ,  
    balance         NUMERIC(12, 2)  
);
```

- ▣ Can only be used for single-column primary keys!

- For multi-column primary keys, must specify primary key after column specifications

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    customer_name  VARCHAR(30) ,  
    account_number CHAR(10) ,  
    PRIMARY KEY (customer_name, account_number)  
);
```

Null-Value Constraints

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- Every attribute domain contains *null* by default
 - ▣ Same with SQL: every column can be set to **NULL**, if it isn't part of a primary key
- Often, **NULL** is not an acceptable value!
 - ▣ e.g. bank accounts must always have a balance
- Can specify **NOT NULL** to exclude **NULL** values for particular columns
 - ▣ **NOT NULL** constraint specified in column declaration itself
- Stating **NOT NULL** for primary key columns is unnecessary and redundant

Account Relation

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- Account number is a primary key
 - ▣ Already cannot be **NULL**
- Branch name and balance also should always be specified
 - ▣ Add **NOT NULL** constraints to those columns
- SQL:

```
CREATE TABLE account (  
    account_number CHAR(10)          PRIMARY KEY,  
    branch_name     VARCHAR(20)      NOT NULL,  
    balance         NUMERIC(12, 2)   NOT NULL  
);
```

Other Candidate Keys

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- Some relations have multiple candidate keys
- Can specify candidate keys with **UNIQUE** constraints
 - ▣ Like primary key constraints, can specify candidate keys in the column declaration, or after all columns
 - ▣ Can only specify multi-column candidate key after the column specifications
- Unlike primary keys, **UNIQUE** constraints do not exclude **NULL** values!
 - ▣ This constraint considers **NULL** values to be unequal!
 - ▣ If some attributes in the **UNIQUE** constraint allow **NULLs**, DB will allow multiple rows with the same values!

UNIQUE Constraints

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□ Example: An employee relation

```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id    INT          PRIMARY KEY,  
    emp_ssn   CHAR(9)      NOT NULL UNIQUE,  
    emp_name  VARCHAR(40)  NOT NULL,  
    ...  
);
```

- ▣ Employee's ID is the primary key
- ▣ All employees need a SSN, but no two employees should have the same SSN
 - Don't forget **NOT NULL** constraint too!
- ▣ All employees should have a name, but multiple employees might have same name

UNIQUE and NULL

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□ Example:

```
CREATE TABLE customer (  
    cust_name  VARCHAR(30) NOT NULL,  
    address    VARCHAR(60) ,  
    UNIQUE (cust_name, address)  
);
```

□ Try inserting values:

```
INSERT INTO customer  
VALUES ('John Doe', '123 Spring Lane');  
INSERT INTO customer  
VALUES ('John Doe', '123 Spring Lane');
```

▣ Second insert fails, as expected:

Duplicate entry 'John Doe-123 Spring Lane' for
key 'cust_name'

UNIQUE and NULL (2)

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- Example:

```
CREATE TABLE customer (  
    cust_name VARCHAR(30) NOT NULL,  
    address    VARCHAR(60),  
    UNIQUE (cust_name, address)  
);
```

- Try inserting more values:

```
INSERT INTO customer VALUES ('Jane Doe', NULL);  
INSERT INTO customer VALUES ('Jane Doe', NULL);
```

- ▣ Both inserts succeed!

- **Be careful using nullable columns in UNIQUE constraints!**

- ▣ Usually, you *really* want to specify **NOT NULL** for all columns that appear in **UNIQUE** constraints

CHECK Constraints

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- Often want to specify other constraints on values
- Can require values in a table to satisfy some predicate, using a **CHECK** constraint
 - ▣ Very effective for constraining columns' domains, and eliminating obviously bad inputs
- **CHECK** constraints must appear after the column specifications
- In theory, can specify any expression that generates a Boolean result
 - ▣ This includes nested subqueries!
 - ▣ In practice, DBMS support for **CHECK** constraints varies widely, and is often quite limited

CHECK Constraint Examples

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- Can constrain values in a particular column:

```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id    INT            PRIMARY KEY,  
    emp_ssn   CHAR(9)        NOT NULL UNIQUE,  
    emp_name  VARCHAR(40)    NOT NULL,  
    pay_rate  NUMERIC(5,2)   NOT NULL,  
    CHECK (pay_rate > 5.25)  
);
```

- Ensures that all employees have a minimum wage

CHECK Constraint Examples (2)

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```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id    INT           PRIMARY KEY,  
    emp_ssn   CHAR(9)       NOT NULL UNIQUE,  
    emp_name  VARCHAR(40)   NOT NULL,  
    status    VARCHAR(10)   NOT NULL,  
    pay_rate  NUMERIC(5,2)  NOT NULL,  
    CHECK (pay_rate > 5.25),  
    CHECK (status IN  
            ('active', 'vacation', 'suspended'))  
);
```

- Employee status must be one of the specified values
 - ▣ Like an enumerated type
 - ▣ (Many DBs provide similar support for enumerated types)

Another CHECK Constraint

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□ Depositor relation:

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    customer_name  VARCHAR(30) ,  
    account_number CHAR(10) ,  
    PRIMARY KEY (customer_name, account_number) ,  
    CHECK (account_number IN  
           (SELECT account_number FROM account))  
);
```

□ Rows in depositor table should only contain valid account numbers!

- ▣ The valid account numbers appear in account table
- ▣ This is a referential integrity constraint

Another CHECK Constraint (2)

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□ Depositor relation:

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    customer_name  VARCHAR(30) ,  
    account_number CHAR(10) ,  
    PRIMARY KEY (customer_name, account_number) ,  
    CHECK (account_number IN  
           (SELECT account_number FROM account))  
    ) ;
```

□ When does this constraint need to be checked?

- ▣ When changes are made to depositor table
- ▣ Also when changes are made to account table!

CHECK Constraints

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- ❑ Easy to write very expensive **CHECK** constraints
- ❑ **CHECK** constraints aren't used very often
 - ▣ Lack of widespread support; using them limits portability
 - ▣ When used, they are usually very simple
 - Enforce more specific constraints on data values, or enforce string format constraints using regular expressions, etc.
 - ▣ Avoid huge performance impacts!
- ❑ Don't use **CHECK** constraints for referential integrity 😊
 - ▣ There's a better way!

Referential Integrity Constraints

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- Referential integrity constraints are very important!
 - ▣ These constraints span multiple tables
 - ▣ Allow us to associate data across multiple tables
 - ▣ One table's values are constrained by another table's values
- A relation can specify a primary key
 - ▣ A set of attributes that uniquely identifies each tuple in the relation
- A relation can also include attributes of another relation's primary key
 - ▣ Called a foreign key
 - ▣ Referencing relation's values for the foreign key must also appear in the referenced relation

Referential Integrity Constraints (2)

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- Given a relation $r(R)$
 - ▣ $K \subseteq R$ is the primary key for R
- Another relation $s(S)$ references r
 - ▣ $K \subseteq S$ too
 - ▣ $\langle \forall t_s \in s : \exists t_r \in r : t_s[K] = t_r[K] \rangle$
- Also called a subset dependency
 - ▣ $\Pi_K(s) \subseteq \Pi_K(r)$
 - ▣ Foreign-key values in s must be a subset of primary-key values in r

SQL Foreign Key Constraints

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- Like primary key constraints, can specify in multiple ways
- For a single-column foreign key, can specify in column declaration
- Example:

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    customer_name  VARCHAR(30) REFERENCES customer,  
    account_number CHAR(10)    REFERENCES account,  
    PRIMARY KEY (customer_name, account_number),  
);
```

- Foreign key refers to primary key of referenced relation
- Foreign-key constraint does NOT imply **NOT NULL**!
 - Must explicitly add this, if necessary
 - In this example, **PRIMARY KEY** constraint eliminates **NULLs**

Foreign Key Constraints (2)

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- Can also specify the column in the referenced relation
- Especially useful when referenced column is a candidate key, but not the primary key
- Example:
 - ▣ Employees have both company-assigned IDs and social security numbers
 - ▣ Health benefit information in another table, tied to social security numbers

Foreign Key Example

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- Employee information:

```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id    INT          PRIMARY KEY,  
    emp_ssn   CHAR(9)      NOT NULL UNIQUE,  
    emp_name  VARCHAR(40)  NOT NULL,  
    ...  
);
```

- Health plan information:

```
CREATE TABLE healthplan (  
    emp_ssn   CHAR(9)          PRIMARY KEY  
                                REFERENCES employee (emp_ssn),  
    provider  VARCHAR(20)     NOT NULL,  
    pcp_id    INT             NOT NULL,  
    ...  
);
```

Multiple Constraints

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- Can combine several different constraints

```
emp_ssn CHAR(9) PRIMARY KEY  
REFERENCES employee (emp_ssn)
```

- ▣ *emp_ssn* is primary key of *healthplan* relation
- ▣ *emp_ssn* is also a foreign key to *employee* relation
- ▣ Foreign key references the candidate-key *employee.emp_ssn*

Self-Referencing Foreign Keys

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- A relation can have a foreign key reference to itself
 - ▣ Common for representing hierarchies or graphs

- Example:

```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id      INT          PRIMARY KEY,  
    emp_ssn     CHAR(9)      NOT NULL UNIQUE,  
    emp_name    VARCHAR(40)  NOT NULL,  
    ...  
    manager_id INT          REFERENCES employee  
);
```

- ▣ `manager_id` and `emp_id` have the same domain – the set of valid employee IDs
- ▣ Allow **NULL** manager IDs for employees with no manager

Alternate Foreign Key Syntax

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- Can also specify foreign key constraints after all column specifications
 - ▣ Required for multi-column foreign keys

- Example:

```
CREATE TABLE employee (  
    emp_id      INT,  
    emp_ssn     CHAR(9)      NOT NULL,  
    emp_name    VARCHAR(40)  NOT NULL,  
    ...  
    manager_id INT,  
  
    PRIMARY KEY (emp_id),  
    UNIQUE (emp_ssn),  
    FOREIGN KEY (manager_id) REFERENCES employee  
);
```

Multi-Column Foreign Keys

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- Multi-column foreign keys can also be affected by **NULL** values
 - ▣ Individual columns may allow **NULL** values
- If all values in foreign key are non-**NULL** then the foreign key constraint is enforced
- If any value in foreign key is **NULL** then the constraint cannot be enforced!
 - ▣ Or, “the constraint is defined to hold” (*lame...*)

Example Bank Schema

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□ Account relation:

```
CREATE TABLE account (  
    account_number VARCHAR(15)    NOT NULL,  
    branch_name     VARCHAR(15)    NOT NULL,  
    balance         NUMERIC(12,2)  NOT NULL,  
    PRIMARY KEY (account_number)  
);
```

□ Depositor relation:

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    customer_name  VARCHAR(15) NOT NULL,  
    account_number VARCHAR(15) NOT NULL,  
    PRIMARY KEY (customer_name, account_number),  
    FOREIGN KEY (account_number) REFERENCES account,  
    FOREIGN KEY (customer_name)  REFERENCES customer  
);
```

Foreign Key Violations

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- Several ways to violate foreign key constraints
- If referencing relation gets a bad foreign-key value, the operation is simply forbidden
 - ▣ e.g. trying to insert a row into *depositor* relation, where the row contains an invalid account number
 - ▣ e.g. trying to update a row in *depositor* relation, trying to change customer name to an invalid value
- More subtle issues when the *referenced* relation is changed
 - ▣ What to do with *depositor* if a row is deleted from *account*?

Example Bank Data

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□ *account* data:

account_number	branch_name	balance
...		
A-215	Mianus	700.00
A-217	Brighton	750.00
A-222	Redwood	700.00
A-305	Round Hill	350.00
...		

□ *depositor* data:

customer_name	account_number
...	
Smith	A-215
Jones	A-217
Lindsay	A-222
Turner	A-305
...	

Try to delete **A-222** from *account*. What should happen?

Foreign Key Violations

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- Option 1: Disallow the delete from *account*
 - ▣ Force the user to remove all rows in *depositor* relation that refer to A-222
 - ▣ Then user may remove row A-222 in *account* relation
 - ▣ Default for SQL. Also a pain, but probably a good choice.
- Option 2: Cascade the delete operation
 - ▣ If user deletes A-222 from *account* relation, *all* referencing rows in *depositor* should also be deleted
 - ▣ Seems reasonable; rows in *depositor* only make sense in context of corresponding rows in *account*

Foreign Key Violations (2)

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- Option 3: Set foreign key value to **NULL**
 - ▣ If primary key goes away, update referencing row to indicate this.
 - ▣ Foreign key column can't specify **NOT NULL** constraint
 - ▣ Doesn't make sense in every situation
 - Doesn't make sense in *account* and *depositor* example!
- Option 4: Set foreign key value to some default
 - ▣ Can specify a default value for columns
 - ▣ (Haven't talked about how to do this in SQL, yet.)

Cascading Changes

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- Can specify behavior on foreign key constraint

```
CREATE TABLE depositor (  
    ...  
    FOREIGN KEY (account_number) REFERENCES account  
        ON DELETE CASCADE,  
    FOREIGN KEY (customer_name) REFERENCES customer  
        ON DELETE CASCADE  
);
```

- When account A-222 is deleted from *account* relation, corresponding rows in *depositor* will be deleted too
- Read: “When a row is deleted from referenced relation, corresponding rows are deleted from this relation.”
- Similar considerations for updates to primary key values in the referenced relation
 - Can also specify **ON UPDATE** behaviors

Summary

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- Integrity constraints are a very powerful feature of the relational model
- SQL provides many ways to specify and enforce constraints
 - ▣ Actual support for different kinds of constraints varies among DBMSes
- Allows a database to exclude all invalid values
- Database can also resolve some integrity violations *automatically*
 - ▣ e.g. cascade deletion of rows from referencing relations, or setting foreign key values to **NULL**

SQL DATA DEFINITION: KEY CONSTRAINTS