

CREATING A UNIVERSAL INFORMATION LANGUAGE

OSCAR BENDER-STONE

ABSTRACT. Welkin is a formalized programming language to store information. We introduce its use cases and rigorously define its syntax and semantics. From there, we introduce the bootstrap, making Welkin completely self-contained under the meta-theory of Goedel's System T (equi-consistent to Peano Arithmetic).

CONTENTS

0.1. Goals	3
0.2. Organization	3
1. Foundations	4
1.1. Logic of Proofs	4
1.2. Computability	4
1.3. Verifiers	4
2. Information Systems	4
2.1. Motivating Examples and Definition	6
2.2. Constructions and Reflection	6
2.3. Universality	7
3. Syntax	7
4. Semantics	7
4.1. Terms	7
5. Bootstrap	8
6. Conclusion	8
References	8

In my journey to become a researcher, I have learned a profound lesson: research is culminated through diverse communities. Each community has their own approaches, their own conferences, and their own formatting. They even have a distinct preference to chalk, dry erase marker, or neither. These distinctions are strengths and foster progress. I didn't understand these communities in my early mathematical journey, which I initiated in secondary school. I read from a variety of mathematical fields, including geometry, logic, and set theory. I was inspired by how logicians bridge seemingly distant fields in unexpected ways. My research journey has sought to expand these bridges, encouraging interdisciplinary work.

Bridging research between these communities, however, was less common than I expected. For example, I wrote a poster for a cryptography class, discussing a mathematically certified program that implemented widely used cryptographic schemes. I initially assumed my professor knew about the researchers on this project, but after meeting one of these authors at a conference, I learned that *neither* knew about the other! As another example, during my time in the Budapest Semesters in Mathematics, I adopted a key tool in program verification to find proofs for a combinatorial problem. According to my advisor, that approach had *never* been considered before in his group. The boundaries between these communities isn't so clear, and it seems to take years to begin to *remotely* find them.

The separation of these communities raises a key question: *can* knowledge across disciplines be bridged together?

TODO: Provide concrete example of how logic connects fields together.

TODO: Clean up this paragraph further.

TODO: cite main claims about journals/research communities/etc as needed

In addition to this [FIRST CLASS OF PROBLEMS NAME], another major hurdle is truth management. [DISCUSS Problems with truth + corrections from papers don't propagate!] What can be done is addressing *information*, the storage of the *asserted* facts themselves, regardless of truth. As one example, suppose a scientist claims, "X is true about Y". One could debate the veracity of that claim, but what we can say is, "This scientist claims, 'X is true about Y'". Even if we doubt that, we could do: "This claim can be formulated: 'This scientist claims 'X is true about Y'''". By using these justifications, stating that a claim is expressible, the *syntactic expression* of the claim can be separated from its *semantic truth value*.¹ I will make this more rigorous in later sections, but this means we can build knowledge bases ontop of information systems using flexible extensions.

Information has been extensively studied through *measurements* in Algorithmic Information Theory (AIT). The founding idea of AIT is the Minimum Description Length (MDL) principle, that the best definition for an object is the smallest description that describes it. To formalize this idea, Kolmogorov defined a description as a *program*, and the Kolmogorov complexity of a string as the length of the *smallest program* that computes that string (see [1]). This program is defined via a Turing-computable programming language, and there is a different constant factor depending on the language, but AIT focuses on the asymptotic complexity. A cornerstone of this framework is providing the reason underlying cause of Gödel's incompleteness theorems, Turing's halting problem, Tarski's undefinability of truth, and more: *not all information can be compressed into a finite description*. This view was articulated by Chaitin on information compression. He defined Ω as the probability that a random Turing machine will halt and proved that it cannot be compressed computably. This result is a major theme in AIT, to address the limits of computation.

In addition to addressing these limits, Chaitin's results have profound consequences for the nature of mathematics. He explains:

Mathematics...has infinite complexity, whereas any individual theory would have only finite complexity and could not capture all the richness of the full world of mathematical truth. [2]

Chaitin's claim extends beyond mathematics; the extent of research areas are so vast that the idea of a *single* theory would fail to faithfully reproduce these disciplines. The study of the areas *themselves* is needed to faithfully represent them. This has been explored in Béziau's field of Universal Logic [3], where the aim is to study *logics* and not a *single* logic. In short, Chaitin's result, and the works in Universal Logic and others, demonstrate that research must be represented *flexibly* as well as faithfully.

The problem with a flexible representation system is precisely *how* to accomplish this. AIT provides asymptotic results on information *measurement*, but does not provide a guide on the fixed representation to use. Chaitin created a LISP variant, designed specifically for the ease of implementation and analysis [4], but this does not address

TODO: REWORD as needed + merge with discussions on FAIR.

TODO: Explain why we need universal building blocks. A key example is, e.g.,

TODO: Explain all claims concretely but concisely, as well as cite other possibilities (e.g., HoTT for logics)! And add anything else besides AIT and Universal Logic. MAYBE ontologies?

¹One might be worried about a paradox, such as "This claim is expressible: this claim is not expressible." We will avoid this using a clear separation of the overarching metatheory and object theory, with the former being syntactical in nature. To express this separation, we write quotes around the claim itself.

the faithful representations of other languages. Additionally, Universal Logic provides a single definition of a logic, one which can be tedious in exotic logics. Each of these issues underly the importance of *organization* itself, which emerge in the proliferation of general-purpose programming languages.

As a concrete example of organizational challenges, consider a Python program in Listing 1.

```
int main() {
    return 0;
}
def main():
    pass
if __init__ == "__main__":
    pass
```

LISTING 1. Example programs in C (left) and Python (right).

TODO: Finish transpilation example! Just show we care about *storing* the underlying semantics.

In light of the persistence of organizational issues, another step is required beyond Chaitin's reasoning: we must consider *universal building blocks* themselves. Sticking to Turing machines is sufficient in AIT and studying asymptotics, but the *actual* storage must take place. This is the motivation and driving force of this thesis.

0.1. Goals.

The aim of this thesis is to create a universal information language to standardize *all* formal representations. I call this language **Welkin**, based on the old German word *welkin* meaning cloud [5]. This aim will be made more precise in the later sections, where we will formally define a verifier for a programming language.

- **Goal 1:** universality. This language applies to ANY checker. Needs to be extremely flexible towards this goal, so we can ONLY assume, at most, we are getting a TM as an input, or it's somehow programmed.
- **Goal 2:** standardized. Needs to be rigorously and formally specified.
- **Goal 3:** optimal reuse. With respect to some criterion, enable *as much* reuse on information as possible.
- **Goal 4:** efficiency. Checking if we have enough information *given* a database much be efficient!

0.2. Organization.

- Section 2. Foundations: define the meta-theory used + verifiers. Also outline the Trusted Computing Base.
- Section 3. Information Systems: explore information in the context of verifiers. Then synthesize a definition to satisfy Goal 1.
 - Want to cover *why* we want to use our system. For minimality, want to start with the least necessary in RE sets. This is exactly outlined in Peirce's Reduction Thesis, with previous artitifical formalisms proving this resolved in [6].
- Section 4. Information Reuse. Develops the optimal informal system (w.r.t to a metric defined in this system) to satisfy Goal 3.
- Section 5. Syntax: Go over the simple LL(1) grammar, which is similar to JSON and uses python syntax for modules.
- Section 6. Semantics: Defines information graphs and their correspondence with the optimal informal system in Section 3.

TODO: Maybe provide as another table with descriptions?

- Section 7. Bootstrap. Fulfill Goal 2 with both the Standard AND the complete bootstrap.
- Section ?. Prototype. Time permitting, develop a prototype to showcase the language, implemented in python with a GUI frontend (Qt) and possibly a hand-made LL(1) parser.
- Section 8. Conclusion. Reviews the work done in the previous sections. Then outlines several possible applications.

1. FOUNDATIONS

Our first step is to define the set of verifiers, a subset of the computable functions. Based on our architecture to separate *query* from *search*, we focus this subset to primitive recursive functions.

To explore verifiers, we need a reliable metatheory, establishing our logical TCB. How can we establish what *reliable* means? [TODO: cite that ZFC, or ZFC + inaccessibles, is common in literature.] However, each of these are *specific theories*, and while ZFC + inaccessibilities likely suffices for, e.g., formal verification, what about other subjects? We want to make this *as extensible* as possible, akin to an infinite hierarchy of theories via reflection. So we will need a different approach.

The key problem to reliability is, while we can easily verify if a given input is accepted by a verifier, how do we tell when there is *no* such input? We use a novel criterion developed by Artemov's Logic of Proofs [7]. [TODO: bridge this with selector proofs. Also, make sure to explain WHY the arithmetic hierarchy is enough. We JUST want to explore properties of naturals. We can't do beyond. But we should prove this!]

This is where our metatheory come in. [TODO: explore arithmetic hierarchy briefly? How do we know *which* results on computability are trustworthy? This is ESSENTIAL for the TCB!]

1.1. Logic of Proofs.

1.2. Computability.

1.3. Verifiers.

Given a partial computable function φ , let $L(\varphi)$ be the language recognized by φ .

Definition 1.3.0. An **effective verifier** is a Turing machine that runs in linear time and it accepts an input *must* have read the entire input.

In a refined form of Kleene representability, we show that every RE set corresponds to an effective verifier in an important way.

Lemma 1.3.1. *For every RE set S with recognizer φ , there is an effective verifier V_φ such that $x \in S$ iff there is some trace t that starts with x and $t \in L(V_\varphi)$.*

For the rest of this thesis, all verifiers mentioned will be effective. Note that we will return to practical verifiers, those with realistic constants.

2. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Now with our meta-theory in Section 1, we can proceed to discuss information systems.

- Now can study the set of *verifiers*. A universal verifier is a verifier of a UTM. So we only need *one* such verifier. We encode the TM AND the input in question, and then simulate the whole TM.
 - Same problems as before: *how do we organize this?*
 - Instead of asking what information is broadly (we'll come back to that in the overarching semantics), we want to ask, what is information *for verifiers*?
 - * Recall translation from before: we *define* things by how they *are checked*. To information on mathematical objects corresponds to *information on how they are checked*.
 - . By how, this includes:
 - *what* things are/are not checked.
 - If it speeds it up/is a slow route.
 - . We capture this how by defining information *as* a relation between an input and a language *per* a trace.
 - . Current idea in a formal setting: *information are traces*.
 - Broadly treat information *as* a relation. Manifested as traces to include source, target, *and* steps inbetween.
 - Problem: this isn't efficient! Come up with non-trivial examples that, while we discern here, doesn't resolve the problem!
 - Also note: may not be *nice* w.r.t. certain systems. E.g., for sequent calculus, composition may not be guaranteed! So we can say a composite exist if *some* steps inbetween do, but this isn't always nice! Not *isomorphic* to sequent calculus proofs (depending on the system)! TODO: cite Strassburger deep inference paper to cite this issue and his approach.
 - Currently: we treat *proofs* as being traces. Need to resolve in the meta-theory!
 - Assuming we have a representation for traces (maybe via lambda terms? Review!),

we can look at the space of *all* these traces.

- HOW do we organize them? They are *base* information, but pretty dense.
 - Inefficient with equivalence modulo labeling
 - So we explore information systems based on these bounds:
 - (1) explicit = trace(s) \leq faster trace 1 \leq faster trace 2 $\leq \dots \leq$ implicit = statement of problem (x in S)
 - * TODO: create diagram that highlights this! Make the outer circle the problem, Halting instance, and then the center is the set of explicit traces. When we union these, then the an explicit trace in one machine is the implicit one for another - maybe show this in a simple lemma?
 - * ... ensured by Blum's speedup theorem - we will make this result self-contained + define Blum complexity measures!
 - * Consider statement of problem to be "most implicit" by fiat:

even if we use a proof search approach (so this may NOT halt) or use more uncomputable means, that still adds “extra” to the search itself.

- * Note that \leq here is NOT necessarily implication; we are more thinking about a rough *measure* of being an *exact* trace of a TM
- * Blum [8] says you can always do better (*in general*).
. Cite example: palindromes! Easy to discuss on efficiency
- * TODO: show that this corresponds to *shorter traces*, fixing the main measure as the size of the trace. Again, to separate *query* from *search*, we do NOT want to involve any aspect of time, so the main other attribute is the space itself.

- Our goal: how to organize when we have a **space** of things like (1) that are *interconnected*?
 - Old approach (diagram!): show that people had *different* ways to tackle the stuff in-between. That’s where most theories like (e.g., dependently typed theories, HOL, etc.)
 - New approach: separate *query* from *search*! Unify the previous approaches by focusing on optimizing the *left side* that we *can* control effectively

2.1. Motivating Examples and Definition.

We start with simple informal examples to explore the concept of information:

- Statements about the world.
- Taxonomies.
- Mathematical relations.
- More sophisticated: formal theories.

Each of the previous examples suggests a common definition: *information is a relation*. However, we want to express any formalizable kind of information. A binary relation *can* encode any other computable one, but not without clear reasons or connections. We add this missing component by using triadic relations instead, building off of semiotics and related schools of thought.

Definition 2.1.0. An **information system** is a pair (D, I) , where:

- D is the **domain**, a finite, computable set of **data** in \mathbb{N}
- I is **(partial) information**, a partially computable subset of $D \times D \times D$. This information is **complete** if I is totally computable.

2.2. Constructions and Reflection.

Let **Info** be the set of all information systems.

A natural construction to include is a system with *indexed information*, akin to indexed families of sets. But we want to have information between information as well. We can think of a disjoint union of systems as the weakest transformation between systems.

Definition 2.2.1. Let $\mathcal{S} = \{(D_i, I_i)\}_{\{i \in \mathbb{N}\}}$ be a family of information systems, indexed by a partial computable function. Then the **sum** of \mathcal{S} is $(\bigcup D_i, \bigcup I_i)$. A **transformation** on \mathcal{S} is an information system $(\bigcup D_i, I')$ such that for each $i \in I$, $I' \cap (D_i \times D_i \times D_i) = I_i$.

As another construction, we can naturally model formal systems by asserting that I is reflexive and transitive in a general sense, formalized by below.

Definition 2.2.2. A **formal system** is an information system such that the information relation is reflexive and “transitive in a general sense” (WIP).

This construction is **information compressing**: we can computably encode information into a different representation and computably decode it back.

Special systems:

- (\emptyset, \emptyset) is the **null information system**
- $(\mathbb{N}, \mathbb{N} \times \mathbb{N} \times \mathbb{N})$ is the **discrete information system**

Lemma 2.2.3. Let $\mathcal{H} \equiv (\text{Info}, \leq)$, where $(D_1, I_1) \leq (D_2, I_2)$ iff $D_1 \subseteq D_2$ and $I_1 \subseteq I_2$. Then \mathcal{H} forms a Heyting Algebra, with bottom element being the null information system and the top element being the discrete one.

Theorem 2.2.4.

- The discrete information system cannot represent \mathcal{H} .
- \mathcal{H} can represent any extension of this structure and therefore induces an idempotent operator.

TODO: Show that a formal system provides a proof system that is a way to *optimize* the search space of information systems.

2.3. Universality.

Theorem 2.3.5. Every universal formal system induces a framework \mathbb{F}' , as the image of the functor $\mathcal{G} : \mathbb{F} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}'$, given by $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{S}) = (\text{Image}(G_{\mathcal{S}}), \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{U}} \cap \text{Image}(G_{\mathcal{S}})^2)$. Conversely, every framework induces a universal formal system.

Proof. We must show that \mathbb{F}' is a framework for \mathbb{F} . Clearly this is a computable sub-category. To prove \mathcal{G} is an equivalence, notice that \mathcal{G} is full and faithful as a full sub-category of \mathbb{F} . Additionally, \mathcal{G} is essentially surjective precisely by construction. This completes the forwards direction.

Conversely, a univeral framework can be formed from a system by creating a computable encoding of the formulas and rules of a system. The family G can then be defined from an equivalence from \mathbb{F} to \mathbb{F}' , which can be easily verified to preserve and reflection derivations. \square

3. SYNTAX

4. SEMANTICS

4.1. Terms.

We expand upon to anaylze the ASTs generated from Section 3.

5. BOOTSTRAP

6. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

1. Li, M., Vitanyi, P.: An Introduction to Kolmogorov Complexity and Its Applications. Springer Publishing Company, Incorporated (2019)
2. Chaitin, G.: The Limits of Reason. *Scientific American*. 294, 74–81 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0306-74>
3. Béziau, J.-Y.: Universal Logic: Evolution of a Project. *Logica Universalis*. 12, 1–8 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11787-018-0194-7>
4. Chaitin, G.: Elegant Lisp Programs. (2003). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4471-0015-7_2
5. Dictionary, O.E.: *welkin*, n., https://www.oed.com/dictionary/welkin_n
6. Koshkin, S.: Is Peirce's Reduction Thesis Gerrymandered?. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*. 58, 271–300 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.2979/csp.2022.a886447>
7. Artemov, S.N.: Explicit Provability and Constructive Semantics. *Bulletin of Symbolic Logic*. 7, 1–36 (2001). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2687821>
8. Blum, M.: A Machine-Independent Theory of the Complexity of Recursive Functions. *J. Acm*. 14, 322–336 (1967). <https://doi.org/10.1145/321386.321395>

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER, BOULDER, CO

Email address: oscar-bender-stone@protonmail.com