Reading Notes of
Elements of the Theory of Computation

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October 23, 2011

Introduction

Fundamental questions in computer science answered by theory of computation:

- What is an algorithm?

- What can and what cannot be computed?

- When should an algorithm be considered practically feasible.

The theory of computation is the mathematical abstractions of computers, but its origin is even before the advent of the electronic computer.

> It is based on very few and elementary concepts, and draws its power and depth from the careful, patient, extensive, layer-by-Iayer manipulation of these concepts – just like the computer.

1 Sets, Relations, and Languages

1.1 Sets

Power set: 2^A, the collection of all subsets of set A.

Partition of set A, subset of 2^A whose elements are nonempty and disjoint when contain all elements of A.

1.2 Relations and functions

a and b are called the *components* of the ordered pair (a, b).

The *Cartesian product* of two sets.

Ordered tuples: ordered triples, quadruples, quintuples, sextuples...

n-ary relation: unary, binary, ternary...

The domain, image, *range*, of function; one-to-one + onto = bijection; inverse.

1.3 Special types of binary relations

The relation $R \in A \times A$ is called a *directed graph*.

Properties of relations: reflexive, symmetric, antisymmetric, transitive.

Equivalence relation: r, s, t. Partial order: r, a, t. Total order.

1.4 Finite and infinite sets

Call two sets *equinumerous* if there is a bijection between them.

Finite (equinumerous with $\{1, 2, \ldots n\}$, infinite, countably infinite (equinumerous with $\mathbf{N}$), countable, uncountable.

1.5 Three fundamental proof techniques

The Principle of Mathematical Induction: Let A be a set of natural numbers such that (1) $0 \in A$, and (2) for each natural number n'n', if $\{0, 1, \ldots, n\} \subseteq A$, then $n + 1 \in A$. Then $A = \mathbf{N}$.

The Pigeonhole Principle: if A and B are finite sets and $|A| > |B|$, then there is no one-to-one function from A to B.

The Diagonalization Principle: Let R be a binary relation on a set A, and let D, the diagonal set for R, be $\{a : a \in A \text{ and } (a, a) \notin R\}$. For each $a \in A$, let $R_a = \{b : b \in A \text{ and } (a, b) \in R\}$. Then D is distinct from each R_a. Lemma: the set $2^{\mathbf{N}}$ is uncountable.

1.6 Closures and algorithms

The *reflecxie transitive closure* of a directed graph.

The *rate of growth* of a function f on $\mathbf{N}$.

The proof of correctness of the Floyd algorithm: define *rank of a path* as the biggest index among its intermediate nodes, and prove that after the jth iteration, all path with rank less than or equal to j will be found.

Closure property: Let D be a set, let $n \geq 0$, and let $R \subseteq D^{n+1}$ be a $(n+1)$-ary relation on D. Then a subset B of D is said to be *closed under R* if $b_{n+1} \in B$ whenever $b_1, \ldots, b_n \in B$ and $(b_1, \ldots, b_n, b_{n+1}\} \in R$. Any property of the form "the set B is closed under relation $R_1, R_2, \ldots, R_m$" is called a *closure property* of B.

The minimal set B that contains A and has property P is unique if P is a closure property defined by relations on a set D while $A \subseteq D$. Then we call B the *closure* of A under the relation $R_1, \ldots, R_m$.

Inclusion property: unary closure (take $n = 0$ in definition).

Any closure property over a finite set can be computed in polynomial time (see ex1.6.9).

1.7 Alphabets and languages

Here is the *mathematics of strings of symbols.*

symbol: any object, but often only common characters are used.

alphabet: a finite set of symbols.

string: finite sequence of symbols from the alphabet, which has *length*, operation of *concatenation*($\circ$), *substring*, *prefix*, *suffix*, s^n, operation of *reversal*(s^R) defined

language: any set of strings over an alphabet Σ, that is, any subset of Σ^*. It might be able to be enumerated *lexicographically*. It has *complement* ($\overline{L}$), *concatenation of languages*, *Kleene star* (the set of all strings obtained by concatenating zero or more strings from it). We write L^+ for LL^*, which is the *closure* of L under the function of concatenation.

1.8 Finite representations of languages

This section discusses how to use *regular expressions* to represent languages.

A *regular expression* is the representation of language using empty set, characters in alphabet, concatentaion (symbol usually omitted), function of union (the *or* operator in regex), star, and parentheses. We can define the function $\mathcal{L}$ from regular expressions to lanuages, whose range is called the class of *regular languages*.

A *language recognition device* is an algorithm that is specifically designed to answer questions of the form "is string w a member of L?".

A *language generator* is the description of the way of generating members of a language.

The relation between the above two types of finite language specifications is another major subject of this book.

2 Finite Automata

2.1 Deterministic Finite Automata

DFA is computer with no memory; input a string, output indicate whether it's acceptable.

DFA definition: quituple $M = (K, \Sigma, \delta, s, F)$, where K is a finite set of *states*, Σ is an alphabet, $s \in K$ is the *initial state*, $F \subseteq K$ is the set of *final states*, and δ the *transition function*, is a function from $K \times \Sigma$ to K.

A *configuration of a DFA* is any elements of $K \times \Sigma^*$. For two configuration (q, w) and (q', w'), then $(q, w) \vdash_M (q', w')$ if and only $\vdash_M^*$ if $w = aw'$ for some symbol $a \in \Sigma$, and $\delta(q, a) = q'$. We say that (q, w) **yields** (q', w') **in one step**. Denote the reflexive transitive closure of $\vdash_M$ by $\vdash_M^*$, $(q, w) \vdash_M^* (q', w')$ is read, (q, w) **yields** (q', w').

A string $w \in \Sigma^*$ is said to be *accepted* by M if and only if there is a state $q \in F$ such that $(s, w) \vdash_M^* (q, e)$. *The language accepted* by M, $L(M)$ is the set of all strings accepted by M.

2.2 Nondeterministic Finite Automata

NFAs are simply a useful *notational generalization* of finite automata, as they can greatly simplify the description of these automata. Moreover, every NFA is equivalent to a DFA.

NFA definition: quituple $M = (K, \Sigma, \Delta, s, F)$ where Δ the *transition relation*, is a subset of $K \times (\Sigma \cup \{e\}) \times K$. Each triple $(q, u, p) \in \Delta$ is called a *transition* of M.

Two finite automata M_1 and M_2 are *equivalent* if and only if $L(M_1) = L(M_2)$. For each NFA, there is an equivalent DFA.

2.3 Finite Automata and Regular Expressions

The class of languages accepted by DFA or NFA, is the same as the class of *regular languages* – those that can be described by regular expressions.

The class of regular languages are the closure of certain finite languages under the language operations of union, concatenation, and Kleene star. We can prove similar closure properties of the class of languages accepted by finite automata: union, concatenation, Kleene star, complementation (exchange the final and nonfinal states), intersection (represented as complementation and union). Therefore, a language is regular *only if* it is accepted by a finite automaton.

The other part, a language is regular *if* it is accepted by a finite automaton, can be proved by constructing a regular expression from every NFA. The way is to find all paths between initial state to some final state, then union them.

2.4 Languages that are and are not Regular