

# Chapter 1

## The Semantic Web Vision

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# Lecture Outline

1. Today's Web
2. The Semantic Web Impact
3. Semantic Web Technologies
4. A Layered Approach

# Today's Web

- Most of today's Web content is suitable for **human consumption**
  - Even Web content that is generated automatically from databases is usually presented without the original structural information found in databases
- Typical Web uses today people's
  - seeking and making use of information, searching for and getting in touch with other people, reviewing catalogs of online stores and ordering products by filling out forms

# Keyword-Based Search Engines

- Current Web activities are not particularly well supported by software tools
  - Except for **keyword-based search engines** (e.g. Google, AltaVista, Yahoo)
- The Web would not have been the huge success it was, were it not for search engines

# Problems of Keyword-Based Search Engines

- High recall, low precision.
- Low or no recall
- Results are highly sensitive to vocabulary
- Results are single Web pages
- Human involvement is necessary to interpret and combine results
- Results of Web searches are not readily accessible by other software tools

# The Key Problem of Today's Web

- The meaning of Web content is not machine-accessible: **lack of semantics**
- It is simply difficult to distinguish the meaning between these two sentences:

*I am a professor of computer science.*

*I am a professor of computer science,  
you may think. Well, . . .*

# The Semantic Web Approach

- Represent Web content in a form that is more easily machine-processable.
- Use intelligent techniques to take advantage of these representations.
- The Semantic Web will gradually evolve out of the existing Web, it is not a competition to the current WWW

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# The Semantic Web Impact – Knowledge Management

- Knowledge management concerns itself with acquiring, accessing, and maintaining knowledge within an organization
- Key activity of large businesses: internal knowledge as an intellectual asset
- It is particularly important for international, geographically dispersed organizations
- Most information is currently available in a weakly structured form (e.g. text, audio, video)

# Limitations of Current Knowledge Management Technologies

- *Searching information*
  - *Keyword-based search engines*
- *Extracting information*
  - human involvement necessary for browsing, retrieving, interpreting, combining
- *Maintaining information*
  - inconsistencies in terminology, outdated information.
- *Viewing information*
  - Impossible to define views on Web knowledge

# Semantic Web Enabled Knowledge Management

- Knowledge will be organized in conceptual spaces according to its meaning.
- Automated tools for maintenance and knowledge discovery
- Semantic query answering
- Query answering over several documents
- Defining who may view certain parts of information (even parts of documents) will be possible.

# The Semantic Web Impact – B2C Electronic Commerce

- A typical scenario: user visits one or several online shops, browses their offers, selects and orders products.
- Ideally humans would visit all, or all major online stores; but too time consuming
- **Shopbots** are a useful tool

# Limitations of Shopbots

- They rely on wrappers: extensive programming required
- Wrappers need to be reprogrammed when an online store changes its outfit
- Wrappers extract information based on textual analysis
  - Error-prone
  - Limited information extracted

# Semantic Web Enabled B2C Electronic Commerce

- Software agents that can interpret the product information and the terms of service.
  - Pricing and product information, delivery and privacy policies will be interpreted and compared to the user requirements.
- Information about the reputation of shops
- Sophisticated shopping agents will be able to conduct automated negotiations

# The Semantic Web Impact – B2B Electronic Commerce

- Greatest economic promise
- Currently relies mostly on EDI
  - Isolated technology, understood only by experts
  - Difficult to program and maintain, error-prone
  - Each B2B communication requires separate programming
- Web appears to be perfect infrastructure
  - But B2B not well supported by Web standards

# Semantic Web Enabled B2B Electronic Commerce

- Businesses enter partnerships without much overhead
- Differences in terminology will be resolved using standard abstract domain models
- Data will be interchanged using translation services.
- Auctioning, negotiations, and drafting contracts will be carried out automatically (or semi-automatically) by software agents



# Wikis

- Collections of web pages that allow users to add content via a browser interface
- Wiki systems allow for collaborative knowledge
- Users are free to add and change information without ownership of content, access restrictions, or rigid workflows

# Some Uses of Wikis

- Development of bodies of knowledge in a community effort, with contributions from a wide range of users (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Knowledge management of an activity or a project (e.g. brainstorming and exchanging ideas, coordinating activities, exchanging records of meetings)

# Semantic Web Enabled Wikis

- The inherent structure of a wiki, given by the linking between pages, gets accessible to machines beyond mere navigation
- Structured text and untyped hyperlinks are enriched by semantic annotations referring to an underlying model of the knowledge captured by the wiki
  - e.g. a hyperlink from Knossos to Heraklion could be annotated with information *is located in*. This information could then be used for context-specific presentations of pages, advanced querying, and consistency verification

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# Semantic Web Technologies

- Explicit Metadata
- Ontologies
- Logic and Inference
- Agents

# On HTML

- Web content is currently formatted for human readers rather than programs
- HTML is the predominant language in which Web pages are written (directly or using tools)
- Vocabulary describes presentation

# An HTML Example

`<h1>Agilitas Physiotherapy Centre</h1>`

Welcome to the home page of the Agilitas Physiotherapy Centre. Do you feel pain? Have you had an injury? Let our staff Lisa Davenport, Kelly Townsend (our lovely secretary) and Steve Matthews take care of your body and soul.

`<h2>Consultation hours</h2>`

Mon 11am - 7pm`<br>`

Tue 11am - 7pm`<br>`

Wed 3pm - 7pm`<br>`

Thu 11am - 7pm`<br>`

Fri 11am - 3pm`<p>`

But note that we do not offer consultation during the weeks of the `<a href=". . .">State Of Origin</a>` games.

# Problems with HTML

- Humans have no problem with this
- Machines (software agents) do:
  - How distinguish therapists from the secretary,
  - How determine exact consultation hours
  - They would have to follow the link to the State Of Origin games to find when they take place.



# A Better Representation

```
<company>
  <treatmentOffered>Physiotherapy</treatmentOffered>
  <companyName>Agilias Physiotherapy
  Centre</companyName>
  <staff>
    <therapist>Lisa Davenport</therapist>
    <therapist>Steve Matthews</therapist>
    <secretary>Kelly Townsend</secretary>
  </staff>
</company>
```

# Explicit Metadata

- This representation is far more easily processable by machines
- Metadata: data about data
  - Metadata capture part of the *meaning of data*
- Semantic Web does not rely on text-based manipulation, but rather on machine-processable metadata

# Ontologies

The term ontology originates from philosophy

- The study of the nature of existence

Different meaning from computer science

- An ontology is an explicit and formal specification of a conceptualization

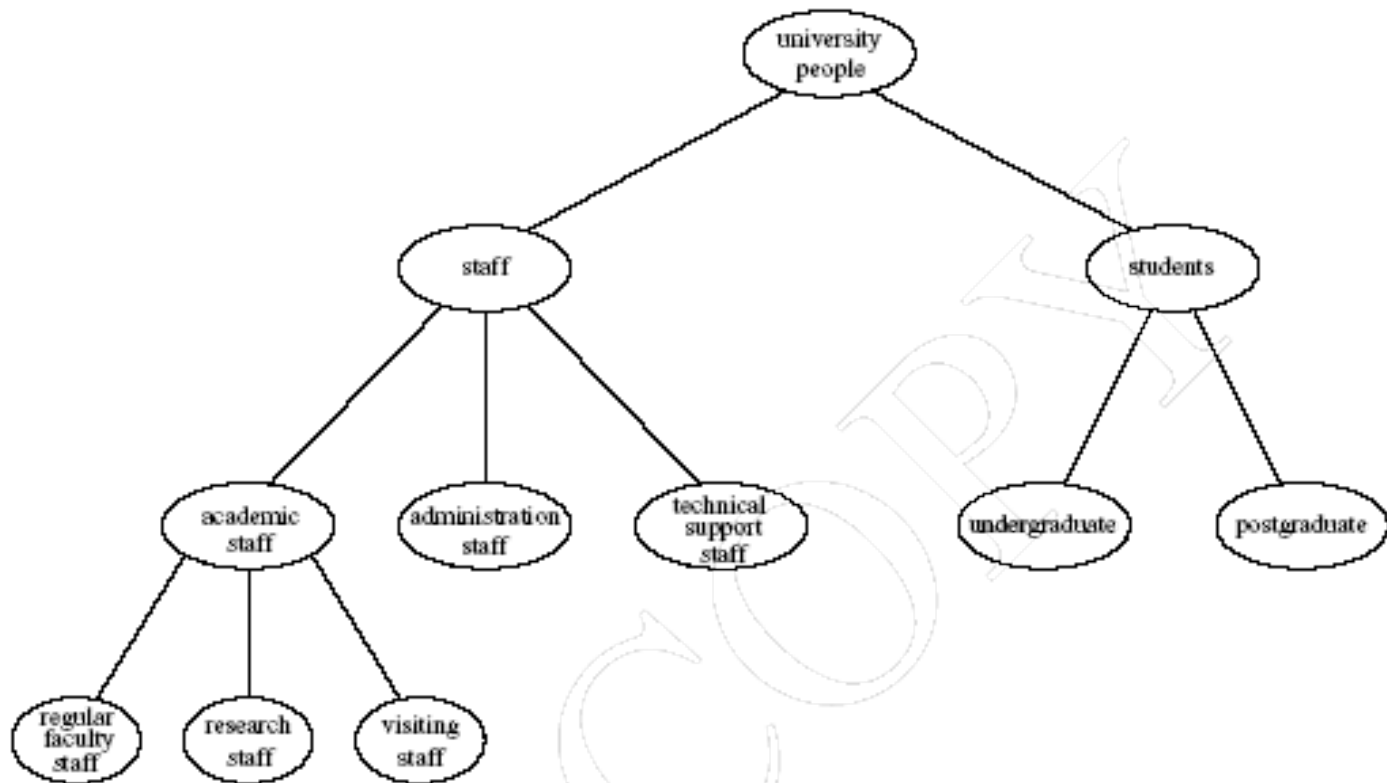
# Typical Components of Ontologies

- **Terms** denote important concepts (classes of objects) of the domain
  - e.g. professors, staff, students, courses, departments
- **Relationships** between these terms: typically class hierarchies
  - a class C to be a subclass of another class C' if every object in C is also included in C'
  - e.g. all professors are staff members

# Further Components of Ontologies

- Properties:
  - e.g. X teaches Y
- Value restrictions
  - e.g. only faculty members can teach courses
- Disjointness statements
  - e.g. faculty and general staff are disjoint
- Logical relationships between objects
  - e.g. every department must include at least 10 faculty

# Example of a Class Hierarchy



# The Role of Ontologies on the Web

- Ontologies provide a shared understanding of a domain: **semantic interoperability**
  - overcome differences in terminology
  - mappings between ontologies
- Ontologies are useful for the organization and navigation of Web sites

# The Role of Ontologies in Web Search

- Ontologies are useful for improving the accuracy of Web searches
  - search engines can look for pages that refer to a precise concept in an ontology
- Web searches can exploit generalization/specialization information
  - If a query fails to find any relevant documents, the search engine may suggest to the user a more general query.
  - If too many answers are retrieved, the search engine may suggest to the user some specializations.



# Web Ontology Languages

## RDF Schema

- RDF is a data model for objects and relations between them
- RDF Schema is a vocabulary description language
- Describes properties and classes of RDF resources
- Provides semantics for generalization hierarchies of properties and classes

# Web Ontology Languages (2)

## OWL

- A richer ontology language
- relations between classes
  - e.g., disjointness
- cardinality
  - e.g. “exactly one”
- richer typing of properties
- characteristics of properties (e.g., symmetry)

# Logic and Inference

- Logic is the discipline that studies the principles of reasoning
- Formal languages for expressing knowledge
- Well-understood formal semantics
  - Declarative knowledge: we describe what holds without caring about how it can be deduced
- Automated reasoners can deduce (infer) conclusions from the given knowledge

# An Inference Example

$\text{prof}(X) \rightarrow \text{faculty}(X)$

$\text{faculty}(X) \rightarrow \text{staff}(X)$

$\text{prof}(\text{michael})$

We can deduce the following **conclusions**:

$\text{faculty}(\text{michael})$

$\text{staff}(\text{michael})$

$\text{prof}(X) \rightarrow \text{staff}(X)$

# Logic versus Ontologies

- The previous example involves knowledge typically found in ontologies
  - Logic can be used to uncover ontological knowledge that is implicitly given
  - It can also help uncover unexpected relationships and inconsistencies
- Logic is more general than ontologies
  - It can also be used by intelligent agents for making decisions and selecting courses of action

# Tradeoff between Expressive Power and Computational Complexity

- The more expressive a logic is, the more computationally expensive it becomes to draw conclusions
  - Drawing certain conclusions may become impossible if non-computability barriers are encountered.
- Our previous examples involved rules “*If conditions, then conclusion,*” and only finitely many objects
  - This subset of logic is tractable and is supported by efficient reasoning tools

# Inference and Explanations

- Explanations: the series of inference steps can be retraced
- They increase users' confidence in Semantic Web agents: “Oh yeah?” button
- Activities between agents: create or validate proofs

# Typical Explanation Procedure

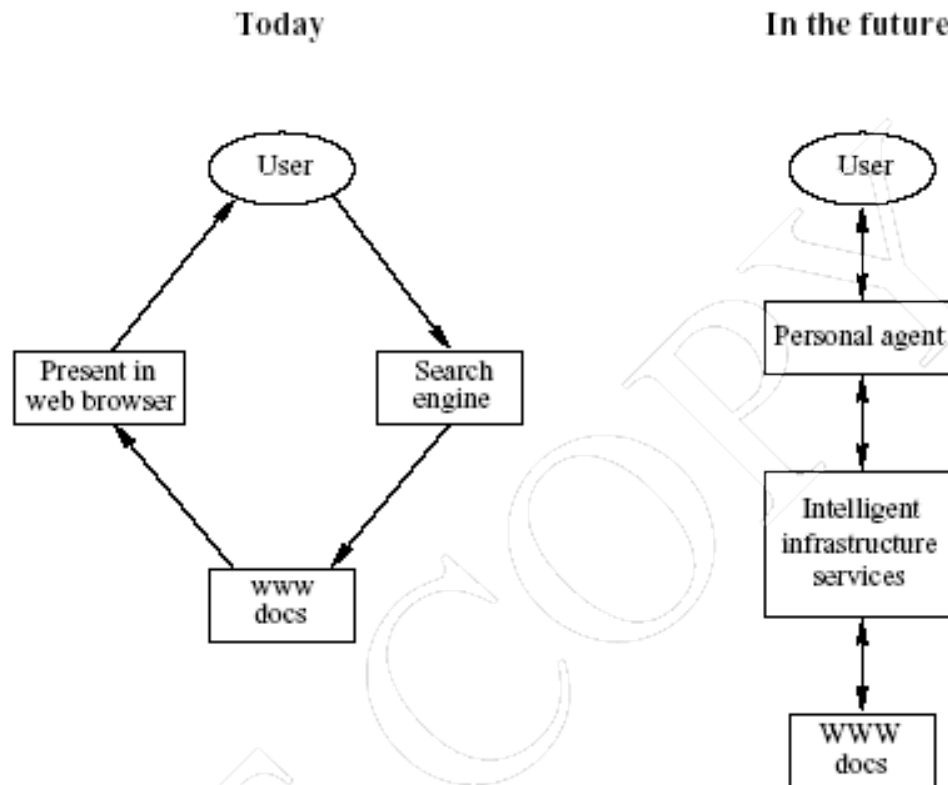
- Facts will typically be traced to some Web addresses
  - The trust of the Web address will be verifiable by agents
- Rules may be a part of a shared commerce ontology or the policy of the online shop



# Software Agents

- Software agents work autonomously and proactively
  - They evolved out of object oriented and component-based programming
- A personal agent on the Semantic Web will:
  - receive some tasks and preferences from the person
  - seek information from Web sources, communicate with other agents
  - compare information about user requirements and preferences, make certain choices
  - give answers to the user

# Intelligent Personal Agents



# Semantic Web Agent Technologies

- Metadata
  - Identify and extract information from Web sources
- Ontologies
  - Web searches, interpret retrieved information
  - Communicate with other agents
- Logic
  - Process retrieved information, draw conclusions

# Semantic Web Agent Technologies (2)

- Further technologies (orthogonal to the Semantic Web technologies)
  - Agent communication languages
  - Formal representation of beliefs, desires, and intentions of agents
  - Creation and maintenance of user models.

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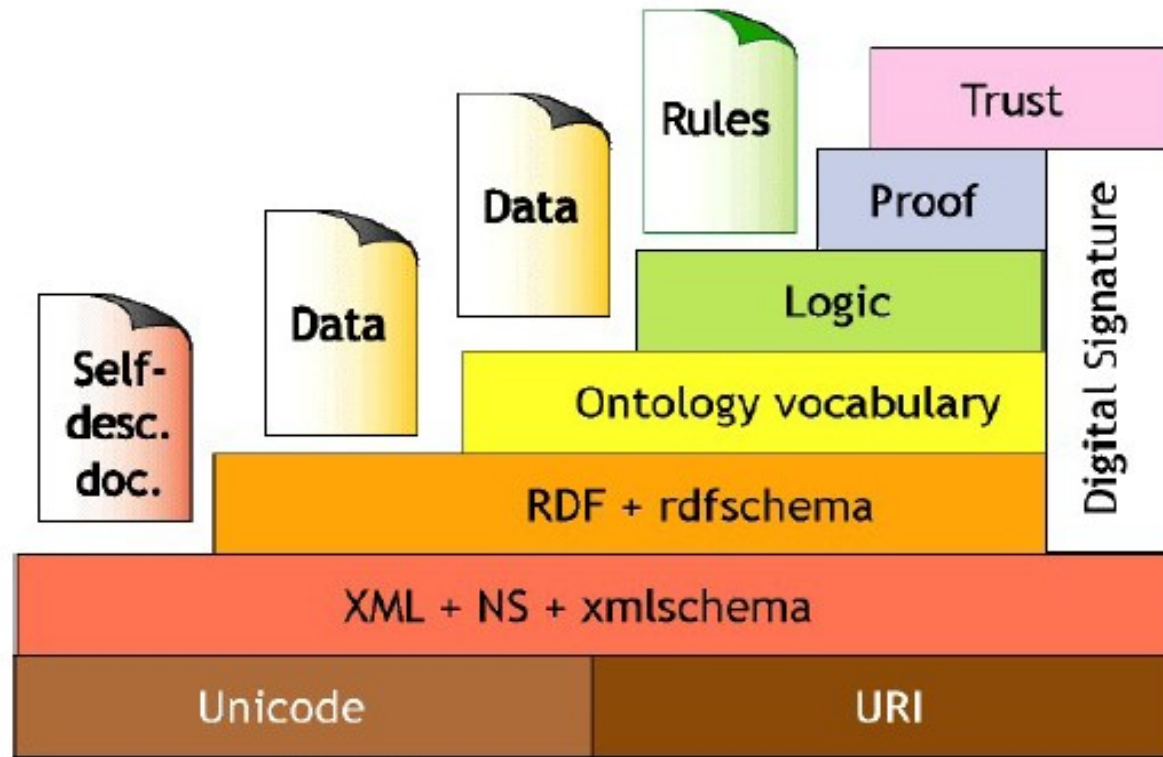
# A Layered Approach

- The development of the Semantic Web proceeds in steps
  - Each step building a layer on top of another

## Principles:

- Downward compatibility
- Upward partial understanding

# The Semantic Web Layer Tower

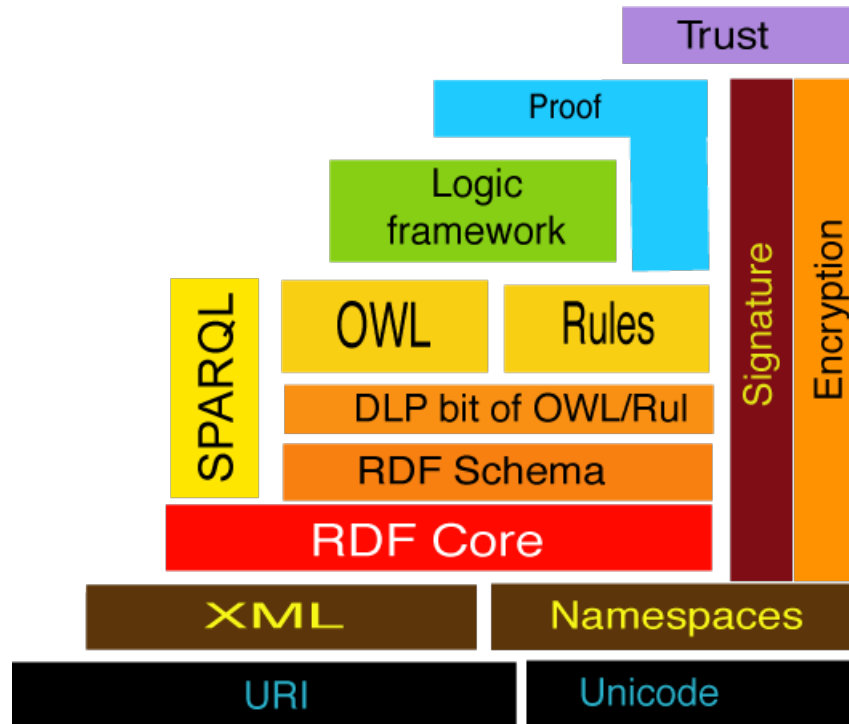


# An Alternative Layer Stack

- Takes recent developments into account
- The main differences are:
  - The ontology layer is instantiated with two alternatives: the current standard Web ontology language, OWL, and a rule-based language
  - DLP is the intersection of OWL and Horn logic, and serves as a common foundation
- The Semantic Web Architecture is currently being debated and may be subject to refinements and modifications in the future.



# Alternative Semantic Web Stack



# Semantic Web Layers

- XML layer
  - Syntactic basis
- RDF layer
  - RDF basic data model for facts
  - RDF Schema simple ontology language
- Ontology layer
  - More expressive languages than RDF Schema
  - Current Web standard: OWL

# Semantic Web Layers (2)

- Logic layer
  - enhance ontology languages further
  - application-specific declarative knowledge
- Proof layer
  - Proof generation, exchange, validation
- Trust layer
  - Digital signatures
  - recommendations, rating agencies ....

# Book Outline

2. Structured Web Documents in XML
3. Describing Web Resources in RDF
4. Web Ontology Language: OWL
5. Logic and Inference: Rules
6. Applications
7. Ontology Engineering
8. Conclusion and Outlook