ENTITY-RELATIONSHIP MODEL III
N-ary Relationships

- Can specify relationships of degree > 2 in E-R model
- Example:

  Employees are assigned to jobs at various branches
  Many-to-many mapping: any combination of employee, job, and branch is allowed
  An employee can have several jobs at one branch
N-ary Mapping Cardinalities

- Can specify some mapping cardinalities on relationships with degree > 2
- Each combination of employee and branch can only be associated with one job:

  Each employee can have only one job at each branch
For degree > 2 relationships, we only allow at most one edge with an arrow.

**Reason:** multiple arrows on N-ary relationship-set is ambiguous

- (several meanings have been defined for this in the past)

- Relationship-set $R$ associating entity-sets $A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_n$
  - No arrows on edges $A_1, \ldots, A_i$
  - Arrows are on edges to $A_{i+1}, \ldots, A_n$

- **Meaning 1 (the simpler one):**
  - A particular combination of entities in $A_1, \ldots, A_i$ can be associated with at most one set of entities in $A_{i+1}, \ldots, A_n$
  - Primary key of $R$ is union of primary keys from set $\{ A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_i \}$

Diagram:

- Primary key: $(a, b)$
- Meaning 1:
  - $(a_1, b_2, c_3, d_5)$
  - $(a_3, b_4, c_3, d_2)$
  - $(a_3, b_4, c_6, d_9)$
  - ...

\[ A \rightarrow R \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \]
N-ary Mapping Cardinalities (3)

- Relationship-set \( R \) associating entity-sets \( A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_n \)
  - No arrows on edges \( A_1, \ldots, A_i \); arrows on edges to \( A_{i+1}, \ldots, A_n \)
- **Meaning 2 (the insane one):**
  - For each entity-set \( A_k \) \((i < k \leq n)\), a particular combination of entities from all other entity-sets can be associated with at most one entity in \( A_k \)
  - \( R \) has a candidate key for each arrow in N-ary relationship-set
  - For each \( k \) \((i < k \leq n)\), another candidate key of \( R \) is union of primary keys from entity-sets \{ \( A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_{k-1}, A_{k+1}, \ldots, A_n \) \}

Two candidate keys: \((a, b, c), (a, b, d)\)

Meaning 2:
- \((a_1, b_2, c_3, d_5)\)
- \((a_3, b_4, c_3, d_2)\)
- \((a_1, b_2, c_1, d_4)\)
- \((a_3, b_4, c_5, d_7)\)
- \((a_1, b_2, c_3, d_9)\)
- \((a_3, b_4, c_6, d_2)\)

\[ \ldots \]

All disallowed by meaning 1!
Both interpretations of multiple arrows have been used in books and papers...

If we only allow one edge to have an arrow, both definitions are equivalent

- The ambiguity disappears
Binary vs. N-ary Relationships

- Often have only binary relationships in DB schemas
- For degree > 2 relationships, could replace with binary relationships
  - Replace N-ary relationship-set with a new entity-set $E$
    - Create an identifying attribute for $E$
    - e.g. an auto-generated ID value
  - Create a relationship-set between $E$ and each other entity-set
  - Relationships in $R$ must be represented in $R_A$, $R_B$, and $R_C$
Binary vs. N-ary Relationships (2)

- Are these representations identical?
- Example: Want to represent a relationship between entities \( a_5, b_1 \) and \( c_2 \)
  - How many relationships can we actually have between these three entities?
- Ternary relationship set:
  - Can only store one relationship between \( a_5, b_1 \) and \( c_2 \), due to primary key of \( R \)
- Alternate approach:
  - Can create many relationships between these entities, due to the entity-set \( E \):
    - \( (a_5, e_1), (b_1, e_1), (c_2, e_1) \)
    - \( (a_5, e_2), (b_1, e_2), (c_2, e_2) \)
    - ...
  - Can’t constrain in exactly the same ways
Binary vs. N-ary Relationships (3)

- Using binary relationships is sometimes more intuitive for particular designs
- Example: office-equipment inventory database
  - Ternary relationship-set inventory, associating department, machine, and vendor entity-sets
- What if vendor info is unknown for some machines?
  - For ternary relationship, must use null values to represent missing vendor details
  - With binary relationships, can simply not have a relationship between machine and vendor
- For cases like these, use binary relationships
  - If it makes sense to model as separate binary relationships, do it that way!
What about this case:
- Ternary relationship between student, assignment, and submission
- Need to allow multiple submissions for a particular assignment, from a particular student

In this case, it could make sense to represent as a ternary relationship
- Doesn’t make sense to have only two of these three entities in a relationship
Other ways to represent students, assignments and submissions?

Can also represent as two binary relationships

Note the total participation constraints!
- Required to ensure that every submission has an associated student, and an associated assignment
- Also, two one-to-many constraints
- Could even make submission a weak entity-set
  - Both student and assignment are identifying entities!

- Discriminator for submission is version number
- Primary key for submission?
  - Union of primary keys from all owner entity-sets, plus discriminator
  - (username, shortname, version)
- Sometimes ternary relationships are best
  - Clearly indicates all entities involved in relationship
  - Only way to represent certain constraints!
- Bank jobs example:
  - Each (employee, branch) pair can have only one job
  - Simply cannot construct the same constraint using only binary relationships
    - *(Reason is related to issue identified on slide 8)*
For E-R model to be useful, need to be able to convert diagrams into an implementation schema

Turns out to be very easy to do this!

- Big overlaps between E-R model and relational model
- Biggest difference is E-R composite/multivalued attributes, vs. relational model atomic attributes

Three components of conversion process:
- Specify schema of the relation itself
- Specify primary key on the relation
- Specify any foreign key references to other relations
Strong Entity-Sets

- Strong entity-set $E$ with attributes $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n$
  - Assume simple, single-valued attributes for now
- Create a relation schema with same name $E$, and same attributes $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n$
- Primary key of relation schema is same as primary key of entity-set
  - Strong entity-sets require no foreign keys to other things
- Every entity in $E$ is represented by a tuple in the corresponding relation
Entity-Set Examples

- Geocache location E-R diagram:
  - Entity-set named location

- Convert to relation schema:

  \[\text{location}(\text{latitude}, \text{longitude}, \text{description}, \text{last\_visited})\]
E-R diagram for customers and loans:

- Convert **customer** and **loan** entity-sets:
  - `customer(cust_id, name, street_address, city)`
  - `loan(loan_id, amount)`
Relationship-Sets

- **Relationship-set** $R$
  - For now, assume that all participating entity-sets are strong entity-sets
  - $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_m$ is the union of all participating entity-sets’ primary key attributes
  - $b_1, b_2, \ldots, b_n$ are descriptive attributes on $R$ (if any)

- Relational model schema for $R$ is:
  - $\{a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_m\} \cup \{b_1, b_2, \ldots, b_n\}$

- $\{a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_m\}$ is a superkey, but not necessarily a candidate key

- Primary key of $R$ depends on $R$’s mapping cardinality
For binary relationship-sets:
- e.g. between strong entity-sets $A$ and $B$
- If many-to-many mapping:
  - Primary key of relationship-set is union of all entity-set primary keys
  - $\text{primary_key}(A) \cup \text{primary_key}(B)$
- If one-to-one mapping:
  - Either entity-set’s primary key is acceptable
  - $\text{primary_key}(A)$, or $\text{primary_key}(B)$
  - Enforce both candidate keys in DB schema!
For many-to-one or one-to-many mappings:
- e.g. between strong entity-sets A and B
- Primary key of entity-set on “many” side is primary key of relationship

Example: relationship R between A and B
- One-to-many mapping, with B on “many” side
- Schema contains primary_key(A) U primary_key(B), plus any descriptive attributes on R
- primary_key(B) is primary key of R
  - Each $a \in A$ can map to many $b \in B$
  - Each value for primary_key(B) can appear only once in R
Relationship-Set Foreign Keys

- Relationship-sets associate entities in entity-sets
  - We need foreign-key constraints on relation schema for $R$!
- For each entity-set $E_i$ participating in $R$:
  - Relation schema for $R$ has a foreign-key constraint on $E_i$ relation, for $\text{primary_key}(E_i)$ attributes
- Relation schema notation doesn’t provide mechanism for indicating foreign key constraints
  - Don’t forget about foreign keys and candidate keys!
    - Making notes on your relational model schema is a very good idea
  - Can specify both foreign key constraints and candidate keys in the SQL DDL
**Relation schema for borrower:**
- Primary key of customer is cust_id
- Primary key of loan is loan_id
- Descriptive attribute access_date
- borrower mapping cardinality is many-to-many
- Result: borrower(cust_id, loan_id, access_date)
In cases like this, must use roles to distinguish between the entities involved in the relationship-set
- *employee* participates in *works_for* relationship-set twice
- Can’t create a schema (*employee_id*, *employee_id*)

Change names of key-attributes to distinguish roles
- e.g. (*manager_employee_id*, *worker_employee_id*)
- e.g. (*manager_id*, *employee_id*)
Relation schema for employee entity-set:
- (For now, ignore phone_number and num_reports...)
- employee(employee_id, name)

Relation schema for works_for:
- One-to-many mapping from manager to worker
- “Many” side is used for primary key
- Result: works_for(employee_id, manager_id)
For degree > 2 relationship-sets:

- If no arrows (“many-to-many” mapping), relationship-set primary key is union of all participating entity-sets’ primary keys
- If one arrow (“one-to-many” mapping), relationship-set primary key is union of primary keys of entity-sets without an arrow
- Don’t allow more than one arrow for relationship-sets with degree > 2
N-ary Relationship-Set Example

- **Entity-set schemas:**
  - job(title, level)
  - employee(employee_id, employee_name)
  - branch(branch_name, branch_city, assets)

- **Relationship-set schema:**
  - Primary key includes entity-sets on non-arrow links
  - works_on(employee_id, branch_name, title)
Weak Entity-Sets

- Weak entity-sets depend on at least one strong entity-set
  - The identifying entity-set, or owner entity-set
  - Relationship between the two is called the identifying relationship

- Weak entity-set $A$ owned by strong entity-set $B$
  - Attributes of $A$ are $\{a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_m\}$
    - Some subset of these attributes comprises the discriminator of $A$
  - $primary\_key(B) = \{b_1, b_2, \ldots, b_n\}$
  - Relation schema for $A$: $\{a_1,a_2,\ldots,a_m\} \cup \{b_1,b_2,\ldots,b_n\}$
  - Primary key of $A$ is $discriminator(A) \cup primary\_key(B)$
  - $A$ has a foreign key constraint on $primary\_key(B)$, to $B$
Identifying Relationship?

- The identifying relationship is many-to-one, with no descriptive attributes
- Relation schema for weak entity-set already includes primary key for strong entity-set
  - Foreign key constraint is imposed, too
- No need to create relational model schema for the identifying relationship
  - Would be redundant to the weak entity-set’s relational model schema!
Weak Entity-Set Example

- **account** schema:
  account(account_number, balance)

- **check** schema:
  - Discriminator is check_number
  - Primary key for check is: (account_number, check_number)
  check(account_number, check_number, check_date, recipient, amount, memo)
Weak Entity-Set Example (2)

- Schemas for strong entity-sets:
  - student(username)
  - assignment(shortname, due_date, url)

- Schema for submission weak entity-set:
  - Discriminator is version
  - Both student and assignment are owners!
    - submission(username, shortname, version, submit_date, data)
      - Two foreign keys in this relation as well
Composite Attributes

- Relational model simply doesn’t handle composite attributes
  - All attribute domains are *atomic* in the relational model
- When mapping E-R composite attributes to relation schema: simply flatten the composite
  - Each component attribute maps to a separate attribute in relation schema
  - In relation schema, simply can’t refer to the composite as a whole
  - (Can adjust this mapping for databases that support composite types)
Customers with addresses:

Each component of address becomes a separate attribute

```
customer(cust_id, name, street, city, state, zip_code)
```
Multivalued Attributes

- Multivalued attributes require a separate relation
  - Again, no such thing as a multivalued attribute in the relational model
  - E-R constraint on multivalued attributes: in a specific entity’s multivalued attribute, each value may only appear once

- For a multivalued attribute $M$ in entity-set $E$
  - Create a relation schema $R$ to store $M$, with attribute(s) $A$ corresponding to the single-valued version of $M$
  - Attributes of $R$ are: $\text{primary\_key}(E) \cup A$
  - Primary key of $R$ includes all attributes of $R$
    - Each value in $M$ for an entity $e$ must be unique
  - Foreign key from $R$ to $E$, on $\text{primary\_key}(E)$ attributes
Change our E-R diagram to allow customers to have multiple addresses:

Now, must create a separate relation to store the addresses

```
customer
  cust_id
  name
  { address
    street
    city
    state
    zip_code }
```

- Large primary keys aren’t ideal — tend to be costly