

# WEBIST 2008

*FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
WEB INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGIES*

## Proceedings

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e-Learning

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# WEBIST 2008

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# BRIEF CONTENTS

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INVITED SPEAKERS.....IV

ORGANIZING AND STEERING COMMITTEES ..... V

PROGRAM COMMITTEE ..... VI

AUXILIARY REVIEWERS .....IX

SELECTED PAPERS BOOK ..... X

FOREWORD.....XI

CONTENTS..... XIII

# INVITED SPEAKERS

---

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# SELECTED PAPERS BOOK

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A number of selected papers presented at WEBIST 2008 will be published by Springer-Verlag in a LNBIP Series book. This selection will be done by the Conference Chair and Program Co-chairs, among the papers actually presented at the conference, based on a rigorous review by the WEBIST 2008 program committee members.

# FOREWORD

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This volume contains the proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Web Information Systems and Technologies (WEBIST 2008), co-organized by the Institute for Systems and Technologies of Information, Control and Communication (*INSTICC*) and the University of Madeira (*UMa*) and co-sponsored by the Workflow Management Coalition (*WfMC*).

The purpose of this Conference is to bring together researchers, engineers and practitioners interested in the technological advances and business applications of web-based information systems. It has four main topic areas, covering different aspects of Web Information Systems, including “Internet Technology”, “Web Interfaces and Applications”, “Society, e-Business, e-Government” and “e-Learning”.

WEBIST 2008 received 238 paper submissions from more than 40 countries in all continents. A double-blind review process was enforced, with the help of more than 200 experts from the international program committee, all of them with a Ph.D. in one of the main conference topic areas. After reviewing, 32 papers were selected to be published and presented as full papers, i.e. completed work (8 pages in proceedings / 30’ oral presentations) and 64 additional papers, describing work-in-progress as short papers for 20’ oral presentation. Furthermore there were also 58 papers presented as posters. The full-paper acceptance ratio was 13%, and the total oral paper acceptance ratio was 40%. These ratios denote a high level of quality, which we intend to maintain or reinforce in the next edition of this conference.

Besides the proceedings edited by INSTICC, a post-conference book will be compiled with extended versions of its best papers, and published by Springer-Verlag. Appropriate indexing has been arranged for the proceedings of WEBIST 2008.

One of the remarkable aspects of the WEBIST conference series, since its first edition in 2005, is the expertise brought about by a large number of distinguished keynote speakers internationally recognized for their scientific level of excellence, whose lectures and whose participation in the conference panel definitely contribute to highly enhance the quality of this event. This year WEBIST hosted six keynotes, delivered by Dr. Tony Shan (Bank of America, U.S.A.), Dr. Leszek Maciaszek (Macquarie University, Australia), Dr. Claudia Medeiros (UNICAMP, Brazil), Dr. Marcin Paprzycki (Systems Research Institute Polish Academy of Science, Poland), Dr. Rainer Unland and Dr. Klaus Pohl (both from the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany).

Building an interesting and successful program for the conference required the dedicated effort of many people. Firstly, we must thank the authors, whose research and development efforts are recorded here. Secondly, we thank the members of the program committee and additional reviewers for their diligence and expert reviewing. We also wish to include here a word of appreciation for the excellent organization provided by the conference secretariat, from INSTICC, who have smoothly prepared the most appropriate environment for a productive meeting and scientific networking. Last but not least, we thank the invited speakers for their invaluable contribution and for taking the time to synthesize and prepare their talks.

We wish you all an exciting conference and a pleasant stay in Funchal, Madeira. We hope to meet you again next year for the 5<sup>th</sup> WEBIST, in Lisbon, Portugal, details of which will be shortly made available at *<http://www.webist.org>*.

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# CONTENTS

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## INVITED SPEAKERS

### KEYNOTE LECTURES

SOA IN PRACTICE <i>Tony C. Shan</i>	IS-5
SERVING ONTOLOGIES ACROSS THE WEB - Challenges and Approaches <i>Claudia Bauzer Medeiros</i>	IS-7
BUILDING QUALITY INTO WEB INFORMATION SYSTEMS <i>Leszek A. Maciaszek</i>	IS-9
GENERIC FRAMEWORK FOR AGENT ADAPTABILITY AND UTILIZATION IN A VIRTUAL ORGANIZATION - Preliminary Considerations <i>Maria Ganzha, Maciej Gawinecki, Michal Szymczak, Grzegorz Frackowiak, Marcin Paprzycki, Myon-Woong Park, Yo-Sub Han and Y. T. Sohn</i>	IS-17
(MULTI-)AGENT SYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY AND E-COMMERCE <i>Rainer Unland</i>	IS-27
S-CUBE: ENABLING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SOFTWARE SERVICES <i>Klaus Pohl</i>	IS-29

## INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

### FULL PAPERS

COLLABORATIVE OLAP WITH TAG CLOUDS - Web 2.0 OLAP Formalism and Experimental Evaluation <i>Kamel Aouiche, Daniel Lemire and Robert Godin</i>	5
BSBC: TOWARDS A SUCCINCT DATA FORMAT FOR XML STREAMS <i>Stefan Böttcher, Rita Hartel and Christian Heinzemann</i>	13
IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW SCHEDULING POLICY IN WEB SERVERS <i>Abmad S. Al Sa'deb and Adnan H. Yahya</i>	22
BRINGING TOGETHER WHAT TOGETHER BELONGS - Applying Web Services to Couple SOA and Grid in Smaller Environments <i>Carsten Kleiner and Arne Koschel</i>	30
DYNAMIC SLA NEGOTIATION BASED ON WS-AGREEMENT <i>Antoine Pichot, Oliver Wäldrich, Wolfgang Ziegler and Philipp Wieder</i>	38
BLACKBIRD MONITORING SYSTEM - Performance Analysis and Monitoring in Information Systems <i>João P. Germano, Alberto R. Silva and Fernando M. Silva</i>	46
OFF-THE-RECORD SECURE CHAT ROOM <i>Jiang Bian, Remzi Seker, Umit Topaloglu and Coskun Bayrak</i>	54

DEVELOPING OPEN TRAVEL ALLIANCE-BASED ONTOLOGY OF GOLF <i>Agnieszka Cieslik, Maria Ganzha and Marcin Paprzycki</i>	62
<b>SHORT PAPERS</b>	
EVALUATION OF A READ-OPTIMIZED DATABASE FOR DYNAMIC WEB APPLICATIONS <i>Anderson Supriano, Gustavo M. D. Vieira and Luiz E. Buzato</i>	73
ANALYSIS, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF IDS USING DATA MINING <i>B. V. Patel and B. B. Mesbham</i>	81
A CONSTRAINT-AWARE QUERY OPTIMIZER FOR WEB-BASED DATA INTEGRATION <i>Jing Lu and Bernhard Mitschang</i>	87
A TUPLE SPACE WEB SERVICE FOR DISTRIBUTED PROGRAMMING - Simplifying Distributed Web Services Applications <i>George C. Wells, Barbara Mueller and Loïc Schulé</i>	93
A DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH FOR THE LIFECYCLE SUPPORT OF DISTRIBUTED WEB-BASED SYSTEMS <i>Frederic Majer, Martin Nussbaumer and Martin Gaedke</i>	101
WEB SERVICE COMPOSITION USING THE WEB SERVICES MANAGEMENT LAYER <i>Niels Joncheere, Bart Verbeeck, Viviane Jonckers, Sofie van Hoecke, Gregory van Segbroeck and Bart Dhoedt</i>	109
USING ONTOLOGIES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN A WEB SYSTEM - A Web Caching System Case of Study <i>Carlos Guerrero, Carlos Juiz and Ramon Puigjaner</i>	117
A BROADCASTING ALGORITHM USING ADJUSTABLE TRANSMISSION RANGES IN MOBILE AD HOC NETWORKS <i>Toshihiko Sasama, Yasuhiro Abe and Hiroshi Masuyama</i>	123
TOWARDS MKDA: A DATA MINING SEMANTIC WEB SERVICE <i>Vincenzo Cannella, Giuseppe Russo and Roberto Pirrone</i>	129
A SURVEY ON WEB SERVICE DISCOVERING AND COMPOSITION <i>Elena del Val Noguera and Miguel Rebollo Pedruelo</i>	135
A MACHINE LEARNING APPROACH WITH VERIFICATION OF PREDICTIONS AND ASSISTED SUPERVISION FOR A RULE-BASED NETWORK INTRUSION DETECTION SYSTEM <i>José Ignacio Fernández-Villamor and Mercedes Garijo</i>	143
FORENSIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PHISHING - Petty Theft or Organized Crime? <i>Stephen McCombie, Paul Watters, Alex Ng and Brett Watson</i>	149
A LOGIC PROGRAMMING MODEL FOR WEB RESOURCES <i>Giulio Piancastelli and Andrea Omicini</i>	158
AN ANALYSIS OF RELATIONAL STORAGE STRATEGIES FOR PARTIALLY STRUCTURED XML <i>Yasser Abdel Kader, Barry Eaglestone and Siobhán North</i>	165
A NEW CONCEPT FOR REAL-TIME WEB GAMES - Developing Highly Real-Time Web Games <i>Yoshihiro Kawano, Masahiro Miyata, Dai Hanawa and Tatsuhiro Yonekura</i>	171
DQRDFS - Towards a Semantic Web Enhanced with Data Quality <i>Ismael Caballero, Eugenio Verbo, Coral Calero and Mario Piattini</i>	178

A MATHEMATICAL FORMULATION OF A MODEL FOR LANDFORM ATTRIBUTES REPRESENTATION FOR APPLICATION IN DISTRIBUTED SYSTEMS <i>Leacir Nogueira Bastos, Rossini Pena Abrantes and Brauliro Gonçalves Leal</i>	184
AN EFFICIENT STREAMING ALGORITHM FOR EVALUATING XPATH QUERIES <i>Yangjun Chen</i>	190
INTERNET ACCESS QUALITY MONITOR <i>Bruno P. Ramos, Vasco N. G. J. Soares and Alexandre J. P. D. Fonte</i>	197
RAPID VIRTUAL DESIGN AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON EXTENDED MVC-BASED WEB APPLICATION FRAMEWORK AND INTERACTIVE XML PRODUCT MODEL <i>Cao Yan and Yang Lina</i>	202
<b>POSTERS</b>	
A CONCURRENCY CONTROL MODEL FOR MULTIPARTY BUSINESS PROCESSES <i>Juha Punsjärvi</i>	209
MODELING THE WEB AS A FOREST OF TREES <i>Fathi Tenzakhti</i>	216
GEO-GAMING: THE MOBILE MONOPOLY EXPERIENCE <i>Mao Li, M. J. O'Grady and G. M. P. O'Hare</i>	220
NDT & METRICA V3 - An Approach for Public Organizations based on Model Driven Engineering <i>M. J. Escalona, J. J. Gutiérrez, J. A. Ortega, I. Ramos and G. Aragón</i>	224
USING CONTENT SYNDICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN DISTRIBUTING AND PUBLISHING INFORMATION TO REACH ALL USERS <i>Serena Pastore</i>	228
WORKFLOWS IN CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS <i>Pedro Pico and Alberto Rodrigues da Silva</i>	232
EVALUATION OF K-/LATTICE-CLUSTERING ALGORITHMS FOR RANDOM WIRELESS MULTI-HOP NETWORKS <i>Toshihiko Sasama, Ryo Monde and Hiroshi Masuyama</i>	236
HARMONY - A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTOMATIC WEB SERVICE COMPOSITION <i>Viorica R. Chifu, Ioan Salomie, Emil Șt. Chifu and Constantin Pârțac</i>	240
A SECURE WEB APPLICATION PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS TO HIGH-PERFORMANCE DATA INTENSIVE SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES - ScalaBLAST Web Application <i>Darren Curtis, Elena Peterson and Christopher Oehmen</i>	244
MDA-BASED DEVELOPMENT OF DATA-DRIVEN WEB APPLICATIONS <i>Attila Adamkó and Lajos Kollár</i>	252
A DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WEB SERVICES <i>Dionisis X. Adamopoulos</i>	256
STRUCTURING DESIGN ACTIVITIES IN OPEN PROGRAMMABLE NETWORKS <i>Dionisis X. Adamopoulos</i>	260
A WEB-BASED SYSTEM TO REDUCE THE NOSOCOMIAL INFECTION IMPACT IN HEALTHCARE UNITS <i>Hugo Rígor, José Machado, António Abelha, José Neves and Carlos Alberto</i>	264



TRANSACTION SUPPORT FOR INTERACTIVE WEB APPLICATIONS <i>David Paul, Mark Wallis, Frans Henskens and Michael Hannaford</i>	269
XML-IS: ONTOLOGY-BASED INTEGRATION ARCHITECTURE <i>Christophe Cruz and Christophe Nicolle</i>	273
IMPLEMENTING CONTENT SHARING AND SESSION HAND-OFF BETWEEN WEB BROWSERS - An Integration of SIP Stack into Mozilla Firefox Web Browser <i>Michael O. Adeyeye and Neco Ventura</i>	278
DECENTRALIZED DIAGNOSIS FOR BPEL WEB SERVICES <i>Lina Ye and Philippe Dague</i>	283
MULTIAGENT DESIGN FOR DYNAMIC JOB-SHOP SCHEDULING USING PASSI <i>Claudio Cubillos, Silvana Roncagliolo and Leonardo Espinoza</i>	288
TOWARDS AN AGENT FRAMEWORK FOR A PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION VIRTUAL ENTERPRISE <i>Claudio Cubillos and Daniel Cabrera</i>	292
XML DATA INTEGRATION IN PEER-TO-PEER DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS <i>Tadeusz Pankowski</i>	296
TOWARDS EFFICIENT CRYPTOGRAPHY FOR PRIVACY PRESERVING DATA MINING IN DISTRIBUTED SYSTEMS <i>Emmanouil Magkos and Vassilis Chrissikopoulos</i>	301

## **E-LEARNING**

### **FULL PAPERS**

HAPTICS AND EXTENSIBLE 3D IN WEB-BASED ENVIRONMENTS FOR E-LEARNING AND SIMULATION <i>Felix G. Hamza-Lup and Ivan Sopin</i>	309
A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR REPLICATED EXPERIMENTS IN VIRTUAL 3D ENVIRONMENTS <i>D. Biella and W. Luther</i>	316
CASE STUDIES VIA THE WEB FOR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Use of the ViCoCITY Web-based Case Study Support Tool <i>James A. Redmond, Audrey Stenson and Alan Mullally</i>	324
TRANSFORMING A COMPETENCY MODEL TO ASSESSMENT ITEMS <i>Onjira Sitthisak, Lester Gilbert and Hugh C. Davis</i>	333
FORMALIZING A MODEL TO REPRESENT AND VISUALIZE CONCEPT SPACES IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS <i>Antonina Dattolo and Flaminia L. Luccio</i>	339

### **SHORT PAPERS**

E-LEARNING ACTIVITIES DESIGN AND INDIVIDUAL LEARNING STYLES - Case Study <i>Cláudia Fernandes and Luís Rocha</i>	349
E-LEARNING AS A SOLUTION TO THE TRAINING PROBLEMS OF SMEs - A Multiple Case Study <i>Andrée Roy and Louis Raymond</i>	356

LEARNING PERSONALIZATION - Design Solutions in an e-Learning System <i>Ileana Trandafir, Ana-Maria Borozan and Alexandru Balog</i>	364
TOWARDS WEB 2.0 DRIVEN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS <i>Mohamed Amine Chatti, Daniel Dab, Matthias Jarke and Gottfried Vossen</i>	370
A TRANSLITERATION ENGINE FOR ASIAN LANGUAGES <i>Sathiamoorthy Manoharan</i>	376
LAUNCHING AN E-LEARNING SYSTEM IN A SCHOOL - Cross-European e-/m-Learning System UNITE: A Case Study <i>Maja Čukušić, Andrina Granić and Ivan Maršić</i>	380
E-LEARNING TOOLS FOR WOUND IMAGE UNDERSTANDING <i>Augustin Prodan, Mădălina Rusu, Remus Câmpean and Rodica Prodan</i>	388
USING EVALUATION AS A QUALITY ASSURANCE TOOL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERIOUS GAMES - A Case Study based on the PRIME Game <i>Jannicke Baalsrud Hauge, Heiko Duin and Manuel Oliveira</i>	394
OPEN SOURCE LMS CUSTOMIZATION - A Moodle Statistical Control Application <i>Carlos Muñoz, Miguel Ángel Conde, Jorge Reyero and Francisco José García</i>	402
DESIGNING 3D COLLABORATIVE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS TO UTILIZE THE PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS OF CSCL <i>Th. Tsiatsos and A. Konstantinidis</i>	408
TEACHING PROGRAMMING WITH A COMPETITIVE ATTITUDE TO FOSTER GROUP SPIRIT <i>Pedro Guerreiro and Katerina Georgouli</i>	414
IMS-CLD: A NEW SPECIFICATION FOR LEARNING SCENARIOS IN COPEs <i>Azzeddine Chikh, Lamia Berkani and Akila Sarirete</i>	422
USING ALTERNATE REALITY GAMES TO SUPPORT THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES <i>Thomas M. Connolly</i>	428
PREDISPOSITION-BASED INTELLIGENT TUTORING SYSTEM - Adaptive User Profiling in Human-Computer Interaction <i>Andrzej Niesler and Gracja Wydmuch</i>	435
<b>POSTERS</b>	
DESIGN OF DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION <i>Isabel Cuadrado Gordillo and Inmaculada Fernández Antelo</i>	443
INTRODUCING E-LEARNING 2.0 IN SME - A Practical Guide <i>Ileana Hamburg</i>	448
APPLICATION OF A WEB-BASED EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES <i>Perfecto Mariño, Miguel Ángel Domínguez, Santiago Otero and Miguel Merino</i>	452
INTERACTIVE, COLLABORATIVE AND ADAPTATIVE LEARNING TOOLS - The TexMat Example <i>A. M. Breda, E. M. Rocha and M. M. Rodrigues</i>	456
USEFUL E-LEARNING PROCESS DESCRIPTIONS <i>Steffen Mencke, Fritz Zbrog and Reiner Dumke</i>	460

PROACTIVE AUTONOMOUS RESOURCE ENRICHMENT FOR E-LEARNING <i>Steffen Mencke, Dmytro Rud, Fritz Zbrog and Reiner Dumke</i>	464
INTEROPERABILITY GUIDELINES FOR DIGITAL LIBRARY OF EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES <i>Kurilovas Eugenijus and Kubilinskienė Svetlana</i>	468
ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF EXPLOITING NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING TECHNIQUES FOR E-LEARNING <i>Diana Pérez-Marín, Ismael Pascual-Nieto and Pilar Rodríguez</i>	472
AUTHOR INDEX	477

## **INVITED SPEAKERS**

# FORMALIZING A MODEL TO REPRESENT AND VISUALIZE CONCEPT SPACES IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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**Keywords:** Adaptive educational hypermedia, concept maps, zz-structures, graph theory, e-learning.

**Abstract:** Zz-structures offer graph-centric views capable of representing contextual interconnections among different information. In this paper we use these structures in order to represent and visualize concept spaces in e-learning environments, and we present their formal analytic description in terms of graph theory. In particular, we focus our attention on the formal description of two views (H and I views), and we extend these notions to a number  $n > 2$  of dimensions. We also apply both this formal description, and the particular properties of zz-structures, to an example in the Web-based education field.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Adaptive Educational Hypermedia (AEH) (Cristea et al., 2006) seek to apply the personalized possibilities of Adaptive Hypermedia (Brusilovsky, 2001) to the domain of education, thereby granting learners a lesson individually tailored to them. A fundamental part of these systems is the concept space (Dagger et al., 2005): this provides an ontology of the subject matter including the concepts and their relationships to one another.

The purpose of concept mapping is not the production of a map representing in absolute terms the relationships between concepts, but the production of a visual layout, which can make that specific issue clearer.

Concept spaces are traditionally visualized using a concept map diagram, a downward-branching, hierarchical tree structure. In mathematical terms, a concept space map is a directed acyclic graph, a generalization of a tree structure, where certain sub-trees can be shared by different parts of the tree.

Concept maps have got the double advantage of visually representing an information map and linking it to useful material contained in a database. Learners have a referring map to which they can come back to review previous steps, and, mostly, learn how to organize information so “it makes sense” for them.

Unfortunately, traditional concept maps (Freire and Rodriguez, 2005) are inadequate to capture and vi-

sualize very large collections of interrelated information. Many of the more innovative tree visualization techniques are not well suited to represent concept maps: for example Shneiderman's Treemaps (Shneiderman, 1992) and Kleiberg's Botanical trees (Kleiberg et al., 2001) cannot easily differentiate between relationship types; other models (e. g. (Cassidy et al., 2006), based on hyperbolic geometry, or (Suksumboon et al., 2007), based on S-nodes) are not able to dynamically switch from a view to another one. It is often not possible to view the entire concept space on-screen without zooming out so far that the concept and relationship labels are no longer readable. Similarly, the large number of relationships improve the difficulty of understanding the structure of the concept space.

In particular, in the e-learning field, there are many reasons to define opportune structure models for storing and visualizing concept maps:

- They allow the system to be adaptive: current approaches and tools (see WebCT, Moodle, etc.) are not adaptive, as they neither support a comprehensive analysis of users' needs, demands and opportunities, nor they support a semantic analysis of texts.
- They provide interoperability between different adaptive systems: this feature becomes not only desirable but also necessary, as it enables the reuse of previously created material without the cost

of recreating it from scratch (Celik et al., 2006).

- They simplify the authoring process, in which the user/learner may assume the role of an author (see, e.g., Wikis and Wiki farms).

Considering the limitations highlighted by the study of the current literature, we will focus our attention on an innovative structure, proposed in (Nelson, 2004), the *zz*-structure, that constitutes the main part of a ZigZag system (Nelson, 1999).

Previous work in this direction has shown how flexible this structure is, and how it can be specialized in different fields, such as, e.g., the modeling of an information manager for mobile phones (*zz*-phones) (Moore and Brailsford, 2004), of the London underground train lines and stations (Nelson, 1999), of bioinformatics workspaces (Moore et al., 2004), of data grid systems (Dattolo and Luccio, 2007), of an authoring system for electronic music (Archimedes) (Canazza and Dattolo, 2007), or of web-based courses (Andric et al., 2007). Although the work (Nelson, 2004) provides a reference description of *zz*-structures, and the other previously mentioned works use different aspects and features of the model, Nelson itself writes: “The ZigZag system is very hard to explain, especially since it resembles nothing else in the computer field that we know of, except perhaps a spreadsheet cut into strips and glued into loops”.

Thus, in our opinion, a formal description of the structure may be very useful in simplifying the comprehension of the model.

**Case Study.** Our application field is Web-based education; it has become a very important area of educational technology and a challenge for semantic Web techniques. Web-based education enables *learners* and *authors* (teachers) to access a wide quantity of continuously updated educational sources. In order to simplify the learning process of learners, and the course creation/modification/organization process of authors, it is important to offer them tools to:

1. identify the collection of “interesting” documents, for example applying semantic filtering algorithms (Brodnik et al., 2006), or proximity metrics on the search engine results (Andric et al., 2007);
2. store the found collection of documents in adequate structures, that are able to organize and visualize concept spaces;
3. create personalized adaptive paths and views for learners.

These three topics are the guidelines of our current research. In this paper, we focus our attention only on point 2. We assume that an author has a collection

of available documents on a given topic that have to be organized in concept maps, suitable for different learners. E.g., some users could be preparing a degree thesis, others could be studying for an examination on a particular topic, others could be doing research on a specific research area, and so on. Thus, the author needs adequate tools to organize documents in a concept space, and to create semantic interconnections and personalized maps.

**Contributions of this Work.** The general goal of this work is to propose a formal structure for representing and visualizing a concept space. This model is based both on *zz*-structures and on graph theory.

We will show how identifying and defining in an analytic way the graph theoretical structure of *zz*-structures can both provide interesting insights to educational hypermedia designers (facilitating a deeper understanding of which model might best support the representation and interaction aims of their systems), and to learners (offering them support for Web orientation and navigation).

Our novel contributions are:

- a formal analytic graph-based description of *zz*-structures. Particular attention has been devoted to the formalization of two views (H and I views), present into all ZigZag implementations;
- an extension of the concept of H and I views from a number 2 towards a number  $n > 2$  of dimensions;
- a new concept map model for e-learning environments, based on our model.

The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, we introduce the reader to *zz*-structures and we present some basic graph theory definitions; in Section 3, we propose our formal definition of *zz*-structures, and we use these structures as a reference model for representing concept maps. Finally, in Section 4 we first introduce the definition of the standard H and I view, and we then extend this definition to the non-standard  $n$ -dimensions view (with  $n > 2$ ). Conclusion and future works conclude the paper.

## 2 Zz-STRUCTURES AND GRAPH THEORY

This section is introduced for consistency. If the reader has a background on the ZigZag model and on basic graph theory, can skip this section.

## 2.1 An Introduction to Zz-Structures

Zz-structures (Nelson, 2004) introduce a new, graph-centric system of conventions for data and computing. A zz-structure can be thought of as a space filled with cells. Each cell may have a content (such as integers, text, images, audio, etc.), and it is called *atomic* if it contains only one unit of data of one type (Moore et al., 2004), or it is called *referential* if it represents a package of different cells. There are also special cells, called *positional*, that do not have content and thus have a positional or topographical function.

Cells are connected together with links of the same color into linear sequences called *dimensions*. A single series of cells connected in the same dimension is called *rank*, i.e., a rank is in a particular dimension. Moreover, a dimension may contain many different ranks. The starting and an ending cell of a rank are called, *headcell* and *tailcell*, respectively, and the direction from the starting (ending) to the ending (starting) cell is called *posward* (respectively, *negward*). For any dimension, a cell can only have one connection in the posward direction, and one in the negward direction. This ensures that all paths are non-branching, and thus embodies the simplest possible mechanism for traversing links. Dimensions are used to project different structures: ordinary lists are viewed in one dimension; spreadsheets and hierarchical directories in many dimensions.

The interesting part is how to view these structures, i.e., there are many different ways to arrange them, choosing different dimensions and different structures in a dimension. A *raster* is a way of selecting the cells from a structure; a *view* is a way of placing the cells on a screen. *Generic views* are designed to be used in a big variety of cases and usually show only few dimensions or few steps in each dimension. Among them the most common are the *two-dimensions rectangular views*: the cells are placed, using different rasters, on a Cartesian plane where the dimensions increase going down and to the right. Obviously some cells will not fit in these two dimensions and will have to be omitted. The simplest raster is the row and column raster, i.e., two rasters which are the same but rotated of 90 degrees from each other. A cell is chosen and placed at the center of the plane (cursor centric view). The chosen cell, called focus, may be changed by moving the cursor horizontally and vertically. In a row view *I*, a rank is chosen and placed vertically. Then the ranks related to the cells in the vertical rank are placed horizontally. Vice versa, in the column view *H*, a rank is chosen and placed horizontally and the related ranks are placed vertically. All the cells are denoted by different numbers. Note that in a view the same cell may appear in different

positions as it may represent the intersection of different dimensions.

## 2.2 Basic Graph Theory Definitions

In the following we introduce some standard graph theory notation, for more details refer to (Harary, 1994).

A *graph*  $G$  is a pair  $G = (V, E)$ , where  $V$  is a finite non-empty set of elements called *vertices* and  $E$  is a finite set of distinct unordered pairs  $\{u, v\}$  of distinct elements of  $V$  called *edges*.

A *multigraph* is a triple  $MG = (V, E, f)$  where  $V$  is a finite non-empty set of vertices,  $E$  is the set of edges, and  $f : E \rightarrow \{\{u, v\} \mid u, v \in V, u \neq v\}$  is a surjective function.

An *edge-colored multigraph* is a triple  $ECMG = (MG, C, c)$  where:  $MG = (V, E, f)$  is a multigraph,  $C$  is a set of colors,  $c : E \rightarrow C$  is an assignment of colors to edges of the multigraph.

In a multigraph  $MG = (V, E, f)$ , edges  $e_1, e_2 \in E$  are called *multiple* or *parallel* iff  $f(e_1) = f(e_2)$ . Thus, a graph as a particular multigraph  $G = (V, E, f)$  without parallel edges.

Given an edge  $e = \{u, v\} \in E$ , we say that  $e$  is *incident* to  $u$  and  $v$ ; moreover  $u$  and  $v$  are *neighboring* vertices. Given a vertex  $x \in V$ , we denote with  $deg(x)$  its degree, i.e., the number of edges incident to  $x$ , and with  $d_{max}$  the maximum degree of the graph, i.e.,  $d_{max} = \max_{z \in V} \{deg(z)\}$ . In an edge-colored (multi)graph  $ECMG$ , where  $c_k \in C$ , we define  $deg_k(x)$  the number of edges of color  $c_k$  incident to vertex  $x$ . A vertex of degree 0 is called *isolated*, a vertex of degree 1 is called *pendant*.

A *path*  $P = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_s\}$  is a sequence of neighboring vertices of  $G$ , i.e.,  $\{v_i, v_{i+1}\} \in E$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq s-1$ . A graph  $G = (V, E)$  is *connected* if:  $\forall x, y \in V$ ,  $\exists$  a path  $P = \{x = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_s = y\}$ , with  $\{v_k, v_{k+1}\} \in E$ ,  $1 \leq k \leq s-1$ . Two vertices  $x$  and  $y$  in a connected graph are at *distance*  $dist$  if the *shortest path* connecting them is composed of exactly  $dist$  edges.

Finally, a  $m \times n$  *mesh* is a graph  $M_{m,n} = (V, E)$  with  $v_{i,j} \in V$ ,  $0 \leq i \leq m-1$ ,  $0 \leq j \leq n-1$ , and  $E$  contains exactly the edges  $(v_{i,j}, v_{i,j+1})$ ,  $j \neq n-1$ , and  $(v_{i,j}, v_{i+1,j})$ ,  $i \neq m-1$ .

## 3 THE FORMAL MODEL

In this section, we formalize the model presented in (Nelson, 2004) in terms of graph theory. In the rest of this paper we describe formal definitions through a simple example in the e-learning field: an author has a collection of available papers that first wants to link

through different semantic paths and then wants to merge into a unique concept space. Papers that have been published in the proceedings of the same conference, or papers that investigate a common topic, or papers that share one author, are examples of semantic paths, which automatically generate concept maps.

### 3.1 Zz-Structures

A zz-structure can be viewed as a multigraph where edges are colored, with the restriction that every vertex has at most two incident edges of the same color. Differently from (McGuffin, 2004), but as mentioned in (McGuffin and Schraefel, 2004; Dattolo and Lucio, 2007), we consider undirected graphs, i.e., edges may be traversed in both directions. A *zz-structure* is formally defined as follows.

**Definition 1 (Zz-structure).** A *zz-structure* is an *edge-colored multigraph*  $S = (MG, C, c)$ , where  $MG = (V, E, f)$ , and  $\forall x \in V, \forall k = 1, 2, \dots, |C|, \deg_k(x) = 0, 1, 2$ . Each vertex of a *zz-structure* is called *zz-cell* and each edge *zz-link*. The set of isolated vertices is  $V_0 = \{x \in V : \deg(x) = 0\}$ .

An example of a *zz-structure* is given in Figure 1. The structure is a graph, where vertices  $v_1, \dots, v_{14}$  represent different papers, and edges of the same kind represent the same semantic connection.

In particular, in this example, thick edges connect a sequence of papers published at the same conference (e.g., WEBIST2007), normal edges group papers that have at least an author in common, finally, dotted lines link papers that have a keyword in common (e.g., wbe, that stands for web-based education).

### 3.2 Dimensions

An alternative way of viewing a *zz-structure* is a union of subgraphs, each of which contains edges of a unique color.

**Proposition 1** Consider a set of colors  $C = \{c_1, c_2, \dots, c_{|C|}\}$  and a family of indirect

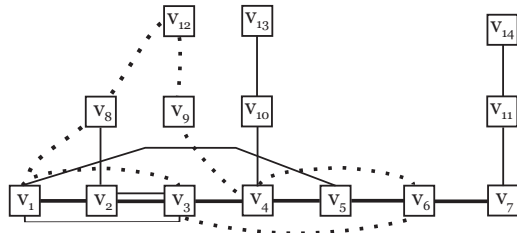


Figure 1: A *zz-structure* where thick, normal and dotted lines represent three different colors.

*edge-colored graphs*  $\{D^1, D^2, \dots, D^{|C|}\}$ , where  $D^k = (V, E^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , with  $k = 1, \dots, |C|$ , is a graph such that: 1)  $E^k \neq \emptyset$ ; 2)  $\forall x \in V, \deg_k(x) = 0, 1, 2$ .

Then,  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$  is a *zz-structure*.

**Definition 2 (Dimension).** Given a *zz-structure*  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , then each graph  $D^k, k = 1, \dots, |C|$ , is a *distinct dimension* of  $S$ .

From Figure 1 we can extrapolate three dimensions, one for each different color (i.e., one for each different semantic connection). As shown in Figure 2, we associate thick lines to dimension  $D^{\text{conference}}$ , normal lines to dimension  $D^{\text{author}}$ , and dotted lines to dimension  $D^{\text{wbe topic}}$ .

Each dimension can be composed of isolated vertices (e.g., vertices  $v_6, v_9, v_{12}$  in dimension  $D^{\text{author}}$ ), of distinct paths (e.g., the three paths  $\{v_8, v_2, v_3, v_1, v_5\}$ ,  $\{v_4, v_{10}, v_{13}\}$  and  $\{v_7, v_{11}, v_{14}\}$  in dimension  $D^{\text{author}}$ ), and of distinct cycles (e.g., the unique cycle  $\{v_1, v_3, v_6, v_4, v_9, v_{12}, v_8, v_1\}$  in dimension  $D^{\text{wbe topic}}$ ).

### 3.3 Ranks

**Definition 3 (Rank).** Consider a dimension  $D^k = (V, E^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ ,  $k = 1, \dots, |C|$  of a *zz-structure*  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ . Then, each of the  $l_k$  connected components of  $D^k$  is called a *rank*.

Thus, each rank  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, l_k$ , is an indirect, connected, edge-colored graph such that: 1)  $V_i^k \subseteq V$ ; 2)  $E_i^k \subseteq E^k$ ; 3)  $\forall x \in V_i^k, 1 \leq \deg_k(x) \leq 2$ . A *ringrank* is a rank  $R_i^k$ , where  $\forall x \in V_i^k, \deg_k(x) = 2$ .

Note that the number  $l_k$  of ranks differs in each dimension  $D^k$ , e.g. in Figure 2, dimension  $D^{\text{author}}$  has three ranks ( $\{v_8, v_2, v_3, v_1, v_5\}$ ,  $\{v_4, v_{10}, v_{13}\}$  and  $\{v_7, v_{11}, v_{14}\}$ ), and dimension  $D^{\text{conference}}$  has a unique rank ( $\{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5, v_6, v_7\}$ ). A *ringrank* is, e.g.,

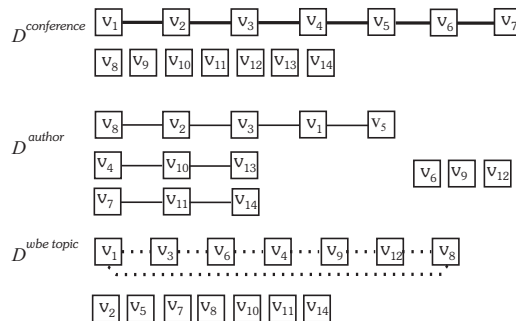


Figure 2: The three dimensions.



the cycle  $\{v_1, v_3, v_6, v_4, v_9, v_{12}, v_8, v_1\}$  of dimension  $D^{wbe\ topic}$ .

**Definition 4 (Parallel Ranks).** Given a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ ,  $m$  ranks  $R_j^k = (V_j^k, E_j^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, m$ ,  $2 \leq m \leq l_k$ ) are parallel ranks on the same dimension  $D^k$ ,  $k \in \{1, \dots, |C|\}$  iff  $V_j^k \subseteq V$ ,  $E_j^k \subseteq E^k$ ,  $\forall j = 1, 2, \dots, m$ , and  $\bigcap_{j=1}^m V_j^k = \emptyset$ .

In Figure 2 the three ranks of dimension  $D^{author}$  are parallel.

### 3.4 Cells and their Orientation

A vertex has local orientation on a rank if each of its (1 or 2) incident edges has assigned a distinct label (1 or -1). More formally (see also (Flocchini et al., 1998)):

**Definition 5 (Local Orientation).** Consider a rank  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$  of a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ . Then,  $\exists$  a function  $g_x^i : E_i^k \rightarrow \{-1, 1\}$ , such that,  $\forall x \in V_i^k$ , if  $\exists y, z \in V_i^k : \{x, y\}, \{x, z\} \in E_i^k$ , then  $g_x^i(\{x, y\}) \neq g_x^i(\{x, z\})$ . Thus, we say that each vertex  $x \in V_i^k$  has a local orientation in  $R_i^k$ .

**Definition 6 (Posward and Negward Directions).** Given an edge  $\{a, b\} \in E_i^k$ , we say that  $\{a, b\}$  is in a posward direction from  $a$  in  $R_i^k$ , and that  $b$  is its posward cell iff  $g_a^i(\{a, b\}) = 1$ , else  $\{a, b\}$  is in a negward direction and  $a$  is its negward cell. Moreover, a path in rank  $R_i^k$  follows a posward (negward) direction if it is composed of a sequence of edges of value 1 (respectively, -1).

For simplicity, given a rank  $R_i^k$ , a way to represent a path composed of a vertex  $x$  and a sequence of its negward and posward cells, is by using the notation  $\dots x^{-2}x^{-1}xx^{+1}x^{+2}\dots$ , where,  $x^{-1}$  represents the negward cell of  $x$  and  $x^{+1}$  the posward cell. In general,  $x^{-i}$  ( $x^{+i}$ ) is a cell at distance  $i$  in the negward (posward) direction. We also assume that  $x^0 = x$ .

**Definition 7 (Headcell and Tailcell).** Given a rank  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , a cell  $x$  is the headcell of  $R_i^k$  iff  $\exists$  its posward cell  $x^{+1}$  and  $\nexists$  its negward cell  $x^{-1}$ . Analogously, a cell  $x$  is the tailcell of  $R_i^k$  iff  $\exists$  its negward cell  $x^{-1}$  and  $\nexists$  its posward cell  $x^{+1}$ .

## 4 VIEWS

We now formalize the standard notion of  $H$  and  $I$  views in two dimensions, and we then propose a new definition of  $H$  and  $I$ -views in  $n$  dimensions. We

also show some interesting applications of these new higher dimensional views.

In the following, that we denote with  $x \in R_{(x)}^a$  the rank  $R_{(x)}^a$  related to vertex  $x$  of color  $c_a$ .

**Definition 8 (H-view).** Given a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^{l_k} (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , the  $H$ -view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^{l_k} V_i^k$ , on main vertical dimension  $D^a$  and secondary horizontal dimension  $D^b$  ( $a, b \in \{1, \dots, l_k\}$ ), is defined as a tree whose embedding in the plane is a partially connected colored  $l \times l$  mesh in which:

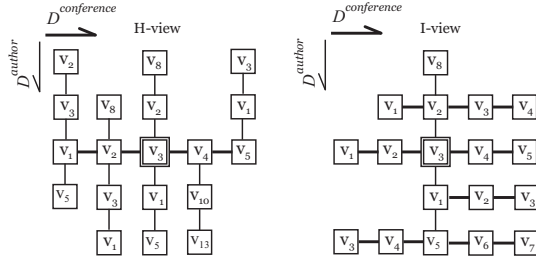
- the central node, in position  $((m+1), (m+1))$ , is the focus  $x$ ;
- the horizontal central path (the  $m+1$ -th row) from left to right, focused in vertex  $x \in R_{(x)}^b$  is:  
 $x^{-g} \dots x^{-1}xx^{+1} \dots x^{+p}$  where  $x^s \in R_{(x)}^b$ , for  $s = -g, \dots, +p$  ( $g, p \leq m$ ).
- for each cell  $x^s$ ,  $s = -g, \dots, +p$ , the related vertical path, from top to bottom, is:  
 $(x^s)^{-g_s} \dots (x^s)^{-1}x^s(x^s)^{+1} \dots (x^s)^{+p_s}$ , where  $(x^s)^t \in R_{(x^s)}^a$ , for  $t = -g_s, \dots, +p_s$  ( $g_s, p_s \leq m$ ).

Intuitively, the  $H$ -view extracts ranks along the two chosen dimensions. Note that, the name  $H$ -view comes from the fact that the columns remind the vertical bars in a capital letter  $H$ . Observe also that the cell  $x^{-g}$  (in the  $m+1$ -th row) is the headcell of  $R_{(x)}^b$  if  $g < m$  and the cell  $x^{+p}$  (in the same row) is the tailcell of  $R_{(x)}^b$  if  $p < m$ . Analogously, the cell  $x^{-g_s}$  is the headcell of  $R_{(x^s)}^a$  if  $g_s < m$  and the cell  $x^{+p_s}$  is the tailcell of  $R_{(x^s)}^a$  if  $p_s < m$ . Intuitively, the view is composed of  $l \times l$  cells unless some of the displayed ranks have their headcell or tailcell very close (less than  $m$  steps) to the chosen focus.

As an example consider Figure 3 left that refers to the  $zz$ -structure of Figure 1. The main vertical dimension is  $D^{author}$  and the secondary horizontal dimension is  $D^{conference}$ . The view has size  $l = 2m + 1 = 5$ , the focus is  $v_3$ , the horizontal central path is  $v_3^{-2}v_3^{-1}v_3v_3^{+1}v_3^{+2} = \{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5\}$  ( $g, p = 2$ ). The vertical path related to  $v_3^{-1} = v_2$  is  $(v_3^{-1})^{-1}(v_3^{-1})(v_3^{-1})^{+1}(v_3^{-1})^{+2} = \{v_8, v_2, v_3, v_1\}$  ( $g_s = 1$  and  $p_s = 2$ ), that is  $(v_3^{-1})^{-1} = v_8$  is the headcell of the rank as  $g_s = 1 < m = 2$ .

Analogously to the  $H$ -view we can define the  $I$ -view.

**Definition 9 (I-view).** Given a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^{l_k} (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k =$


 Figure 3: *H*-view and *I*-view, related to Figure 1.

$(V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , the *I*-view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^l V_i^k$  on main horizontal dimension  $D^a$  and secondary vertical dimension  $D^b$  ( $a, b \in \{1, \dots, l_k\}$ ), is defined as a partially connected colored  $l \times l$  mesh in which:

- the central node, in position  $((m + 1), (m + 1))$  is the focus  $x$ ;
- the vertical central path (the  $m + 1$ -th column) from top to bottom, focused in vertex  $x \in R_{(x)}^b$  is:  
 $x^{-u} \dots x^{-1} x x^{+1} \dots x^{+r}$  where  $x^s \in R_{(x)}^b$ , for  $s = -u, \dots, +r$  ( $u, r \leq m$ ).
- for each cell  $x^s$ ,  $s = -u, \dots, +r$ , the related horizontal path, from left to right, is:  
 $(x^s)^{-u_s} \dots (x^s)^{-1} x^s (x^s)^{+1} \dots (x^s)^{+r_s}$ , where  $(x^s)^t \in R_{(x^s)}^a$ , for  $t = -u_s, \dots, +r_s$  ( $u_s, r_s \leq m$ ).

Note that, the name *I*-view comes from the fact that the rows remind the horizontal serif in a capital letter I. Observe also that the cell  $x^{-u}$  (in the  $m + 1$ -th column) is the *headcell* of  $R_{(x)}^b$  if  $u < m$  and the  $x^{+r}$  (in the same column) is the *tailcell* of  $R_{(x)}^b$  if  $r < m$ . Analogously, the cell  $x^{-u_s}$  is the headcell of  $R_{(x^s)}^a$  if  $u_s < m$  and the  $x^{+r_s}$  is the tailcell of  $R_{(x^s)}^a$  if  $r_s < m$ .

As example consider Figure 3 right. The main horizontal dimension is  $D^{\text{conference}}$  and the secondary vertical dimension is  $D^{\text{author}}$ . The view has size  $l = 2m + 1 = 5$ , the focus is  $v_3$ , the vertical central path is  $v_3^{-2} v_3^{-1} v_3 v_3^{+1} v_3^{+2} = \{v_8, v_2, v_3, v_1, v_5\}$  ( $u, r = 2$ ). The horizontal path related to  $v_3^{-1} = v_2$  is  $(v_3^{-1})^{-1} \dots (v_3^{-1})^{+2} = \{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4\}$  (i.e.,  $r = 2$ ). Vice versa the horizontal path related to  $v_3^{+1} = v_1$  is  $\{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$  and  $v_1$  is the headcell. Finally, the horizontal path related to  $v_3^{+2} = v_5$  is  $\{v_3, v_4, v_5, v_6, v_7\}$ .

We can now extend the known definition of *H* and *I* views to a number  $n > 2$  of dimensions. Intuitively, we will build  $n - 1$  different *H*-views (respectively, *I*-views), centered in the same focus, with a fixed main dimension and a secondary dimension chosen among the other  $n - 1$  dimensions. Formally:

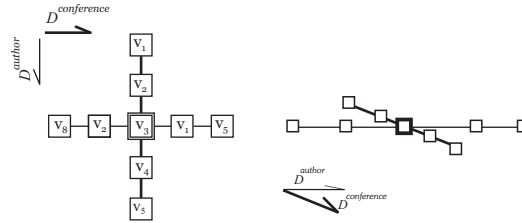
**Definition 10 (n-Dimensions H-view).** Given a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^{l_k} (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , the  $n$ -dimensions *H*-view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^l V_i^k$ , on dimensions  $D^1, D^2, \dots, D^n$  is composed of  $n - 1$  rectangular *H*-views, of main dimension  $D^1$  and secondary dimensions  $D^i$ ,  $i = 2, \dots, n$ , all centered in the same focus  $x$ .

Analogously, we have the following:

**Definition 11 (n-Dimensions I-view).** Given a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^{l_k} (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ , the  $n$ -dimensions *I*-view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^l V_i^k$ , on dimensions  $D^1, D^2, \dots, D^n$  is composed of  $n - 1$  rectangular *I*-views of main dimension  $D^1$ , and secondary dimensions  $D^i$ ,  $i = 2, \dots, n$ , all centered in the same focus  $x$ .

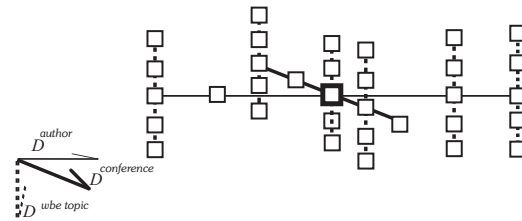
In Figure 3, we can distinguish only two dimensions ( $D^{\text{conference}}$  and  $D^{\text{author}}$ ).

To display a 3-dimensions *H*-view we can add a new dimension (let it be  $D^{\text{wbe topic}}$ ). This new *H*-view has main dimension  $D^{\text{wbe topic}}$ , and secondary dimensions  $D^{\text{conference}}$  and  $D^{\text{author}}$ . To construct this view we start from Figure 1 using  $v_3$  as focus, and we consider the two central paths (Figure 4 left), related to the two secondary dimensions  $D^{\text{conference}}$  and  $D^{\text{author}}$ .


 Figure 4: Two secondary dimensions cross the focus  $v_3$ .

The same visualization is shown in Figure 4 right under a different perspective.

Finally, in Figure 5 we obtain the 3-dimensions *H*-view where the vertical paths on main dimension  $D^{\text{wbe topic}}$  are added.


 Figure 5: An example of a 3-dimensions *H*-view.

We can now extend this example to the  $n$ -dimensions case. In Figure 6, we show a 5-dimensions view, considering four secondary dimensions. In our example, we have added other two dimensions ( $D^{publication\ year}$  and  $D^{publishing\ house}$ ), representing the year of publication of the article and the publishing house. This new view has focus  $v_3$ , size  $l = 2m + 1 = 5$  and main dimension  $D^{publication\ year}$ .

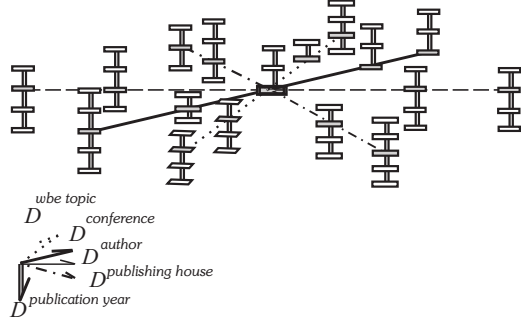


Figure 6: A 5-dimensions  $H$ -view.

In the 3-dimensions case, we can extend the previous definition of a 3-dimensions  $H$  (or  $I$ ) view. Intuitively, we build a standard 2-dimensions  $H$  (or  $I$ ) view and, starting from each of the related cells as focus, we display also the ranks in the third dimension. Formally:

**Definition 12 (3-Dimensions extended  $H$ -view).** Consider a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^l (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ . The 3-dimensions extended  $H$ -view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^l V_i^k$ , on dimensions  $D^1, D^2, D^3$ , is composed as follows:

- the central path (the  $m + 1$ -th row) from left to right, focused in vertex  $x \in R_{(x)}^3: x^{-g} \dots x \dots x^{+p}$ , where  $x^s \in R_{(x)}^3$ , for  $s = -g, \dots, +p$ ,  $g, p \leq m$  and  $g + p + 1 = l'$ ;
- $l'$  rectangular  $H$ -views of same size  $l$  and of focuses respectively  $x^{-g}, \dots, x, \dots, x^{+p}$ , on main dimension  $D^1$  and secondary dimension  $D^2$ .

Analogously we can define a 3-dimensions extended  $I$ -view.

**Definition 13 (3-Dimensions extended  $I$ -view).** Consider a  $zz$ -structure  $S = \bigcup_{k=1}^{|C|} D^k$ , where  $D^k = \bigcup_{i=1}^l (R_i^k \cup V_0^k)$ , and where  $R_i^k = (V_i^k, E_i^k, f, \{c_k\}, c)$ . The 3-dimensions extended  $I$ -view of size  $l = 2m + 1$  and of focus  $x \in V = \bigcup_{i=0}^l V_i^k$ , on dimensions  $D^1, D^2, D^3$ , is composed as follows:

- the central path (the  $m + 1$ -th column) from top to bottom, focused in vertex  $x \in R_{(x)}^3: x^{-u} \dots x \dots x^{+r}$ , where  $x^s \in R_{(x)}^3$ , for  $s = -u, \dots, +r$ ,  $u, r \leq m$  and  $u + r + 1 = l''$ ;
- $l''$  rectangular  $I$ -views of same size  $l$  and of focuses respectively  $x^{-u}, \dots, x, \dots, x^{+r}$ , on main dimension  $D^1$  and secondary dimension  $D^2$ .

As example, we start from Figure 4 and we consider the related 2-dimensions  $H$ -view of size 5 and of focus  $v_3$ , on main dimension  $D^{conference}$  and secondary dimension  $D^{author}$ . We obtain the  $H$ -view shown in Figure 7.

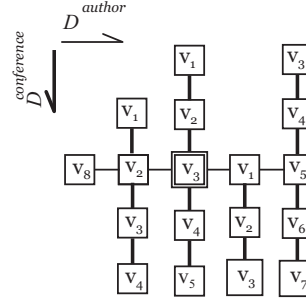


Figure 7: Standard 2-dimensions  $H$ -view.

Now, for each cell of this view, we visualize the related ranks in dimension  $D^{wbe\ topic}$ . The result is shown in Figure 8.

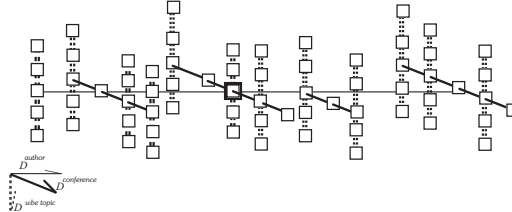


Figure 8: A 3-dimensions extended  $H$ -view.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have provided a description of  $zz$ -structures, of  $H$ -view and  $I$ -view, and we have extended these definition to  $n$ -dimensions views. Our aim is to use this formal model to represent concept maps and to study their behavior in the Adaptive Educational Hypermedia field.

This paper represents a first step in this direction and it is part of larger project. Starting from the present model, future works will focus on:

- automatic semantic filtering methodologies;

- an extension of this model towards an open, distributed and concurrent agent based architecture;
- adaptive navigation and presentation for learners;
- authoring facilities for web-based courses.

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