

Preface

A statement of George Bernhard Shaw is essentially this:

“The wisdom of a person is not measured by the number of experiences but rather by the ability to make use of them”.

This characterises case-based reasoning (CBR) to a large degree. It is easy to record billions of experiences in a database. However, the central question is: If I have a problem, which experience should I consult and in what way? Humans have cultivated this in very clever ways. So, what prevents us from collecting experiences on a computer? Nothing: Collection is easily done. The problem is now to realise the second part of Shaw’s statement on a computer. This has been neglected for a long time and is still not a standard in university education.

This difficulty is obvious: The new problem is not exactly like that in the experience base, and even if we find a good one quite similar, it cannot be used exactly in the same way as it was used in the past.

This book presents a systematic approach. It has two goals:

- (1) to present rigorous and formally valid structures for precise case-based reasoning;
- (2) to introduce you to the universe of CBR applications through the understanding of techniques, methods, and tools for many quite different tasks.

The basic formalisms are:

- A process model. This describes on an abstract level the steps that one has to perform when working with CBR. This incorporates, in particular, what to do in order to find useful experiences and how to apply them once they are selected.
- The knowledge containers. They describe how and where knowledge is stored that is needed for executing the steps of the process model.

There are two ways of working with CBR. The experience-based view compares a new problem to a previous experience. The extended view does not use experiences; it searches for a solution of a problem by directly associating a solution to the problem. In both approaches all the techniques with respect to the process model and the knowledge containers are valid.

Chapter 1 introduces you to the organization of the book. The book includes core methods, advanced elements, a part dedicated to complex knowledge sources, and additions.

The book also presents many applications. Mostly, they are not given in full detail. However, they are used to guide you on how to proceed. Most of these examples result from actual projects and student work over a decade with the participation of the authors.

Despite the wealth of applications and the scientific research progress, CBR has played only a minor role in education. It is not among the general topics in the curricula of computer-related fields. One reason for this seems to be the lack of textbooks. In English, there is Kolodner's *Case-Based Reasoning* from 1993. This book is a thorough compendium of the first years of research in CBR.

There is also *Raciocínio Baseado em Casos*, in Portuguese, by Christiane Gresse von Wangenheim and Aldo von Wangenheim, published in 2003 (Curitiba: Editora Manole). This covers the process model and applications.

This textbook aims at changing this status quo. It is not only aimed at students but also at potential lecturers. The latter are supported in different ways, for instance, by structured text, exercises and tools. This book is also intended for professionals designing and developing CBR systems.

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