A Modal Logic For Information System Security

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Abstract

As a security mechanism, authorization or access control ensures that all accesses to the system resources occur exclusively according to the access policies and rules specified by the system security agent. Authorization specification has been extensively studied and a variety of approaches have been investigated. In this paper, we propose a knowledge oriented formal language to specify the system security policies and their reasoning in response to system resource access request. The semantics of our language is provided by translating our language into epistemic logic program in which knowledge related modal operators are employed to represent agents’ knowledge in reasoning. We demonstrate how our authorization language handles the situation where the security agent’s knowledge on access decision is incomplete.

Keywords: Access Control, Intelligent Systems, Formal Language, Authorization

1 Introduction

One important mechanism to protect information system is to control the access to the system resources. Authorization or access control is such a mechanism. It is to ensure that all accesses to the system resources occur exclusively according to the access policies and rules specified by the security agent of the information system. Authorizations or access control has been extensively studied in (Athuri et al. 2002), (Chomicki et al. 2000), (Fernandez et al. 1995), (Zhou et al. 2008) etc. and a variety of authorization specification approaches such as access matrix (Dacier et al. 1994), (Denning 1976), role-based access control (Cramp ton et al. 2008), access control in database systems (Bertino et al. 1996), authorization delegation (Murray et al. 2008), procedural and logical specifications (Bai et al. 2003), (Bertino et al. 2003) have been investigated. Since logic based approaches provide a powerful expressive (Fagin et al. 1995) as well as flexibility for capturing a variety of system security requirements, increasing work has been focusing on this aspect. Jajodia et al (Jajodia et al. 2001) proposed a logic language for expressing authorizations. They used predicates and rules to specify the authorizations; their work mainly emphasizes the representation and evaluation of authorizations. The work of Bertino et al (Bertino et al. 2000) describes an authorization mechanism based on a logic formalism. It mainly investigates the access control rules and their derivations. In their recent work (Bertino et al. 2003), a formal approach based on C-Datalog language is presented for reasoning about access control models.

Nevertheless, there were some limitations so far in these approaches. For instance, when the security agent does not have complete, specific information about the security domain, how to reason and answer access queries under such a scenario? For example, the agent currently does not know clearly who can access the classified file between Alice and Bob, but knows only one of them can. This can be specified by a disjunctive logic program (Baral 2003) as follows:

\[
\{\text{AliceCanAccessFile} \lor \text{BobCanAccessFile} \} \leftarrow
\{\text{not BobCanAccessFile}, \text{not AliceCanAccessFile}\}.
\]

If a query asks if Alice can read the classified file, the agent will not be able to make the decision, because this program has two different answer sets: \{AliceCanAccessFile\} and \{BobCanAccessFile\}. In fact, under many circumstances, using disjunctive logic programming to specify security policies is not sufficient to precisely handle incomplete information.

In this paper, we propose a knowledge based formal languages \(\mathcal{L}^{k}\) to specify authorization domain with incomplete information in secure computer systems. We introduce modal logic to specify and reason about a security domain then translate the domain into an epistemic logic program. We show that our approach has an expressive power to describe a variety of complex security scenarios.

In our presentation, we assume the existence of a single, local system security officer or security agent administering the authorizations. This assumption enables us to concentrate on a single administering agent system and hence avoids the problem of coordination among multi agents. Access control in a multi-security system or administered by multi-security agents is out of the scope of this paper.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Sec-
2 The syntax of a high level language $L^k$

In this section we define the basic syntax of a high
level language $L^k$ which embeds a modal operator $K$ to
represent an agent’s knowledge about access con-
rol policies.

Language $L^k$ includes the following disjoint
sorts for subject ($S, S_1, S_2, \cdots$ for the constants
and $s, s_1, s_2, \cdots$ for the variables), group-subject
($G, G_1, G_2, \cdots$ for the constants and $g, g_1, g_2, \cdots$
for the variables), access-right ($A, A_1, A_2, \cdots$ for the
constants and $a, a_1, a_2, \cdots$ for the variables), group-access-right
($GA, GA_1, GA_2, \cdots$ for the constants and $ga, ga_1, ga_2, \cdots$
for the variables), group-object ($GO, GO_1, GO_2, \cdots$
for the constants and $go, go_1, go_2, \cdots$ for the variables),
object ($O, O_1, O_2, \cdots$ for the constants and $o, o_1, o_2, \cdots$
for the variables), group-object ($GO, GO_1, GO_2, \cdots$
for the constants and $go, go_1, go_2, \cdots$ for the variables)
and logic connectives $\land$ and $\lor$. We also introduce
a modal operator $K$ to represent what an agent
knows to be true. We use $Khold(Sue, Read, File)$ to represent
that “it’s believed that Sue can read File”.

In $L^k$, a subject $S$ has read right to an object
$FILE$ is represented as $holds(S, read, FILE)$. It defines
an atomic formula of the language. We define a
fact $f$ to be an atomic formula or its negation. A
ground fact is a fact without variable occurrence. We
view $\neg f$ as $f$. A fact expression $\phi$ of $L^k$ is defined
as follows: (i) each fact $\phi$ is a fact expression; (ii)
if $\phi$ and $\psi$ are fact expressions, then $\phi \land \psi$ and $\phi \lor \psi$ are also
fact expressions. A ground fact expression is either a
conjunctive or disjunctive fact expression. A fact
expression $\phi$ is called a conjunctive (or disjunctive)
if it is of the form $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$ (or $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$
respectively), where each $\varphi_i$ is a fact.

Now we are ready to formally define the proposi-
tions in $L^k$. An initial proposition in $L^k$ is defined
as

initially $\phi$  

(1)

where $\phi$ is either a conjunctive or disjunctive fact
expression. That is, $\phi$ is of the form $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$
or $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$, where each $\varphi_i$ is a fact.

An objective proposition is an expression of the form

$\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$  

(2)

where $\phi$ is either a conjunctive or disjunctive fact
expression, $\psi$ and $\gamma$ are two conjunctive fact
expressions.

A subjective proposition is an expression of the form

$\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$ knowing $\beta$,  

(3)

or

$\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$ not knowing $\beta$,  

(4)

where $\phi$ is a conjunctive or disjunctive fact expression,
$\psi$, $\gamma$ and $\beta$ are conjunctive fact expressions.

A proposition is called a ground proposition if it
does not contain variables. A policy domain descrip-
tion $D$ in $L^k$ is a finite set of initial propositions,
objective propositions and subjective propositions.

In the following, we describe a few complex
security scenarios using language $L^k$, and dem-
strate that $L^k$ is an expressive language to represent
incomplete information, default information, and
agents’ knowledge in relation to various access
control situations.

Example 1 The example mentioned in the intro-
duction can be represented by a domain descrip-
tion:

initially $holds(Alice, Access, File) \lor holds(Bob, Access, File)$
holds(Alice, Access, File) if $\neg holds(Bob, Access, File)$
holds(Bob, Access, File) if $\neg holds(Alice, Access, File)$

Here the initial fact holds($Alice, Access, File$)
holds($Bob, Access, File$) represents an incomplete
information about Alice and Bob’s access right to
the file.

Example 2 Consider a domain description $D$
consists of the following propositions:

initially $holds(S, Own, O)$
holds($S, Write, O$) if $holds(S, Own, O)$
with absence $\neg holds(S, Write, O)$,

$\neg holds(S, Own, O)$ if $\neg holds(S, Read, O)$.

This domain description expresses the following
policies: initially subject $S$ owns object $O$. If there is no
evidence that $S$ cannot write on $O$ is absent from the
domain, then $S$ has write right on $O$, and $S$ will
no longer owns $O$ if somehow $S$ cannot read $O$ anymore.
Here with absence $\neg holds(S, Write, O)$ represents a
default information. As long as there is no clear
information indicating $\neg holds(S, Write, O)$, it would
be assumed that $S$ can write $O$.

Example 3 Let us look at another example. A policy
says that if a subject group $G$ can read file $F$, then a
member $S_1 \in G$ will be assumed to be able to read $F$
also if we don’t know that $S_1$ cannot read $F$. This
can be specified by the following propositions:

initially $holds(G, Read, F)$
initially $S_1 \in G$ holds($S_1, Read, F$) if $\neg holds(G, Read, F)$, $S_1 \in G$,
not knowing $\neg holds(S_1, Read, F)$

This example represents a policy involving agent (sub-
ject)’s knowledge for making decision. As we will
show next, the semantics of knowledge in $L^k$ will be
defined based on epistemic logic programming.
3 Semantics of $\mathcal{L}^k$

Given a domain description $D$, we will translate it into an epistemic logic program $\Pi(D)$, then the semantics of $D$ will be defined based on the world view semantics of program $\Pi(D)$.

In the following, we first introduce epistemic logic programs, and then define the semantics of $\mathcal{L}^k$.

3.1 Epistemic logic programs

In this section, we present a general overview on epistemic logic programs. Gelfond extended the syntax and semantics of disjunctive logic programs to allow the correct representation of incomplete information in the presence of multiple extensions (Gelfond 1994).

In epistemic logic programs, the language of (disjunctive) extended logic programs is expanded with two modal operators $K$ and $M$. $KF$ is read as "$F$ is known to be true" and $MF$ is read as "$F$ may be believed to be true". In this paper we will consider propositional epistemic logic programs where rules containing variables are viewed as the set of all ground rules by replacing these variables with all constants occurring in the language. The semantics for epistemic logic programs is defined by the pair $(A, W)$, where $A$ is a collection of sets of ground literals which is also simply called a collection of belief sets, and $W$ is a set in $A$ called the agent’s working set of beliefs. The truth of a formula $F$ in $(A, W)$ is denoted by $(A, W) \models F$ and the falsity is denoted by $(A, W) \not\models F$. They are defined as follows.

$(A, W) \models p$ iff $p \in W$ where $p$ is a propositional atom.

$(A, W) \models KF$ iff $(A, W_i) \models F$ for all $W_i \in A$.

$(A, W) \models MF$ iff $(A, W_i) \models F$ for some $W_i \in A$.

$(A, W) \models F \land G$ iff $(A, W) \models F$ and $(A, W) \models G$.

$(A, W) \models F$ or $G$ iff $(A, W) \models \neg(F \land \neg G)$.

$(A, W) \models \neg F$ iff $(A, W) \not\models F$.

$(A, W) \models F$ iff $F \in W$ where $F$ is a ground atom.

$(A, W) \models KF$ iff $(A, W) \not\models KF$.

$(A, W) \models MF$ iff $(A, W) \models MF$.

$(A, W) \models F$ or $G$ iff $(A, W) \models F$ or $(A, W) \models G$.

$(A, W) \models F$ or $G$ iff $(A, W) \not\models F$.

$(A, W) \not\models G$.

It is worth mentioning that since belief set $W$ allows both positive and negative propositional atoms, in Gelfond’s semantics, $(A, W) \models \phi$ is not equivalent to $(A, W) \models \phi$ in general. For instance, $\{(a, b), \{a, b\} \not\models c$, but we do not have $\{(a, b), \{a, b\} \models c$ (i.e. $\{(a, b), \{a, b\} \equiv \neg c$). Consequently, here $K$ and $M$ are not dual modal operators here. Consider $A = \{(a, b), \{a, b\}, \neg\}$. Clearly we have $A \models \neg K\neg c$. But having $A \models M\neg c$ seems to be wrong.

If a formula $G$ is of the form $KF$, $\neg KF$, $MF$, or $\neg MF$ (where $F$ is a propositional formula), then its truth value in $(A, W)$ will not depend on $W$. In this case we call $G$ a subjective formula. If $F$ is a propositional literal, then we call $KF$, $\neg KF$, $MF$, and $\neg MF$ subjective literals. On the other hand, if $G$ does not contain $K$ or $M$, then its truth value in $(A, W)$ will only depend on $W$ and we call $G$ an objective formula or objective literal if $G$ is a propositional literal. In the case that $G$ is subjective, we simply write $A \models G$ instead of $(A, W) \models G$, and $W \models G$ instead of $(A, W) \models G$ in the case that $G$ is objective. In general, we simply write $A \models G$ if for each $W \in A$, we have $(A, W) \models G$. Each $A$ is an epistemic logic program $\Pi$ is a finite set of rules of the form:

$F \leftarrow G_1, \ldots, G_m, \not\models G_{m+1}, \ldots, \not\models G_n$. (5)

In (5), $m, n \geq 0$, $F$ is of the form $F_1$ or $\cdots$ or $F_k$ $(k \geq 1)$ and $F_1, \ldots, F_k$ are objective literals, $G_1, \ldots, G_m$ are objective or subjective literals, and $G_{m+1}, \ldots, G_n$ are objective literals. For an epistemic logic program $\Pi$, its semantics is given by its world view which is defined in the following steps:

Step 1. Let $\Pi$ be an epistemic logic program not containing modal operators $K$ and $M$ and negation as failure not. A set $W$ of ground literals is called a belief set of $\Pi$ iff $W$ is a minimal set of satisfying conditions: (i) for each rule $F \leftarrow G_1, \ldots, G_m$ from $\Pi$ such that $W \models G_1 \land \cdots \land G_m$, we have $W \models F$; and (ii) if $W$ contains a pair of complementary literals then $W = \text{Lit}$, i.e. $W$ is an inconsistent belief set.

Step 2. Let $\Pi$ be an epistemic logic program not containing modal operators $K$ and $M$ and $W$ be a set of ground literals in the language of $\Pi$. By $\Pi W$ we denote the result of (i) removing from $\Pi$ all the rules containing formulas of the form $\not\models G$ such that $W \models G$ and (ii) removing from the rules in $\Pi$ all other occurrences of formulas of the form $\not\models G$.

Step 3. Finally, let $\Pi$ be an arbitrary epistemic logic program and $A$ a collection of sets of ground literals in its language. By $\Pi A$ we denote the epistemic logic program obtained from $\Pi$ by (i) removing from $\Pi$ all rules containing formulas of the form $\not\models G$ such that $G$ is subjective and $A \not\models G$, and (ii) removing from rules in $\Pi$ all other occurrences of subjective formulas. Now we define that a collection $A$ of sets of ground literals is a world view of $\Pi$ if $A$ is the collection of all belief sets of $\Pi A$.

Example 4 Consider a simple epistemic logic program $\Pi$ consisting of the following rules:

$a \lor b \leftarrow \neg Mc$,

d $\leftarrow Ka$,

e $\leftarrow b, \not\models e$.

Let $A = \{(a, d)\}$, then from the above definition, we have its belief sets $\Pi A$:

$a \leftarrow b$,

d $\leftarrow$,

e $\leftarrow b, \not\models e$.

Then it is easy to see that $\{(a, d)\}$ is the only answer set of $\Pi A$. So it is a world view of $\Pi$. It can be also verify that $A$ is the unique world view of $\Pi$.

3.2 Translating a domain description into an epistemic logic program

Now we define the semantics of $\mathcal{L}^k$ based on the world view semantics of epistemic logic programs. Let $D$ be
a given domain description of $L^k$, i.e. $D$ is a finite set of propositions as illustrated in section 2.1. We specify an epistemic logic program $\Pi(D)$ translated from $D$ as follows:

1. For an initial policy proposition (1): **initially** $\phi$, if $\phi$ is a conjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$, then it is translated to a set of rules:

   $$\phi_1 \leftarrow, \cdots, \phi_n \leftarrow,$$

   if $\phi$ is a disjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$, then it is translated to one rule:

   $$\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n \leftarrow,$$

2. For each objective access proposition (2): $\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$, $\phi$ is a conjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$, then it is translated to a set of rules:

   $$\phi_1 \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l, \cdots, \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l,$$

   if $\phi$ is a conjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$, then it is translated to one rule:

   $$\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l,$$

3. For each subjective access proposition (3): $\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$ knowing $\beta$, $\phi$ is a conjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$, then translate it to a set of rules:

   $$\phi_1 \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, K\beta_1, \cdots, K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l, \cdots, \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, K\beta_1, \cdots, K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l,$$

   if $\phi$ is a disjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$, then translate it to one rule:

   $$\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, K\beta_1, \cdots, K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \neg \gamma_l,$$

4. For each subjective access proposition (4): $\phi$ if $\psi$ with absence $\gamma$ not knowing $\beta$, $\phi$ is a conjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \land \cdots \land \phi_n$, then translate it to a set of rules:

   $$\phi_1 \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg K\beta_1, \neg K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \not\beta_r, \cdots, \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg K\beta_1, \neg K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \not\beta_r,$$

   if $\phi$ is a disjunctive fact expression $\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n$, then translate it to one rule:

   $$\phi_1 \lor \cdots \lor \phi_n \leftarrow \psi_1, \cdots, \psi_k, \neg K\beta_1, \neg K\beta_r, \neg \gamma_1, \cdots, \not\beta_r.$$

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Now we specify $\Pi(D)$ to be the collection of all rules translated from $D$ by the above procedure. It is noted that $\Pi(D)$ is an epistemic logic program without modal operator $M$.

Since positions in $D$ may contain variables, program $\Pi(D)$ may also contain variables. In this case, a ground epistemic logic program generated from $\Pi(D)$ by replacing each variable with all possible corresponding sort constants occurring in $\Pi(D)$. Without much confusion, we may still use notion $D(\Pi)$ to denote this corresponding ground program.

**Definition 1** Let $D$ be a domain description of $L^k$, $\Pi(D)$ the epistemic logic program translated from $D$ as described above, and $f$ a ground fact. We say that $D$ entails $f$, denoted as $D \models f$, if $\Pi(D)$ has a world view, and for each world view $A$ of $\Pi(D)$, $A \models f$.

**Example 5** Consider Example 3 presented in section 2. According to the above procedure, we can translate the domain description $D$ as the following program $\Pi(D)$:

$$\text{holds}(G, \text{Read}, F) \leftarrow,$$

$$S_1 \in G \leftarrow,$$

$$\text{holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F) \leftarrow \text{holds}(G, \text{Read}, F),$$

$$S_1 \in G, \neg K \text{~holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F).$$

Now suppose we need to answer a query whether $S_1$ can read file $F$, i.e. whether $D \models \text{holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F)$. It is not difficult to see that program $\Pi(D)$ has a unique world view $A = \{ \text{holds}(G, \text{Read}, F), S_1 \in G, \text{holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F) \}$, and $A \models \text{holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F)$. So we conclude that $D \models \text{holds}(S_1, \text{Read}, F)$.

**4 A case study: Reasoning about knowledge in access control**

In this section, we demonstrate a case study from which we show that our approach can overcome some difficulties in the reasoning about access control when incomplete information is involved.

We consider a typical hospital scenario that doctor assistants take responsibility to manage patients files and access relevant files and data from other department. In order to ensure the confidentiality of all patients’ medical records, a number of authorization policies must be implemented in all departments in a hospital.

Suppose that Hobson is a heart specialist in a hospital. He is planning a by-pass surgery for his patient John, for that purpose, he needs to review John’s medical records, a number of authorization policies across the hospital as follows:

$$\text{holds}(x, \text{Read, All heart records}) \text{ if knowing } \text{assistant}(x, \text{Hobson}),$$

$$\text{holds}(x, \text{Read, y heart record}) \text{ if }$$

$$\text{holds}(x, \text{Read}, \text{All heart records}) \land \text{patient}(y, \text{Hobson}),$$

$$\text{holds}(\text{Hobson, Read, y}) \text{ if } \text{holds}(x, \text{Read}, y) \land$$

$$\text{assistant}(x, \text{Hobson}).$$
sendRequest(Sue, Read, y) if request(Hobson, y) with absence
(9)

sendRequest(Alice, Read, y) if request(Hobson, y)
with absence sendRequest(Sue, Read, y). (10)

waitingApproval(x, Read, y) if
sendRequest(x, Read, y) ∧
not knowing approved(x, Read, y),
(11)

approved(x, Read, y) if
sendRequest(x, Read, y) ∧
assistant(x, d) ∧ specialist(d),
(12)

holds(x, Read, y) if approved(x, Read, y). (13)

Let us take a closer look at these rules. Basically, rules
(6) and (7) say that if it is known that x is a personal
assistant of Doctor Hobson, then x can access (read) Doctor’s all patients’ heart records, and if someone is
already permitted to read all patients’ heart records, and
y is a patient of Doctor, then this person can also read y’s heart record. Note that rule (7) plays a role of inheritance for access control. Also, rule (8) implies the fact that once Doctor Hobson’s assistant
x obtains the access read for some patient record from other department, then Doctor Hobson should have the access right on this record obviously.

Rule (9) indicates that if Doctor Hobson has a request of accessing patient y’s record from other departments, then usually Sue should send this request for approval. Note that this rule is defeasible due to with absence. For instance, if Sue is on leave, then ¬sendRequest(Sue, Read, y) will be presented and hence this rule will not be initiated any more. Rule (10) describes the case that Alice will do Sue’s duty when she is not available. On the other hand, rule (11) means that once a request is sent out, it is on the waiting status if no approval from that department is explicitly informed. Rule (12) states that the corresponding department will approve the request sent by x about y’s record if x is a personal assistant of some doctor d who is a registered specialist of the hospital. Finally, rule (13) is quite straightforward that if x receives the approval of the department that holds patient record, x can then access y’s record in that department.

Now suppose we have the following facts:

initially assistant(Alice, Hobson),
(14)

initially assistant(Sue, Hobson),
(15)

initially patient(John, Hobson),
(16)

initially specialist(Hobson),
(17)

initially request(Hobson, John_generalHealth_record),
(18)

initially ¬sendRequest(Sue, Read, John_generalHealth_record),
(19)

we would like to know how the access right “Read” for patient John’s general health record can be obtained by Doctor Hobson. Let D be the domain description consisting of propositions (6) - (19). Then applying our translation procedure described in section 3.2, we can obtain the following epistemic logic program II(D):

holds(x, Read, All_heart_records) ←
Kassistant(x, Hobson),
holds(x, Read, y, heart_record) ←
holds(x, Read, All_heart_records), patient(y, Hobson),
holds(Hobson, Read, y) ←
holds(x, Read, y, assistant(x, Hobson), sendRequest(Sue, Read, y) ←
request(Hobson, y),
¬¬sendRequest(Sue, Read, y),
sendRequest(Alice, Read, y) ←
request(Hobson, y),
not sendRequest(Sue, Read, y),
waitingApproval(x, Read, y) ←
sendRequest(x, Read, y),
¬Kapproved(x, Read, y),
approved(x, Read, y) ←
sendRequest(x, Read, y), assistant(x, d),
specialist(d),
holds(x, Read, y) ← approved(x, Read, y),
assistant(Alice, Hobson),
assistant(Sue, Hobson),
patient(John, Hobson),
specialist(Hobson, H),
request(Hobson, John_generalHealth_record) ←,
sendRequest(Sue, Read, John_generalHealth_record) ←,

holds(Sue, Read, All_heart_records),
holds(Sue, Read, John_generalHealth_record) ←,
holds(Sue, Read, John_heart_records),
approved(Alice, Read, John_generalHealth_record)
holds(Alice, Read, John_generalHealth_record)←,

D ⊨ sendRequest(Alice, Read, John_generalHealth_record),
D ⊨ approved(Alice, Read, John_generalHealth_record),
D ⊨ holds(Alice, Read, John_generalHealth_record),
D ⊨ holds(Hobson, Read, John_generalHealth_record).

5 The implementation issues

A system for epistemic logic programming has been
implemented. In this section we briefly outlined our implementation of our epistemic logic programming system and explain how our formal language $L^k$ developed in this paper is fulfilled by the system.

The system we implemented is called World Views Solver, simply denoted as Wviews. The essential function of Wviews is to compute one or all world views (models) of an input epistemic logic program. To
compute the world views of an epistemic logic program $\Pi$, Wviews first performs a reduction to transform $\Pi$ into a traditional disjunctive logic program (DLP), then call dlv to compute the answer sets of $\Pi^A$. The system structure is outlined as follows$^5$.

![Wviews system structure](http://www.scm.uws.edu.au/ yan/Wviews.html)

**Figure 1: Wviews system structure.**

As we mentioned in section 3, the semantics of $\mathcal{L}^k$ is defined in terms of the world view semantics of epistemic logic programs. Having system Wviews, we can easily implement our policy language $\mathcal{L}^k$ in the following way: taking the domain description $D$ as the input, which is a finite set of $\mathcal{L}^k$ propositions (see section 2), we implement a transformation procedure as illustrated in section 3, to translate $D$ into an epistemic logic program $\Pi(D)$, then by calling system Wviews, we will be able to compute one or all world views (models) of $\Pi(D)$.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we proposed a formal language $\mathcal{L}^k$ to specify security polices by an authorization domain with incomplete information. Different from previous policy specification languages, our formal language $\mathcal{L}^k$ has knowledge as its key feature to deal with incomplete domains. We specified the semantics of such knowledge oriented authorization specification language based on the well known the world view semantics of epistemic logic programs. The examples showed demonstrated that our approach has a rich expressive power to describe a variety of complex security requirements. Related semantic and computational properties of epistemic logic programs have been studied in (Zhang 2007), which will be help us to fully using the expressive power of epistemic logic programming to represent and reason about knowledge based authorization policies. This is our current research focus.

References


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$^5$The system details can be accessed from http://www.scm.uws.edu.au/ yan/Wviews.html.