

GXL2SVG: Domain-Specific Graph Layout

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Abstract

GXL provides an international standard to exchange graphs and their according schemas, but without offering means to visualize these structures. This paper presents a declarative approach to specify a graph layout by referring to the graphs schema. Using GReQL graph querying technology, the resulting display of graph elements can be influenced by various graph properties. The graph visualizer *GXL2SVG* uses standard graph layout services and exports graphs as SVG documents.

1 Introduction

Graphs are widely used to represent software systems in software engineering. They provide a well defined the mathematical basis to reason on program structures. Analysis of graph data structures can be done efficiently, and visualizations of graphs are easily understood by various stakeholders in the software development process.

Adequate visualization of graphs strongly depends on the modelling domain the graph is applied in and is often dependent on the information in the graph and the graph structure itself. Using the standardized GXL Graph Exchange Language[4], the domain specific structure of the graph is represented by GXL schemas. *Domain-specific layout of graphs* can be specified with respect to these schemas. *Graph properties* might also influence the layout of graphs. For example, CodeCrawler [1] uses colors, shapes, and sizes of nodes to represent metrics in syntax graphs. All of these layout parameters can be calculated using graph queries[7].

In this paper, we present an approach to specify the layout of graphs with respect to their graph schemas and graph properties. The calculation of graph properties follows the GReQL graph querying approach [6]. The graph visualizer *GXL2SVG* [8] imports GXL graphs and a *layout specification* referring to the appropriate graph schema.

Using the layout facilities provided by the GraphViz library[3], *GXL2SVG* exports domain specific graph visualizations as Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG)[10].

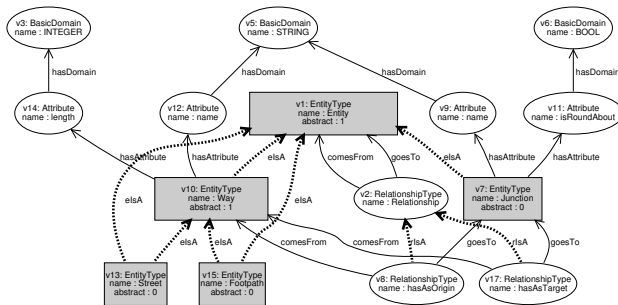


Figure 1: An example graph

2 GXL2SVG Layout Features

The following section introduces some of the layout features provided by *GXL2SVG*. Fig. 1 shows a small example graph. Most nodes are represented by ellipses with textual information on node types and names, some of the nodes are rendered as grey rectangles with different content.

GXL2SVG uses an XML language for the specification of graph layout properties. The visualization of the elliptical nodes in Fig.1 is specified in Fig. 2. Lines 5 and 6 define the shape, and lines 8-11 specify the node labels consisting of certain literal strings and graph attribute values.

```
1 <GSIFunctionApplication
2     function="VertexLayoutProperties">
3   <Result><Set>
4     <Tuple>
5       <Name>VertexStyle</Name>
6       <GreqlText>'ellipse'</GreqlText></Tuple>
7     <Tuple>
8       <Name>Label</Name>
9       <GreqlText>USING v: 'v' + vertexId(v)
10        + ' : ' + typeName(v) + '\n name : '
11        + v.name</GreqlText></Tuple>
12   </Set></Result>
13 </GSIFunctionApplication>
```

Figure 2: Layout specification for ellipse nodes

Fig. 3 shows the layout specification for the rectangular nodes. This specification only holds for Entity Type-nodes (line 4). Graphs with nodes to be visualized with this style have to match a schema containing Entity Type-nodes. Shape (rectangle) and background color (172 = grey) referring to *GXL2SVG*'s default color palette are defined in lines 6-12. The GReQL-Query in lines 15-16 calculates the width of each rectangle depicting a Entity Type-node v depending on the number of incoming edges (in-Degree(v)).

Analogously to the layout of the nodes, the layout of edges is specified. Fig. 1 uses thick dotted and thin solid edges. The placement of the nodes follows a hierarchical layout approach suitable for tree-like structures [9].

GXL2SVG offers means to manipulate graph layout on three levels. *Global properties* deal with the general layout of all nodes and edges, independent of specific structures or attribute values. *Schema-related properties* focus on the visualization on graph elements of certain node and edges types specified in the schema. Finally, *instance-related properties* determine the illustration of a specific nodes or edges. The more specialized levels overwrites the property values of the more general levels.

Three general graph layout approaches – hierarchical, force-directed, and radial [2] – are supported by

```

1 <GSIFunctionApplication
2     function="VertexLayoutProperties">
3     <Parameter>
4     <TypeId>EntityType</TypeId></Parameter>
5     <Result><Set>
6     <Tuple>
7     <Name>VertexStyle</Name>
8     <GreqlText>'rectangle'</GreqlText></Tuple>
9     <Tuple>
10    <Name>BackgroundColor</Name>
11    <GreqlText>
12    TUP('default',172)</GreqlText></Tuple>
13    <Tuple>
14    <Name>Width</Name>
15    <GreqlText>USING v:
16    inDegree{ }(v) * 20 + 50</GreqlText></Tuple>
17    . . .
18    </Set></Result>
19 </GSIFunctionApplication>

```

Figure 3: Layout specification for EntityType-nodes

GXL2SVG, so far. Additionally, the manipulation of properties like size, color, shape, line style, edge end symbols, node and edge labels, fonts, font sizes etc., which are not covered by the general layout algorithm itself, can be defined in *GXL2SVG* layout specifications. All layout properties have distinctive names and an appropriate value. The value is always computed by a GREQL query. Such queries can easily gather information which is spread over the complete graph. Thus, each layout property value can depend on arbitrary graph properties.

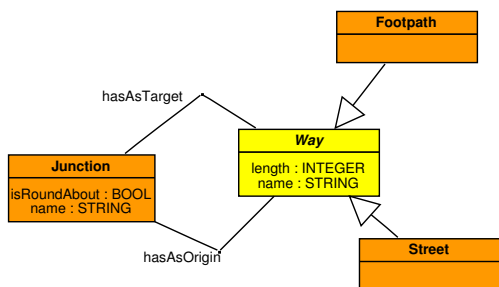


Figure 4: Graph from Fig. 1 layouted as class diagram

Fig. 4 shows an example of the power and expressiveness of *GXL2SVG* layouts. The graph in Fig. 1 is depicted in the *domain of class diagrams* using an UML-like visualization style. Information displayed in the class nodes is collected from various surrounding EntityType, Attribute, and Domain nodes. Different end symbols of edges distinguish generalization from association edges, whereas different shades help telling the abstract class (Way) from concrete ones. Graph layout follows a force directed approach[5].

Using the UML related domain specific layout in Fig. 4 provides a much easier understanding of the graph in Fig. 1. It represents a partial schema for city maps.

3 Implementation

GXL2SVG's core functionality is implemented as a C++ library. The main objective in development was separation of graph representation, layout specification, output generation, and graph layout algorithm.

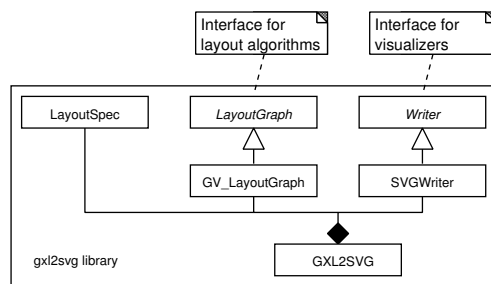


Figure 5: GXL2SVG library structure

This resulted in the modular design shown in fig. 5, where the layout algorithm is only used to compute positions and sizes of nodes and the routing of edges. This results in a specific layout graph which is then rendered by an output writer into the final destination format.

4 Conclusion

GXL2SVG provides a declarative specification of graph layout. By referring to the graph schema, these layout specifications provide domain specific rendering of graphs. GREQL queries are used to influence the graph layout by arbitrary graph properties.

The approach presented in this paper is based on standardized open formats like GXL and SVG. Unless its current implementation only uses GraphViz layout services, the implementation can easily be extended and optimized by other graph layout algorithms.

Further work will supply a predefined set of domain specific layout specifications and offer an interactive user interface to support the definition of layouts by extending graph schemas.

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