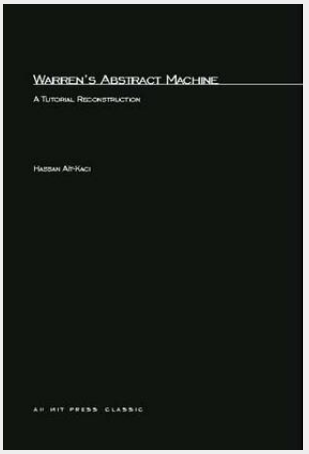
Aït-Kaci

Warren's Abstract Machine

A Tutorial Reconstruction



This tutorial demystifies one of the most important yet poorly understood aspects of logic programming, the Warren Abstract Machine or WAM. The author's step-by-step construction of the WAM adds features in a gradual manner, clarifying the complex aspects of the design and providing the first detailed study of WAM since it was designed in 1983. Developed by David H. D. Warren, the WAM is an abstract (nonphysical) computer that aids in the compilation and implementation of the Prolog programming language and offers techniques for compiling and optimizing symbolic computing that can be generalized beyond Prolog. Although the benefits of the WAM design have been widely accepted, few have been able to penetrate the WAM. This lucid introduction defines separate abstract machines for each conceptually separate part of the design and refines them, finally stitching them together to make a WAM. An index presents all of the critical concepts used in the WAM. It is assumed that readers have a clear understanding of the operational semantics of Prolog, in particular, of unification and backtracking, but a brief summary of the necessary Prolog notions is provided.Contents Introduction • Unification—Pure and Simple • Flat Resolution • Prolog • Optimizing the Design • Conclusion • Appendixes

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