

From data base to knowledge graph - using data in chemistry

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Abstract

Over the last couple of decades, the scientific community has made large efforts to process and store experimental and computational chemical data and information on the world wide web. This review summarizes several databases and ontologies available on the web for researchers to use. We also discuss briefly the categories of chemistry data that are stored, its main usage and how it can be accessed and understood in the framework of the Semantic Web.

Keywords: Knowledge Graph, Databases, Semantic Web

1. Introduction

As progress is being made in developing new and green chemical processes for a variety of industrial applications, an ever-growing amount of chemical information has been published and stored in databases online. This includes both experimental and computational chemical data. As a result, understanding how to store, access, and manipulate this vast amount of information is now key to further scientific progress. Increasingly, information science and mathematical methods such as data mining and graph theory are being used to guide various fields in chemistry and chemical engineering. Examples include analyzing organic reaction networks to understand and plan new synthetic routes for green chemistry [1, 2, 3, 4], and the use of process informatics to develop predictive chemical kinetics for combustion

13 chemistry [5]. In addition, various approaches to access and generate chem-
14 ical knowledge are being developed using, for example, semantic web and
15 network analysis. Semantic web technologies like knowledge graphs offer ad-
16 ditional functionality to represent chemical knowledge. In conjunction with
17 semantic web services the information available in chemical databases can be
18 retrieved and changed and allows the automation of model building [6, 7, 8].
19 The purpose of this review is to describe some of the main current databases
20 available to researchers for data mining and review, as well as to discuss ef-
21 forts to use ontologies as a general model for the representation of chemistry
22 data, the improvement of the quality of these data, and the generation of
23 resources to share consistent chemical data for a variety of purposes.

24 **2. Chemical Databases**

25 Several large chemical databases are available in the chemistry literature,
26 providing a wealth of useful chemical information for researchers to use. The
27 purpose of this section is to summarize some of the key features of such
28 databases, for example, what information on chemical species they store and
29 how this information can be queried. The world’s largest freely accessible
30 database of chemical information is PubChem [9], which stores information
31 in three primary categories: compounds, substances, and bioactivities [10, 9].
32 Currently, PubChem has information on 97 million compounds, 242 million
33 substances, and 280 million bioactivities [10, 9]. Information in PubChem
34 can be queried by standard means, such as by text search, molecular formula,
35 or chemical structure. For a common molecule, such as benzene, PubChem
36 contains a variety of properties. This includes 2D and 3D structures as well as
37 any crystal structures which can be downloaded in standard chemical formats
38 such as JavaScript Object Notation (JSON), eXtensible Markup Language
39 (XML) [11], or Common Interchange Format (CIF). PubChem also computes
40 standard identifiers for the species in question, such as the IUPAC name, the
41 canonical SMILES identifier [12, 13], or the InChI format [14], as well as
42 other vendor/chemical agency identifiers. These identifiers enable identifi-
43 cation and comparison of species between databases, so are key to linking
44 data for the same species from different sources. Essential computed and
45 experimental chemical and physical properties for the structure are also pro-
46 vided by PubChem, as is any available spectral data that has been linked to
47 the structure. PubChem also provides a large amount of information on the
48 biological aspects of such structures, including drug information, solubility,

49 toxicity, and biological activity, which is key data for those designing drugs
50 or green synthesis routes.

51 Another major database for chemical data is Reaxys, run by Elsevier
52 [15, 16]. Reaxys contains much of the same information as PubChem and
53 other chemical databases, such as structure, key identifiers, physical and
54 chemical properties, spectral data, and biological activity for various com-
55 pounds. What differentiates Reaxys is its focus on providing data for develop-
56 ing synthetic routes. To this end, Reaxys has three key sets of information for
57 a substance, namely preparations, reactions, and documents. Preparations
58 displays key synthesis routes that can be used to prepare the substance in
59 question. This includes the main reactions, reaction conditions, catalysts and
60 any other information used in the synthesis routes. Each synthesis route also
61 contains the source of the synthesis, which usually comes from the Journals
62 and Patent databases that are linked to Reaxys via Elsevier. This enables
63 the user to create a synthetic route for the substance of interest using Reaxys
64 synthesis planner. Similarly, the reaction set contains the list of reactions in
65 the Reaxys database which includes the substance the user has queried. The
66 reactions can be filtered by structure, reagent, reaction class, solvents, cata-
67 lysts, and yield among others, allowing the user to find reactions tailored to
68 their application. Finally, the documents class lists the journal publications,
69 patents, conference papers, and books that Reaxys has access to that are
70 linked to the queried substance. This allows users of Reaxys to have access
71 to both the data and source to analyze and select reactions.

72 Similar to Reaxys, the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) [17, 18] is a col-
73 lection of databases containing information on organic and inorganic chemical
74 substances. This information includes chemical structures, chemical names,
75 and chemical reactions. Information stored in these databases is extracted
76 from a wide range of literature such as patent records, journal publications,
77 conference proceedings, Ph.D. theses, and web sources. The CAS Registry
78 databases contain chemical structures, names, and experimental properties
79 for more than 150 million molecules [18]. Building on the scope of the CAS
80 Registry, the CASREACT database [19] contains several million single- and
81 multi-step chemical reactions based on the molecules and the information
82 stored in the CAS database. Much like Reaxys, this is provided to help users
83 find reactions for their particular chemical application.

84 A key database for thermochemical data is the Active Thermochemical
85 Tables (ATcT), developed by researchers at the Argonne National Labora-
86 tory [20, 21]. The principle behind the ATcT is the thermochemical network

87 approach, which makes use of both experimental and theoretical reaction
88 and formation enthalpies to yield estimates for the enthalpy of formation
89 of the species in the network. The ATcT describes thermochemistry using
90 a graph theoretic approach, with primary vertices being the enthalpies of
91 formation of species, secondary vertices being the reaction enthalpies, and
92 the directed edges indicating a reaction occurring between species in the net-
93 work, with the weight determined by stoichiometry. A statistical approach
94 is then used to analyze and solve for the optimal thermochemical values that
95 yield a self-consistent solution. Typically, this is possible because there are
96 multiple measurements or calculations for a given formation or reaction en-
97 thalpy, providing the extra degrees of freedom necessary. This also means
98 that the solution given by the ATcT can help to identify measurements that
99 are potentially inconsistent with others in the network. Data computed by
100 the ATcT can be found and queried online. Crucially, the reactions which
101 contribute to the ATcT enthalpy of formation are displayed, as are uncer-
102 tainties in the estimate of enthalpy of formation provided, making it clear
103 which data is used and its degree of reliability.

104 On the computational chemical database side, the largest database is
105 the Computational Chemistry Comparison and Benchmark DataBase (CC-
106 CBDB) for thermochemical properties of species from the National Institute
107 of Standards and Technology (NIST) [22]. Information is queried by chemi-
108 cal name or molecular formula. The CCCBDB stores computed information
109 in the following main categories: energy, geometry, vibrations, electrostatics,
110 entropy and heat capacity, and reaction. All of the computed properties are
111 displayed for the different levels of theory at which they have been calcu-
112 lated, with the data split into categories based on the type of computational
113 chemical method used. The CCCBDB also crucially has a comparison fea-
114 ture, where the user can compare the results of theoretical calculations to
115 any available experimental data in NIST’s databases, as well as look at the
116 effect of different theoretical methods on calculated properties.

117 Other more specialized databases also exist. For example, the Alexandria
118 library developed by van der Spoel et al. consists of molecular properties for
119 force field development [23]. Alexandria contains molecular structures and
120 properties for 2,704 compounds, many of which contain functional groups
121 common to biomolecules and drugs. Alexandria contains similar informa-
122 tion to the CCCBDB, but crucially provides more extensive multipole and
123 polarizability calculations to guide researchers who want to develop poten-
124 tials and force fields. Importantly, all properties in Alexandria are provided

125 at the same level of theory and the Gaussian input and output files from
126 the calculations are also given, making reproduction of the stored informa-
127 tion significantly easier. Even more specialized databases for computational
128 chemists exist, such as Head-Gordon and Hait’s benchmark database specif-
129 ically for DFT calculations on dipole moments, spanning a variety of func-
130 tionals in the process [24]. The database from Simmie et al. is specifically
131 for high-level enthalpies of formation for nitrogen based compounds [25].
132 The GDB-17 database specifically enumerates small organic molecules, using
133 graph-theoretic methods to span 166 billion such molecules with the aim of
134 guiding new drug design [26]. Ramakrishnan et al. provide the QM9 dataset,
135 containing DFT calculations on around 134,000 molecules for training new
136 machine learning potentials [27]. The ANI-1 data set uniquely contains non-
137 equilibrium DFT calculations, that is for molecules in conformers that are
138 not their minimum energy ground state configuration [28]. ANI-1 contains
139 around 20 million molecular conformations for 57,462 molecules taken from
140 the GDB database. There is clearly a wide variety of chemical data, both ex-
141 perimental and computational, that is available to researchers in a variety of
142 fields in chemistry. This data is ever growing, and methods to store, access,
143 and act on this data automatically are becoming more valuable for progress
144 to be made.

145 **3. Ontologies for Computational Chemistry**

146 Given the variety of chemical data available, developing a consistent
147 framework to store and access it is crucial, even more so as the amount
148 of data available is expanding rapidly. Further data processing will increas-
149 ingly rely on automation allowing machines to interpret, integrate, share,
150 and perform reasoning with data of various formats.

151 One of the early efforts in storing chemical data in a standard format was
152 the introduction of Chemical Markup Language (CML) pioneered by Murray-
153 Rust and coworkers [29, 30, 31, 32]. The CML format is based on XML, which
154 is suitable for storing data of any level of complexity while providing semantic
155 information to the data stored. CML allows the representation of complex
156 chemical objects by employing the hierarchical tree structure of XML using
157 chemical name tags which cover different aspects of chemistry. Over the past
158 20 years, CML has been developed to represent most aspects of chemistry,
159 including CMLReact for chemical reactions [33], CMLSpec for spectral data

160 [34], CML for crystallography [35], and CML for polymers (PML) [36] along
161 with the standard labels and definitions for physical properties.

162 Building on this established format for representing chemical data, Phan-
163 dungsukanan and coworkers developed a sub-domain for storing quantum
164 chemistry calculations data based on CML, termed CompChem [37]. The
165 main goal of CompChem was to introduce a stricter structure into CML-
166 based documents so that software tools know exactly how to validate and
167 process information related to computational chemistry. To this end, the se-
168 mantics of data stored in the CompChem based documents is modelled based
169 on the typical nature of computational simulations or calculations, contain-
170 ing information on the job type, input parameters, and output parameters
171 that one would expect in these calculations. This enables the storage of a
172 variety of output data from *ab initio* quantum chemistry calculations such
173 as the results of geometry optimization, single point energy calculations, and
174 frequency calculations, among others. The storage and access of this data
175 was realized through a MolHub web service [37]. However, the original Mol-
176 Hub did not allow for semantic inter-operability between different chemistry
177 software tools, provide an efficient query engine, or guarantee the consistency
178 of data.

179 To alleviate these shortcomings, a novel OntoCompChem ontology has
180 been developed by extending the Gainesville Core (GNVC) ontology [38]
181 while supporting the CompChem convention of CML [39]. The OntoCom-
182 pChem ontology is currently populated by Gaussian quantum chemistry
183 calculations through an updated version of the MolHub semantic web ser-
184 vice (<https://como.ceb.cam.ac.uk/resources/molhub/>). The OntoCom-
185 pChem knowledge graph forms part of a more general knowledge graph called
186 the J-Park Simulator (JPS) [40]. This architecture supports semantic inter-
187 operability between different domains and allows the use of propositional
188 logic, formal query language, and Semantic Web tools such as the HerMiT
189 [41] reasoner to check the consistency of data within the JPS knowledge
190 graph. More recently, the OntoKin ontology [42, 43] has been developed as
191 a component of the JPS to represent gas phase elementary reactions, which
192 are the building block of large reaction mechanisms found in combustion
193 and atmospheric chemistry models. The ontology allows inference engines
194 to detect inconsistencies in chemical mechanisms and to perform semantic
195 queries across mechanisms stored in the JPS knowledge graph. At present,
196 both the OntoKin and MolHub frameworks are missing an intelligent system
197 that automatically establishes semantic inter-operability between quantum

198 chemistry calculations and kinetic mechanisms. To achieve this goal, we are
199 currently developing a formal framework that is based on reinforcement learn-
200 ing formal tools [44], modal logic [45], and a propositional logic framework
201 with binary metric operators [46] to provide formal language support.

202 In addition to the JPS efforts, other semantic frameworks are currently
203 in use. The Chemical Semantics Framework (CSF) [47] stores results of
204 quantum chemistry calculations. The core of the CSF is the GNVC ontology
205 which forms the knowledge component of the framework. However, the ontol-
206 ogy does not support all of CompChem’s conventions for CML features. For
207 example, some keywords in the CML format such as geometry type are not
208 supported. In addition, the CSF does not support semantic inter-operability
209 between different computational chemistry tools. However, the framework
210 allows web agents to access and, in principle, act on data stored in the CSF,
211 representing a step towards automation of the knowledge graph. The ChEBI
212 database stores molecular entities focused on ‘small’ chemical compounds,
213 that is part of the Open Biomedical Ontologies effort. It uses the ChEBI
214 ontology as a common model for classification of chemical compounds in the
215 biomedical field. The ontology provides models for molecular structures such
216 as hydrocarbons, common chemical roles for the molecules in the ontology,
217 as well as for information pertaining to subatomic particles [48]. The ChEBI
218 database can be explored using an advanced search interface, but semantic
219 inter-operability and web agent access is currently not supported.

220 The review of ontologies for chemistry makes it clear that plenty of effort
221 is being put towards developing methods for storing, accessing, and interpret-
222 ing the available chemical data in an intelligent way. Key to the success of
223 these efforts will be the development of standards for the publication and re-
224 porting of chemical data. By having a standard format for reporting chemical
225 data, linking this information to a semantic framework or ontology becomes
226 substantially easier and less error prone. Efforts to this end include the work
227 of the InChI consortium [14], the Allotrope Foundation’s work on developing
228 a standard data format, and the work of Cronin and coworkers on developing
229 a chemical programming language that can be used to represent experimen-
230 tal organic chemistry [49]. These standards will help inspire the definition of
231 classes in chemical ontologies. In conjunction with this, the development of
232 tools for establishing semantic frameworks, as well as agents that can act on
233 this data automatically, is still in process. This will eventually enable a self-
234 consistent and ever-growing chemical knowledge graph based on ontologies
235 and automated by web agents.

236 4. Summary and Outlook

237 In this review, we have discussed how the rapidly increasing amount of
238 chemical information available to researchers has necessitated the develop-
239 ment of automated methods to query, store, and share this information for a
240 variety of applications. We have discussed some of the main databases and
241 the usage of ontologies in the chemistry domain. Moving forward, it is hoped
242 that more tools will be developed to provide more intelligent ways to create,
243 update, retrieve, and maintain distributed chemical information via the Web.
244 It is also necessary to develop tools to support more advanced community in-
245 volvement, bridging data silos, and identifying "best" data for the solution of
246 a particular problem. Eventually, the chemical knowledge graph will be fully
247 automated and self-improving to provide, for example, new synthesis routes
248 and more reliable chemical models built on the experimental and chemical
249 data provided in the variety of databases online.

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