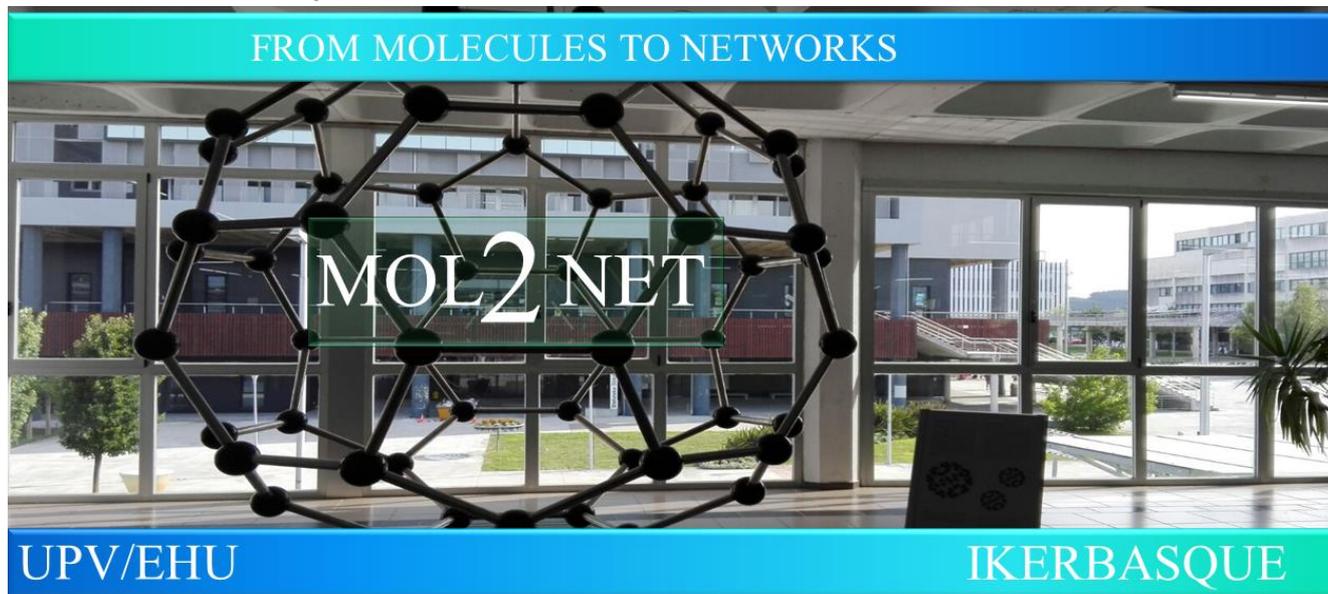


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Software Resources for Developing Multicriteria Applications: A Review, Part 1: Introduction and types of software resources developed

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Abstract.

In the last years, some Software Resources for Developing Multicriteria Applications (SRDMA) have been developed. The purpose of this review is to determine the state of the art on SRDMA to obtain a catalog of what has been developed which include libraries, frameworks, webservices and others. For this, it was performed a web search of research published in the last 10 years.

We have published this review in three different parts and presented them on three different congresses of Mol2Net series according to the topic. The publications and software found were classified into 3 different categories. Part 1: types of software resources developed (NIECXSM), Part 2: multicriteria methods implemented (USEDAT-08) and operating systems supported (CATCHTOHIT-03).

To analyze them we carry out a Contextual and a Formal Concept Analysis. Findings suggest that the type of software

resources most developed was frameworks. Thus, we consider that future research should contemplate the development of more generic SRDMA which are available to developers through flexible licenses that allow them to be easily integrated into new application developments.

Introduction

Multicriteria Decision Making (MCDM) is one of the most popular decision-making tools utilized in various fields and involves the analysis of various available choices in a situation (Ozsahin et al., 2021). There are a lot of methods available for solving MCDM problems, many of them implemented by computer systems.

A software resource is a cohesive collection of artifacts that solve a specific problem in the software development lifecycle. It may be any work-products or software related activities (Zhao et al., 2010) .

The goal of this work is to perform a literature review of researches dealing with Software Resources for Developing Multicriteria Applications (SRDMA) based on the guidelines proposed by (B. A. Kitchenham et al., 2015). It focused specifically on resources associated with application programming like libraries, frameworks, webservice, and so on. The review provides an inventory of resources developed between 2012 to 2022 (until April 2022) in the context of SRDMA.

Materials and Methods

To carry out this review, the structured method was implemented following the guidelines provided by (B. A. Kitchenham et al., 2015) in five phases: research questions, search process, study selection, data extraction and data synthesis.

Research questions

Research questions guide the review process (B. Kitchenham & Charters, 2007) . Its establishment will allow us to guide the investigation and to learn more about the topics that interest us about the SRDMA developed in recent years. Derived from the objective of this study, three research questions were formulated:

1. RQ-1: What types of software resources have been developed to help build multicriteria applications? Identify the types of resources developed for this purpose such as libraries, web services, frameworks and so on
2. RQ-2: What development tool was used to build the software? Identify the development tool used to build the software resource as C/C++, Java, Excel, MatLab and so on.
3. RQ-3: What type of licensing use the software resources developed to help build multicriteria applications? To know the type of license used by developed software resources such as public domain, copyleft, noncommercial and so on.

Search process

The search process was carried out using a web search restricted to journals, books, book chapters or conference proceedings that were peer reviewed. Also we searched in websites of research

organizations and trusted companies that offer this type of software resources. The search was made using the following string: “multicriteria” (“mcdm” OR “madm” OR “modm”) AND “software resource” (“software library” OR “software framework” OR “software webservice” OR “software sdk” OR “software api” OR “software toolkit”).

The sources for data collection included Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, ACM Digital Library, IEEE and Software resources available on the Web (Decision Deck Consortium, 2022; Gunther et al., 2015; Hämäläinen, 2013; Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2014) .

Study selection

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined according to the research questions. It was used to evaluate the retrieved data, analyze and interpret the literature to carry out the selection of primary studies and the software.

- Inclusion criteria: IC1: Published or released between 2012 and 2022; IC2: Analyze, discuss or presents any software development resource for developing multicriteria applications; IC3: Answer at least one research question.
- Exclusion Criteria: EC1: Earlier version of more recent work; EC2: Duplicate studies or software; EC3: Does not focus on software resources for developing multicriteria applications.

Data extraction

The procedure for data extraction of each study consisted of extracting the data general information of each study and information that helps answer the research questions.

Data synthesis

To analyze the software resources features it was employed a basic contextual analysis and a Formal Concept Analysis (FCA) (Wille, 2005) which is used for the analysis of data structured into units with formal abstractions of concepts, allowing meaningful comprehensible interpretation.

Conduction

After bringing together the results of the automated search only relevant works containing search string were considered. This yielded to a total of 189 relevant papers or software. By applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, at the end of search process it was reduced to a final set of 63 papers or software.

Results and Discussion

Contextual and FCA results are presented below.

Contextual Results

RQ-1: What types of software resources have been developed to help build multicriteria applications?

Figure 1 show types of software resources that have been developed to help build multicriteria applications. Here we see that frameworks dominate, followed in second place but far behind by algorithms and applications.

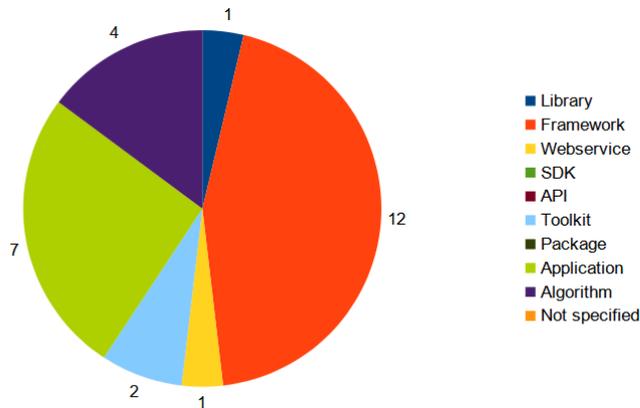


Figure 1: Types of software resources

RQ-2: What development tool was used to build the software?

Figure 2 show development tool used to build the software resource. Few works provide information on the development tools used to build them. Among those that do, we see that they are more or less evenly distributed among various programming languages and applications, with the Java language standing out a bit.

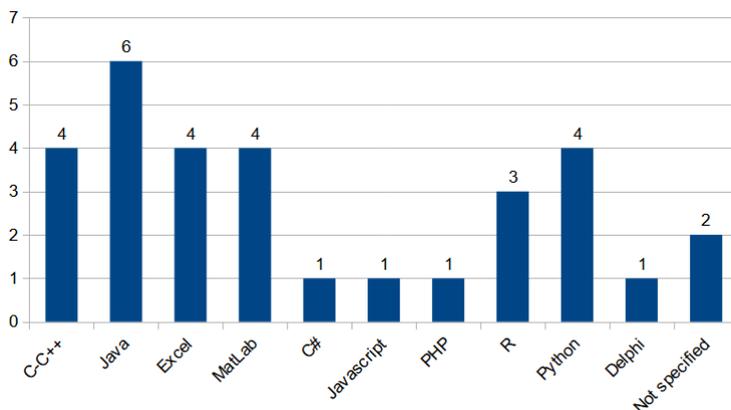


Figure 2: Development tools

RQ-3: What type of licensing use the software resources developed to help build multicriteria applications?

Figure 3 show what are the type of licensing of the software resources. Only a very small number of reported resources provide any kind of licensing information. Of this group, most of those who do can be considered free.

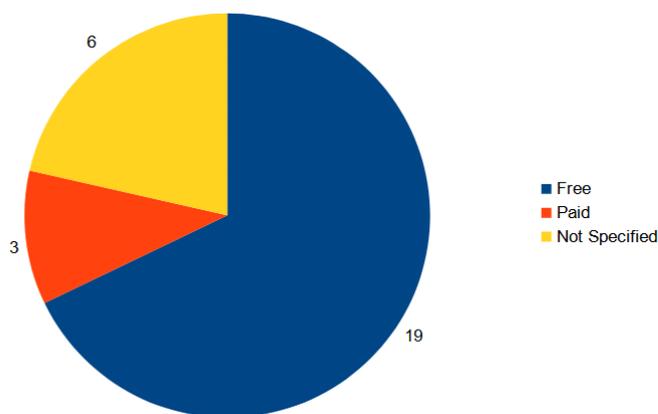


Figure 3: Licensing

Formal Concept Analysis Results

To analyze in greater depth the papers we use Formal Concept Analysis (FCA) (Wille, 2005) which allows to group the papers into a lattice along with the different features that are addressed to visualize the commonality of particular SRDMA attributes and the level to which papers address the same or different SRDMA attributes. The analysis was done with the software Lattice Miner Platform 2.0 from the University of Quebec (Laboratoire LARIM, 2017).

In previous sections it showed that the most type of software resource developed were frameworks, applications and algorithms. So, these elements are used as a base in FCA analysis to identify relationships that are not easily noticeable at first glance.

Lattice 1 Type of software resource and development tool.

Lattice in figure 4 shows that 5 resources were developed in Java, 4 in Excel, 4 in Matlab and 4 in Python. The rest use different development tools.

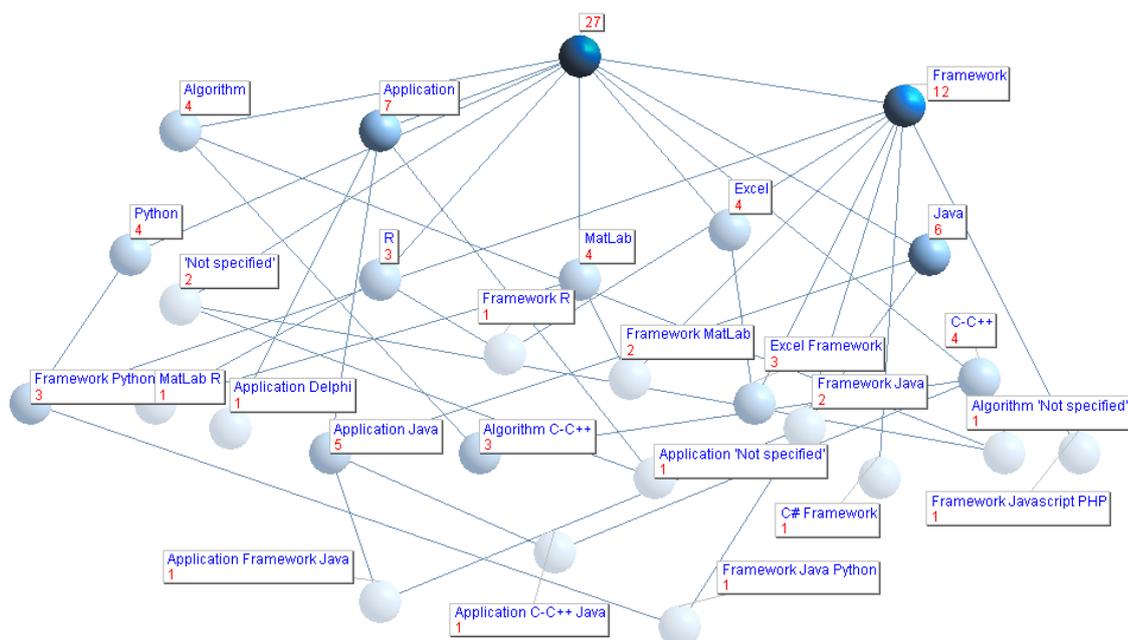


Figure 4: Type of software resource and development tool

Lattice 2: Type of software resource and licensing.

Lattice in figure 5 shows that 5 applications are free, 1 framework is free, and 1 application has both types of licenses. The rest do not report licensing information.

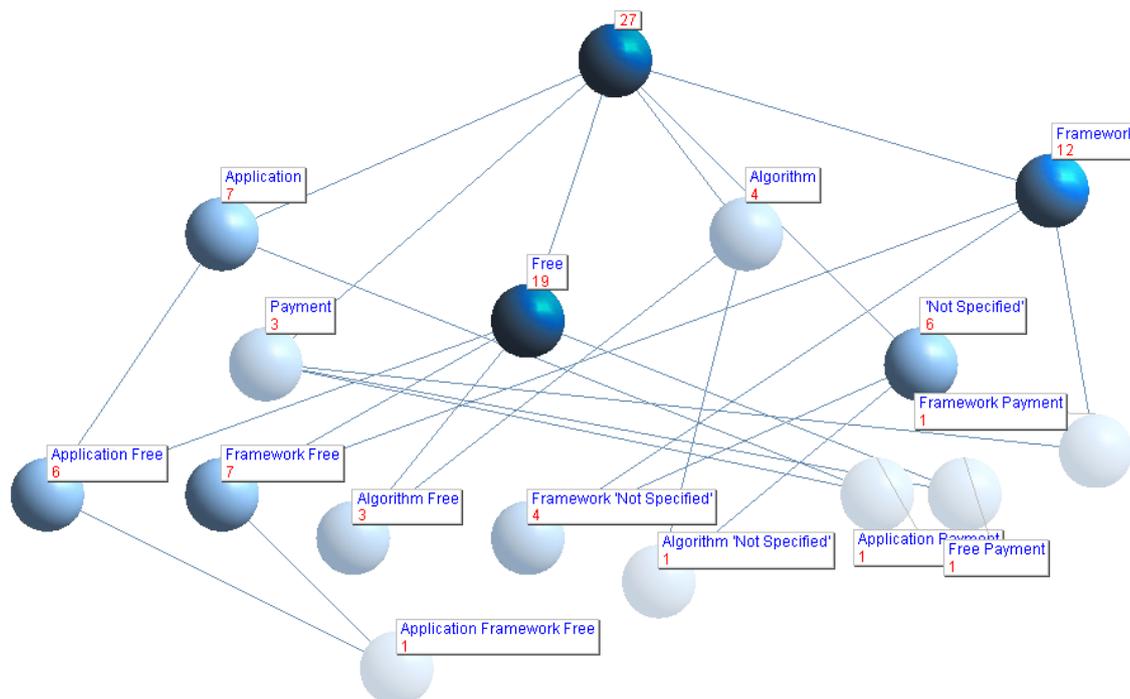


Figure 5: Type of software resource and licensing

Conclusions

The objective of this review was to assess the state of art in the SRDMA area. It was found that related to the types of software resources available, frameworks are the most developed with 12, followed by applications with 7 and algorithms with 4. There is little information about software development tools used to build it and here Java stands out with 5. Very few software resources report anything about licensing or available source code. Only 13 software has licensing information and the same number indicate whether their source code is available. This provides indications that this field of research presents areas of opportunity in which it needs to gain more maturity. We suggest further research should explore the development of generic software resources that can be integrated into new multicriteria software under development such as libraries, webservice, APIs or toolkits which have been little explored.

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