Chapter 8: Symmetry Breaking (Balanced Incomplete Block Designs)

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ECLiPSe ELearning Overview

Licence

Outline

What we want to introduce

- BIBD - Balanced Incomplete Block Designs
- Using lex constraints to remove symmetries
- Only one of many ways to deal with symmetry in problems
- Finding all solutions to a problem
- Using timeout to limit search

Problem Definition

BIBD (Balanced Incomplete Block Design)

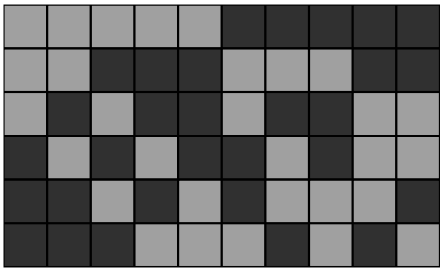
A BIBD is defined as an arrangement of v distinct objects into b blocks such that each block contains exactly k distinct objects, each object occurs in exactly r different blocks, and every two distinct objects occur together in exactly λ blocks. A BIBD is therefore specified by its parameters (v, b, r, k, λ).

Motivation: Test Planning

Consider a new release of some software with *v* new features. You want to regression test the software against combinations of the new features. Testing each subset of features is too expensive, so you want to run *b* tests, each using *k* features. Each feature should be used *r* times in the tests. Each pair of features should be tested together exactly λ times. How do you arrange the tests?

Model

Another way of defining a BIBD is in terms of its incidence matrix, which is a binary matrix with v rows, b columns, r ones per row, k ones per column, and scalar product λ between any pair of distinct rows.



A (6,10,5,3,2) BIBD

Model for (v, b, r, k, λ) BIBD

- A binary $v \times b$ matrix. Entry V_{ij} states if item i is in block j.
- Sum constraints over rows, each sum equal r
- Sum constraints over columns, each sum equal k
- Scalar product between any pair of rows, the product value is λ.

Top Level Program

```
:-module(bibd).
:-export(top/0).
:-lib(ic).
:-lib(ic_global).

top:-
    bibd(6,10,5,3,2,Matrix),writeln(Matrix).

bibd(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix):-
    model(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix),⇨ Set up model
    extract_array(row,Matrix,List),⇨ Get list
    search(L,0,input_order,indomain,
           complete,[]).⇨ Search
```


Constraint Model

```
model(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix,Method):-
    dim(Matrix,[V,B]),⇨ Define Binary Matrix
    Matrix[1..V,1..B] :: 0..1,
    (for(I,1,V), param(Matrix,B,R) do
        sumlist(Matrix[I,1..B],R)
    ),⇨ Row Sum = R
    (for(J,1,B), param(Matrix,V,K) do
        sumlist(Matrix[1..V,J],K)
    ),⇨ Column Sum = K
    (for(I,1,V-1), param(Matrix,V,B,L) do
        (for(I1,I+1,V), param(Matrix,I,B,L) do
            scalar_product(Matrix[I,1..B],
                           Matrix[I1,1..B],L)
        )
    ).⇨ Scalar product between all rows
```

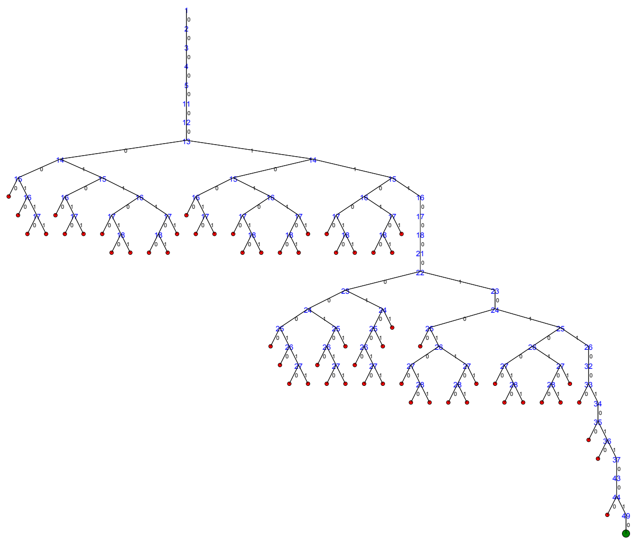
scalar_product

```
scalar_product(XVector,YVector,V):-
    collection_to_list(XVector,XList),
    collection_to_list(YVector,YList),➪ Get lists
    (foreach(X,XList),➪ Iterate over lists
     foreach(Y,YList),➪ ...in parallel
     fromto(0,A,A1,Term) do ➪ Build term
        A1 = A+X*Y➪ Construct term
    ),
    eval(Term) #= V.➪ State Constraint
```


Search Routine

- Static variable order
- First fail does not work for binary variables
- Enumerate variables by row
- Use utility predicate `extract_array/3`
- Assign with `indomain`, try value 0, then value 1
- Use simple `search` call

Basic Model - First Solution



Finding all solutions - Hack!

```
:-module(bibd).
:-export(top/0).
:-lib(ic).
:-lib(ic_global).

top:-
    bibd(6,10,5,3,2,Matrix),writeln(Matrix),
    fail.⇨ Force Backtracking

bibd(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix):-
    model(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix),
    extract_array(row,Matrix,List),
    search(L,0,input_order,indomain,
           complete,[]).
```

Finding all solutions - Proper

```
:-module(bibd).
:-export(top/0).
:-lib(ic).
:-lib(ic_global).

top:-
    findall(Matrix,bibd(6,10,5,3,2,Matrix),Sols),
    writeln(Sols).

bibd(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix):-
    model(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix),
    extract_array(row,Matrix,List),
    search(L,0,input_order,indomain,
           complete,[]).
```


`findall` predicate

- `findall(Template,Goal,Collection)`
- Finds all solutions to `Goal` and collects them into a list `Collection`
- `Template` is used to extract arguments from `Goal` to store as solution
- Backtracks through all choices in `Goal`
- Solutions are returned in order in which they are found

Problem

- Program now only stops when it has found all solutions
- This takes too long!
- How can we limit the amount of time to wait?
- Use of the `timeout` library

Finding all solutions - Proper

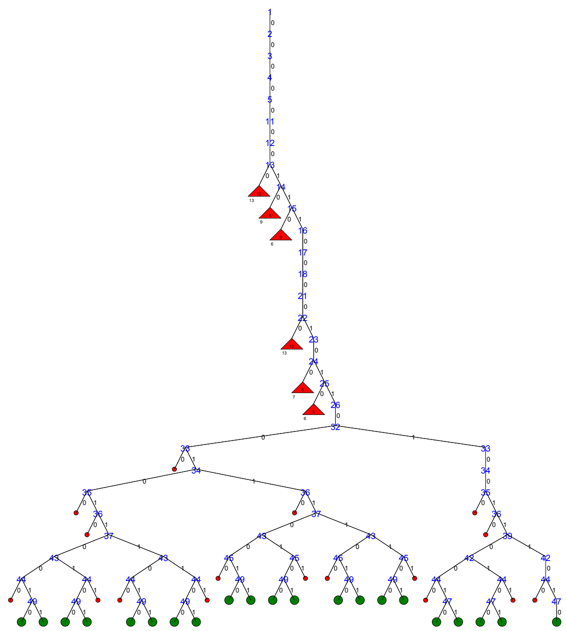
```
:-module(bibd).
:-export(top/0).
:-lib(ic).
:-lib(ic_global).
:-lib(timeout).⇨ Load library

top:-
    findall(Matrix,timeout(bibd(6,10,5,3,2,Matrix),
                           10,⇨ seconds
                           fail),Sols),
    writeln(Sols).
```

`timeout` library

- `timeout(Goal,Limit,TimeoutGoal)`
- Runs `Goal` for `Limit` seconds
- If `Limit` is reached, `Goal` is stopped and `TimeoutGoal` is run instead
- If `Limit` is not reached, it has no impact
- Must load `:-lib(timeout).`

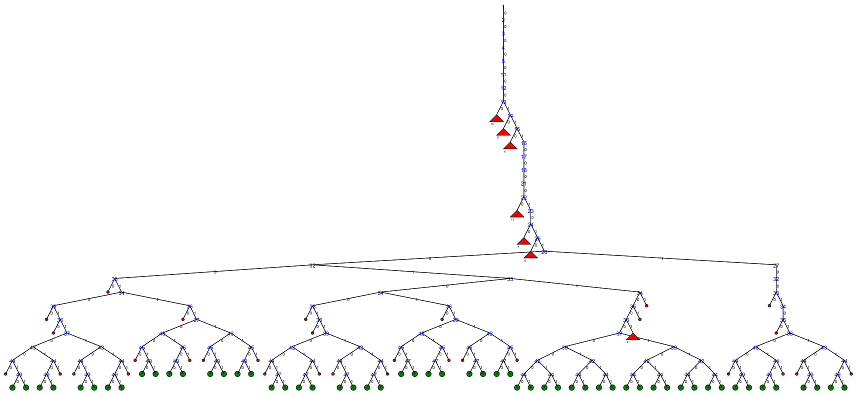
Finding all Solutions - Search Tree 200 Nodes



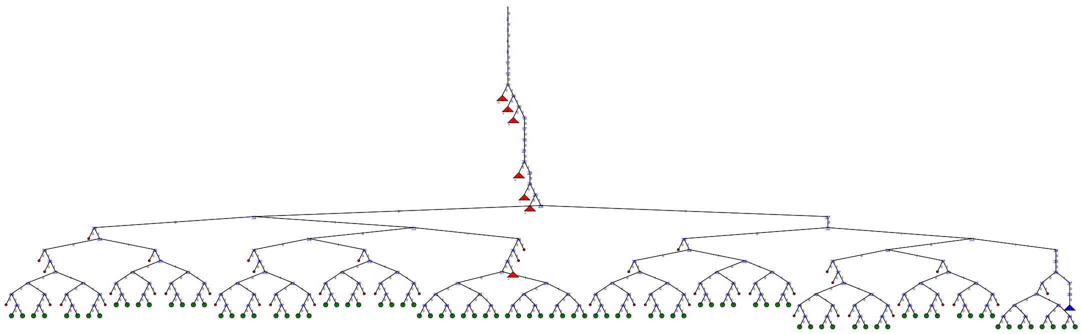
Observation

- Surprise! There are many solutions

Search Tree 300 Nodes



Search Tree 400 Nodes



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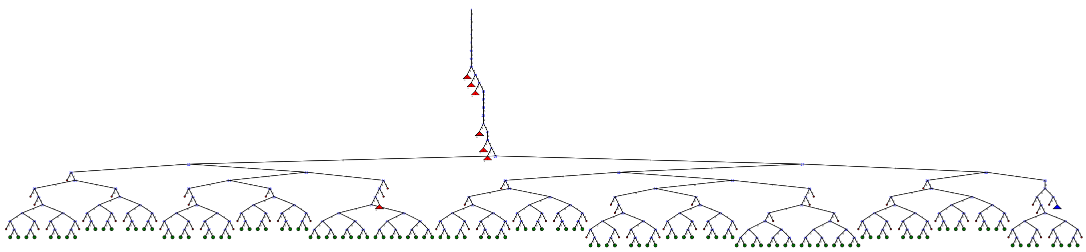
Search Tree 500 Nodes



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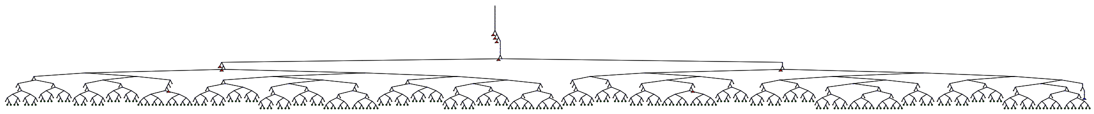
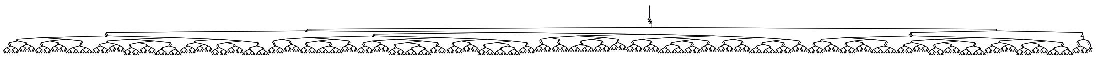
Search Tree 1000 Nodes



Search Tree 2000 Nodes



Problem

- There are too many solutions to collect in a reasonable time
- Most of these solutions are very similar
- If you take one solution and
  - exchange two rows
  - and/or exchange two columns
- ... you have another solution
- Can we avoid exploring them all?

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Symmetry Breaking Techniques

- Remove all symmetries
  - Reduce the search tree as much as possible
  - May be hard to describe all symmetries
  - May be expensive to remove symmetric parts of tree
- Remove some symmetries
  - Search is not reduced as much
  - May be easier to find some symmetries to remove
  - Cost can be low

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Symmetry Breaking Techniques

- Symmetry removal by forcing partial, initial assignment
  - Easy to understand
  - Rather weak, does not affect search
- Symmetry removal by stating constraints
  - Removing all symmetries may require exponential number of constraints
  - Can conflict with search strategies
- Symmetry removal by controling search
  - At each node, decide if it needs to be explored
  - Can be expensive to check

Solution used here: Double Lex

- Partial symmetry removal by adding lexicographical ordering constraints
- Our problem has full row and column symmetries
- Any permutation of rows adn/or columns leads to another solution
- Idea: Order rows lexicographically
- Rows must be different from each other, strict order on rows
- Columns might be identical, non strict order on columns
  - This can be improved in some cases
- Constraints only between adjacent rows(columns)

Added Constraints

```
dim(Matrix,[V,B]),
(for(I,1,V-1),
 param(Matrix,B) do
    I1 is I+1,
    lex_less(Matrix[I1,1..B],Matrix[I,1..B])
 ),➪ Row lex constraints
 (for(J,1,B-1),
  param(Matrix,V) do
     J1 is J+1,
     lex_leq(Matrix[1..V,J1],Matrix[1..V,J])
  ),➪ Column lex constraints
```


Using Two Global Constraints

- `lex_leq(List1,List2)`
  - `List1` is lexicographical smaller than or equal to `List2`
  - Achieves domain consistency
- `lex_less(List1,List2)`
  - `List1` is lexicographical smaller than `List2`
  - Achieves domain consistency

Example propagation `lex_less`

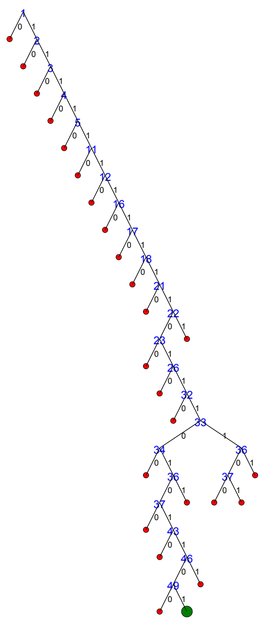
Before

[	2,	X2 $\in \{1,3,4\}$,	X3 $\in \{1,2,3\}$,	X4 $\in \{1,2\}$,	X5 $\in \{3,4\}$],
[	Y1 $\in \{0,1,2\}$,	1,	Y3 $\in \{0,1,2,3\}$,	Y4 $\in \{0,1\}$,	Y5 $\in \{0,1\}$]

After

[	2,	1,	X3 $\in \{1,2\}$,	X4 $\in \{1,2\}$,	X5 $\in \{3,4\}$],
[	2,	1,	Y3 $\in \{2,3\}$,	Y4 $\in \{0,1\}$,	Y5 $\in \{0,1\}$]

Complete Search Tree with Double Lex



Observation

- Enormous reduction in search space
- We are solving a different problem!
- Not just good for finding all solutions, also for first solution!
- Value choice not optimal for finding first solution
- There is a lot of very shallow backtracking, can we avoid that?

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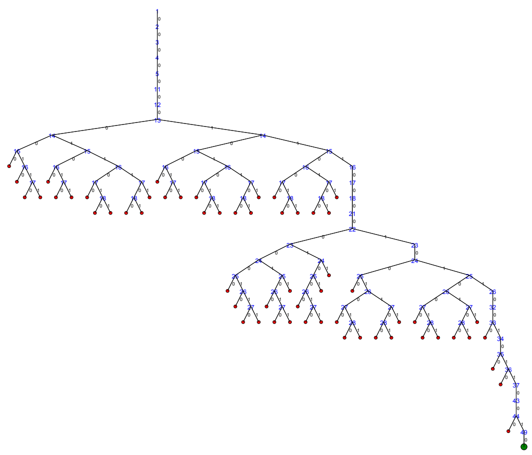
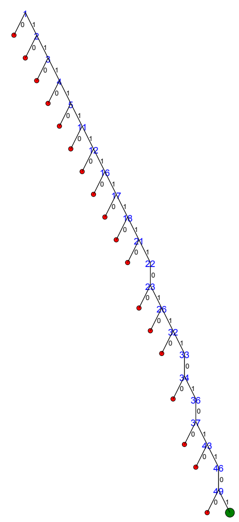
Effort for First Solution

Basic Model



With double Lex



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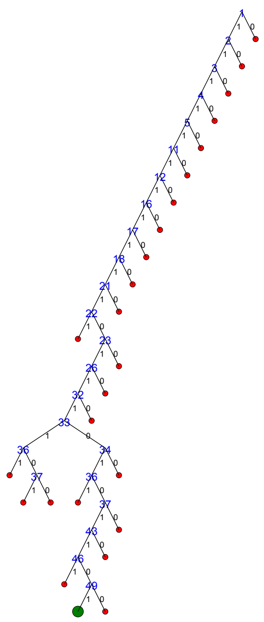
Alternative Value Order

```
:-module(bibd).
:-export(top/0).
:-lib(ic).
:-lib(ic_global).

top:-
    bibd(6,10,5,3,2,Matrix),writeln(Matrix).

bibd(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix):-
    model(V,B,R,K,L,Matrix),
    extract_array(row,Matrix,List),
    search(L,0,input_order,
           indomain_max,⇨ Start with 1
           complete,[]).
```


Assigning Value 1 First



Observation

- First solution is found more quickly
- Size of tree for all solutions unchanged
- Value order does not really affect search space when exploring all choices!

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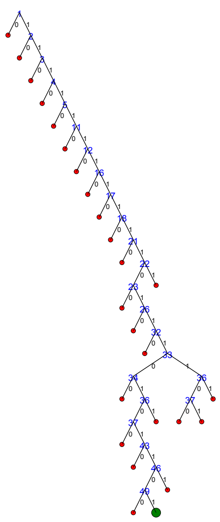
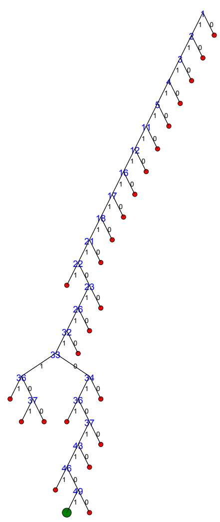
Effort for All Solutions

Assign 0, then 1



Assign 1, then 0



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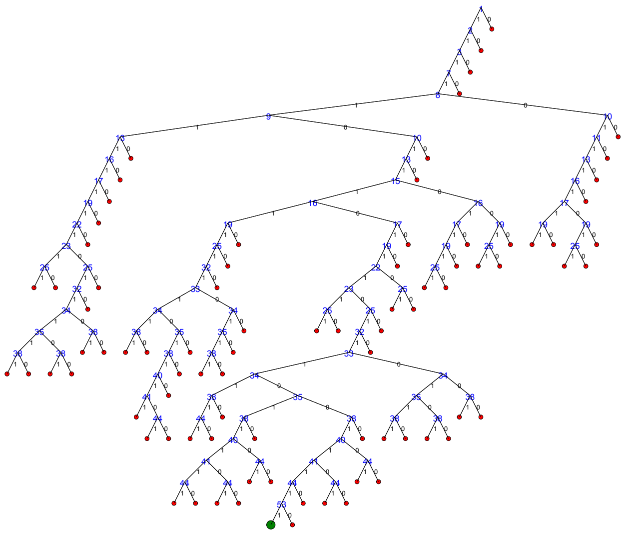
Conclusions

- Symmetry breaking can have huge impact on model
- Mainly works for pure problems
- Partial symmetry breaking with additional constraints
- Double lex for row/column symmetries
- Only one variant of many symmetry breaking techniques

Row- or Column- wise Assignment?

- We did assign matrix by row, why?
- What happens if we assign variables by column?

Variable Selection by Column

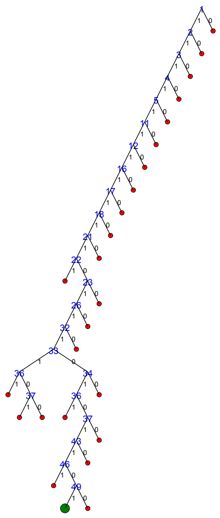


Observation

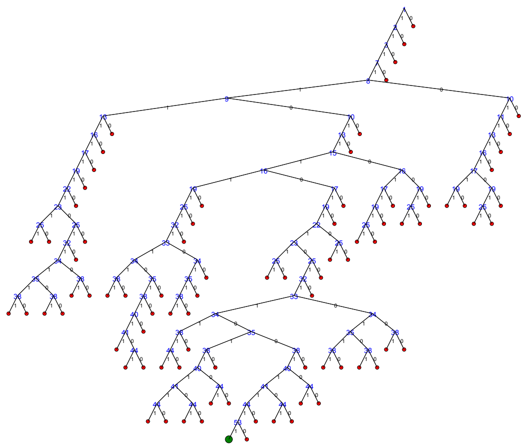
- Good, but not as good as row order
- Value choice (0/1) or (1/0) unimportant even for first solution
- Changing the variable selection does affect size of search space, even for all solutions

Effort for All Solutions

By Row



By Column



Possible Explanations

- There are fewer rows than columns
- Strict lex constraints on rows, but not on columns
    - More impact of first row
- Needs better understanding

Does this scale?

v	b	r	k	λ	asym	lex^2	STAB	lex^2 + SBNO
9	24	8	3	2	36	5,987	344	311
16	16	6	6	2	3	46	3	7
15	21	7	5	2	0	0	0	0
13	26	6	3	1	2	12,800	21	101
7	35	15	3	5	109	33,304	542	282
15	15	7	7	3	5	118	19	19
21	21	5	5	1	1	12	1	1
25	30	6	5	1	1	864	1	5
10	18	9	5	4	21	8,031	302	139
7	42	18	3	6	418	250,878	2,334	1,247
22	22	7	7	2	0	0	0	0
7	49	21	3	7	1,508	1,460,332	8,821	4,353
8	28	14	4	6	2,310	2,058,523	17,890	11,424
19	19	9	9	4	6	6,520	71	17
10	30	9	3	2	960	724,662	24,563	15,169
31	31	6	6	1	1	864	1	2
7	56	24	3	8	5,413	6,941,124	32,038	14,428
9	36	12	3	3	22,521	14,843,772	315,531	85,605
7	63	27	3	9	?	28,079,394	105,955	43,259
15	35	7	3	1	80	32,127,296	6,782	35,183
21	28	8	6	2	0	0	0	0
13	26	8	4	2	2461	3,664,243	83,337	31,323
11	22	10	5	4	4393	6,143,408	106,522	32,908
12	22	11	6	5	?	?	228,146	76,572
25	25	9	9	3	?	?	17,016	1,355
16	24	9	6	3	?	?	769,482	76,860

Scalability

- lex^2 good, but not good enough
- Still leaves too many symmetries to explore
- Better techniques in the literature
  - STAB, group theory based, Puget 2003.
  - SBNO, local search based domination check, Prestwich, 2008.

Do we need binary variables?

- The 0/1 model does very little propagation
- Consider a model with finite domain variables
- Each of b blocks consists of k variables ranging over v values
- The values in a block must be alldifferent (ordered)
- Each value can occur r times
- Scalar product more difficult
- Even better expressed with finite set variables

More Information

I. Gent, K. Petrie, and J.F. Puget.
Symmetry in constraint programming.
In F. Rossi, P. van Beek, and T. Walsh, editors, *Handbook of Constraint Programming*, chapter 10. Elsevier, 2006.

Jean-Francois Puget.
Symmetry breaking using stabilizers.
In Francesca Rossi, editor, *CP*, volume 2833 of *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, pages 585–599. Springer, 2003.

More Information

S. D. Prestwich , B. Hnich , R. Rossi, and S. A. Tarim.
Symmetry Breaking by Metaheuristic Search.
SymCon 2008 - The 8th International Workshop on Symmetry and Constraint Satisfaction Problems, Sydney, Australia, September, 2008.

Exercises

1