

12. The method of claim **11**, wherein the transformation metadata specifies one or more transformations for performing the merge operation.

13. The method of claim **7**, further comprising providing a mechanism for a user of the re-usable software component to further specify the capability metadata, the affinity metadata, the derivation metadata, the transformation metadata, and the capability metadata.

14. The method of claim **7**, further comprising providing a mechanism for a user of the re-usable software component to specify additional metadata for use in conjunction with the re-usable software component, the additional metadata indicating whether the one or more mechanisms for integrating the re-usable software component with one or more other software components were useful for an actual integration between the re-usable software component and the one or more other software components.

15. The method of claim **7**, further comprising providing a mechanism for a user of the re-usable software component to specify additional metadata for use in conjunction with the re-usable software component, the additional metadata identifying a popularity value for the re-usable software component.

16. A computer-readable medium having a data structure stored thereon, the data structure comprising:

- a first data field storing capability metadata for a re-usable software component, the capability metadata defining one or more capabilities of the re-usable software component;
- a second data field storing affinity metadata for the re-usable software component, the affinity metadata identifying

one or more data entities that the re-usable software component operates upon;

- a third data field storing derivation metadata for the re-usable software component, the derivation metadata indicating whether the one or more data entities may be inherited; and

- a fourth data field storing transformation metadata for the re-usable software component, the transformation metadata identifying one or more mechanisms for integrating the re-usable software component with one or more other software components.

17. The computer-readable medium of claim **16**, further comprising a fifth data field storing re-user metadata for the re-usable software component, the re-user metadata supplied by a user of the re-usable software component.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim **17**, wherein the transformation metadata comprises data identifying one or more transformations for integrating the re-usable software component and the one or more other software components.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim **18**, wherein the derivation metadata further indicates whether a merge operation is to be performed on the one or more data entities and an externally described data entity for one or more of the capabilities.

20. The computer-readable medium of claim **18**, wherein the derivation metadata further indicates whether a union operation is to be performed upon the one or more data entities and an externally described data entity for one or more of the capabilities.

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