

contained in the above description and shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

What is claimed is:

1. A computerized method of updating a software product, the method comprising:

defining the software product as a plurality of components;

accessing one of a plurality of instruction sets associated with a service package based on a lifecycle phase of the software product to be updated; and

modifying at least one of the components in the software product in accordance with the accessed instruction set.

2. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein modifying the component in the software product comprises removing one or more components from the software product.

3. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein modifying the component in the software product comprises adding one or more components to the software product.

4. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of instruction sets corresponds to at least one of the following lifecycle phases: predeployment of the software product, deployment of the software product, and post-deployment of the software product.

5. A method of updating a software product with a service package, said software product comprising a plurality of components, each of said components having a state associated therewith, said state representative of an operating context of the component, said service package comprising one or more files associated with a selected component, said service package further comprising a plurality of instruction sets for installing said files, said method comprising:

determining the state associated with the selected component;

selecting one of the instruction sets based on the determined state; and

applying one or more of the files to the selected component in accordance with the selected instruction set.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising defining the state associated with the selected component with a manifest associated therewith.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the components are stored on a computer-readable medium, and further comprising:

updating the manifest for the selected component with data related to applying the one or more of the files; and

storing the updated manifest for the selected component on the computer-readable medium.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein updating the manifest comprises updating the manifest for the selected component with at least one of the following: a version number, an update time, a description of the service package, and a description of the changes made to the component.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

receiving a request from a user for the data in the updated manifest for the selected component;

querying the updated manifest in response to the received request to generate query results; and

providing the query results to the user.

10. The method of claim 6, wherein the manifest defines at least one of the following: a lifecycle phase of the software product and a storage location of the component.

11. The method of claim 5, wherein the component is stored on a computer-readable medium, and wherein applying the one or more of the files comprises copying each of the files from the service package to the computer-readable medium and integrating the copied files with the component.

12. The method of claim 5, wherein the service package comprises one or more update components, each of said update components having an update manifest associated therewith, said update manifest comprising a plurality of instruction sets for installing the associated update component.

13. The method of claim 5, wherein each of the plurality of instruction sets corresponds to at least one of the following phases: predeployment of the software product, deployment of the software product, and post-deployment of the software product.

14. The method of claim 5, wherein the software product comprises at least one of an operating system and an application program.

15. The method of claim 5, wherein applying one or more of the files to the selected component comprises applying one or more of the binary files to the selected component.

16. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

receiving the service package, said service package comprising an updated component; and

resolving dependencies between the received, updated component and the selected component in the software product.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising receiving additional components identified during said resolving dependencies.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein resolving dependencies comprises accessing the selected instruction set to identify an additional component dependent on the updated component.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising obtaining the additional component, and wherein applying the one or more of the files comprises applying the updated component and the obtained, additional component to the software product.

20. The method of claim 5, wherein applying the one or more of the files comprises performing at least one of the following: a file action and a data action.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein performing the file action comprises at least one of the following: copying, deleting, and replacing the files.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein performing the data action comprises updating a system setting.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein updating the system setting comprises updating a registry entry.

24. One or more computer-readable media having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 5.

25. One or more computer-readable media having computer-executable modules for updating a software product with a service package, said software product comprising a plurality of components, each of said components having a