

version, the last version to write the file can be determined (see step 570 of FIG. 5). Based on that information, it can be determined that the CMYK color property value is outdated and that the RGB color property value should be loaded and converted to an updated CMYK color property value.

[0086] An object is a collection of properties. Accordingly, changes to an object in different versions of the application program can be reflected by changes in properties that correspond to the object. When the data file containing the object is loaded or saved, the steps of methods 700, 800, and 900 can be reiterated for individual properties of the object.

[0087] An embodiment of the present invention can be used as part of a document publishing system known as the Microsoft® Publisher, which is available from Microsoft® Corporation of Redmond, Wash. That publishing system can allow a user to edit documents and insert various objects containing graphics data, text data, spreadsheet data, or other kinds of data. In addition, that system can allow the user to modify the properties of the objects. The system can have a number of predefined object types that have predefined properties which are set to standard values (default values). Each object type can have a different set of properties and/or property values. Each object can be an instance of their object type. As such, the settings of an object in its original form can be readily obtainable. Although an embodiment is described with reference to a document publishing system, one skilled in the art will recognize that the techniques described herein can be applied to a virtually unlimited number of other types of systems.

[0088] The present invention can be used with computer hardware and software that performs the processing functions described above. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the systems, methods, and procedures described herein can be embodied in a programmable computer, computer executable software, or digital circuitry. The software can be stored on computer readable media. For example, computer readable media can include a floppy disk, RAM, ROM, hard disk, removable media, flash memory, memory stick, optical media, magneto-optical media, CD-ROM, etc. Digital circuitry can include integrated circuits, gate arrays, building block logic, field programmable gate arrays (FPGA), etc.

[0089] Although specific embodiments of the present invention have been described above in detail, the description is merely for purposes of illustration. Various modifications of, and equivalent steps corresponding to, the disclosed aspects of the exemplary embodiments, in addition to those described above, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention defined in the following claims, the scope of which is to be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass such modifications and equivalent structures.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for reading an original data file to be compatible with an active version and a later version of an application program, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a high version watermark in the original data file, the high version watermark indicating a highest version of the application program used to save the file;

comparing the high version watermark to the active version of the application program to determine whether the original data file corresponds to the later version of the application program; and

loading the original data file into the active version,

wherein, when said comparing step determines that the original data file corresponds to the later version, said loading step comprises the steps of:

ignoring unknown information in the original data file; and

loading known information from the original data file into the active version.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said original data file comprises an object property list.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein said object property list contains an object property list array.

4. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

tracking a position of objects in the object property list array; and

updating the object property list array based on the position of the objects tracked in said tracking step.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the unknown and known information each comprise a property of an object property list.

6. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of saving a modified version of the original data file, said saving step comprising the steps of:

overwriting the known information from the original data file with information from the modified version; and

retaining the unknown information from the original data file to keep the unknown information available to the later version.

7. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

providing a last version watermark in the original data file, the last version watermark indicating a last version of the application program used to save the file; and

determining characteristics of the original data file by comparing the last version watermark to the active version of the application program.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein, when said determining step determines that the last version watermark corresponds to a version of the application program that is previous to the active version, said method further comprises the step of converting information in the active version of the application program based on information in the original data file.

9. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

providing a low version watermark in the original data file, the low version watermark indicating a lowest version of the application program used to save the file;

determining characteristics of the original data file by comparing the low version watermark to the active version of the application program.