US 20050165865A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication

(10) Pub. No.: US 2005/0165865 A1

(43) Pub. Date: Jul. 28, 2005

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(54) METADATA JOURNAL FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

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(21) Appl. No.: 10/753,639

(22) Filed: Jan. 8, 2004

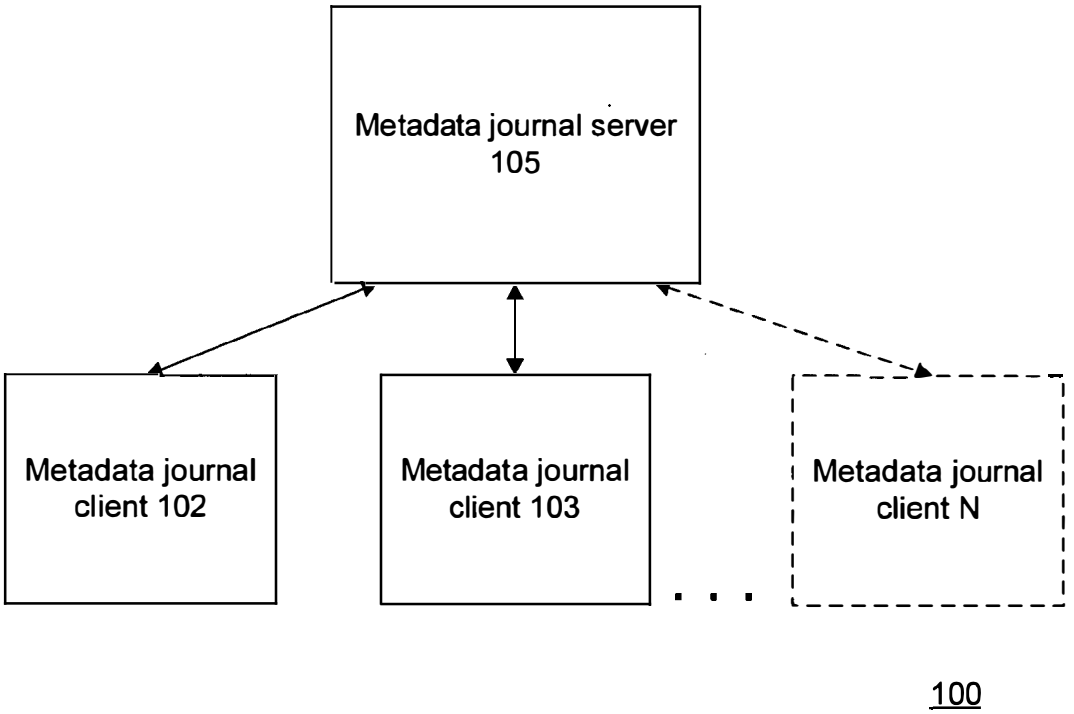
Publication Classification

(51) Int. Cl.[7] G06F 17/30

(52) U.S. Cl. 707/203

(57) ABSTRACT

The metadata journal service records changes to an information system through client devices that send changes made to objects for recording in a server. A client calls the server when a metadata event is raised. A metadata event may be raised when an object is modified, created, or deleted. The client sends the object identifier of object involved in the metadata event to the server, along with schema objects and operations associated with the object. The server generates a unique key for the metadata event, and stores the objects along with their associated schema objects and operations in the metadata journal. The journal may be searched and queried to provide metadata analysis, such as lineage or impact analysis for an object in the system.



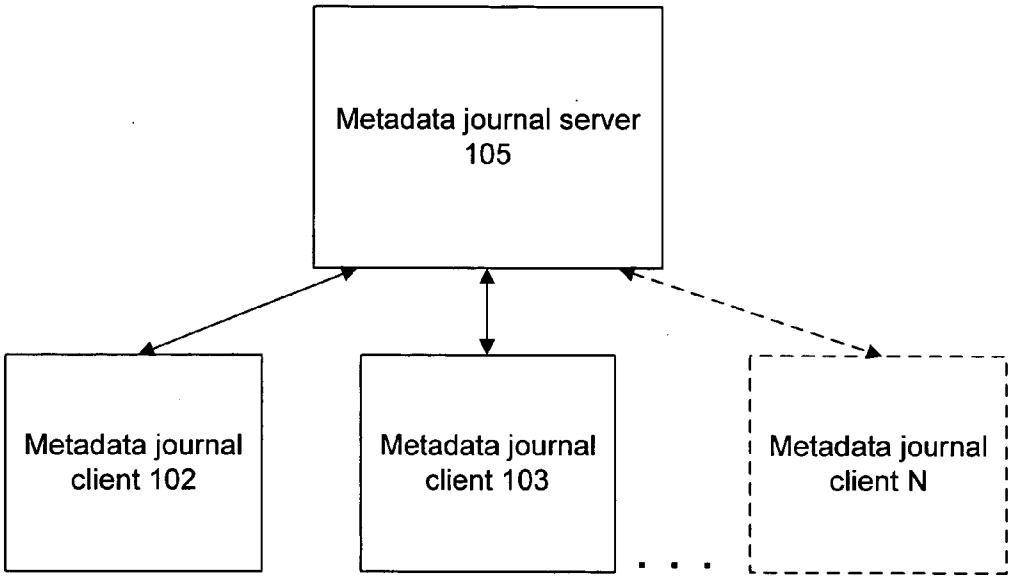

Metadata journal server
105
Metadata journal
client 102
Metadata journal
client 103
Metadata journal
client N

Fig. 1

100

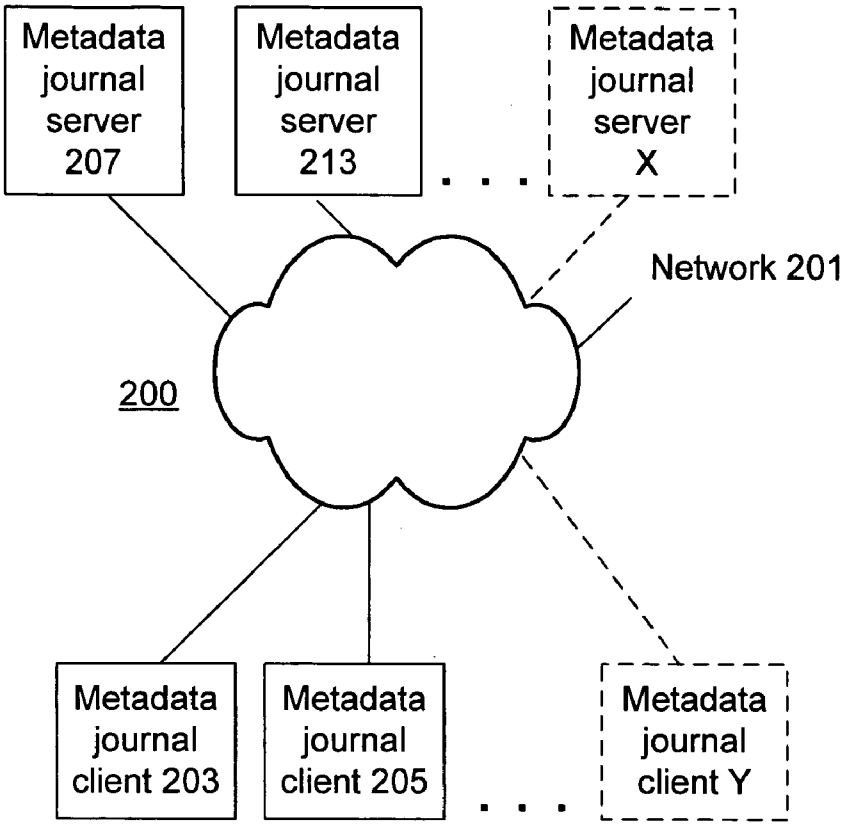
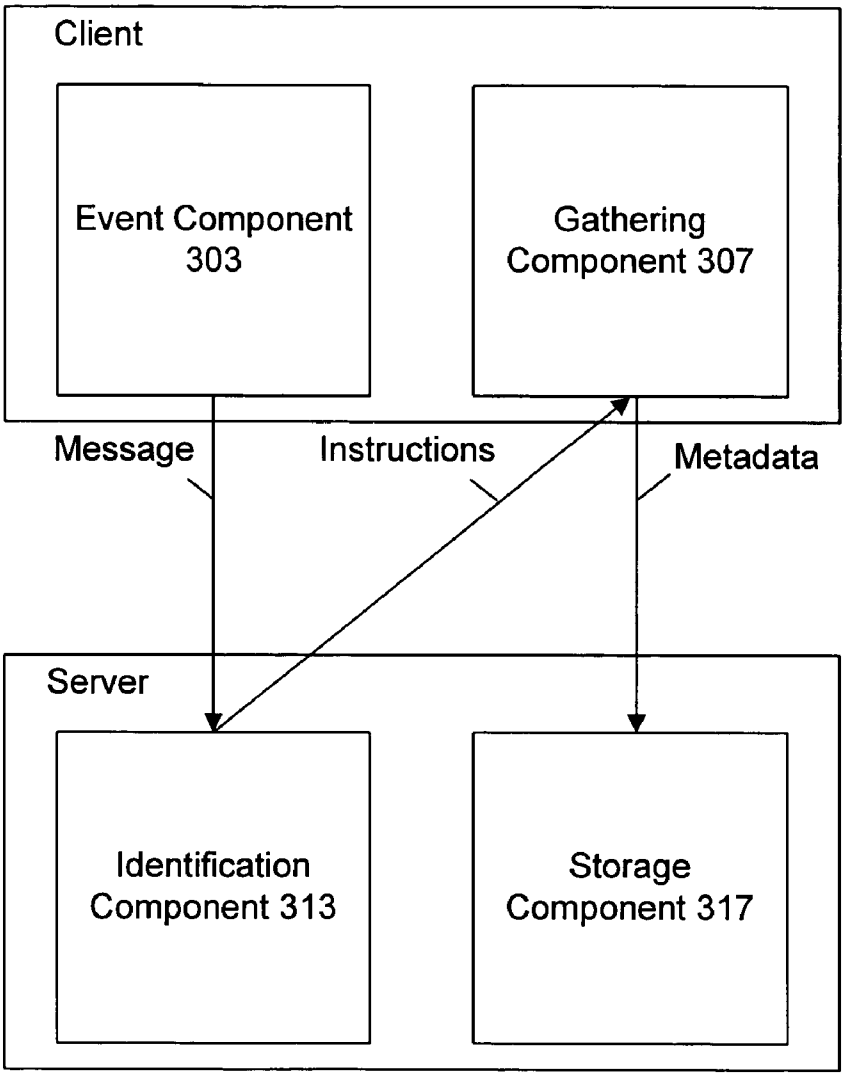
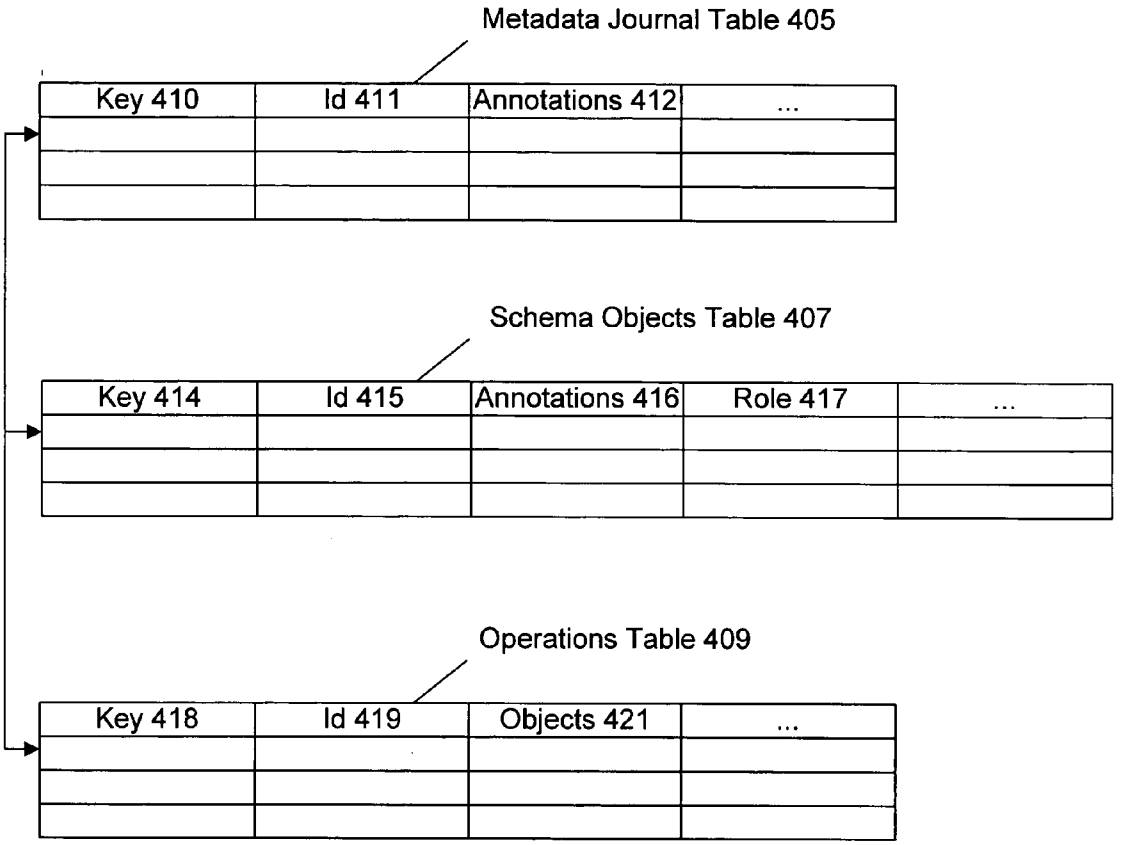

Metadata journal server 207
Metadata journal server 213
Metadata journal server X
Network 201
200
Metadata journal client 203
Metadata journal client 205
Metadata journal client Y

Fig. 2


Client
Event Component 303
Gathering Component 307
Message
Instructions
Metadata
Server
Identification Component 313
Storage Component 317

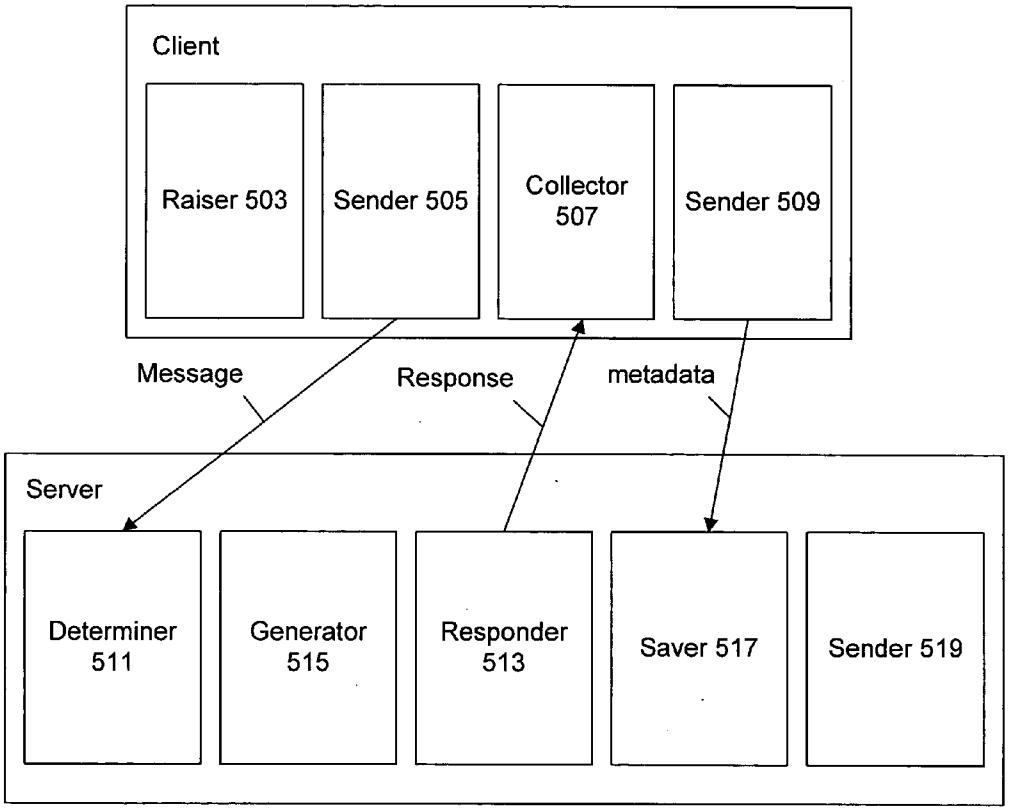
300

Fig. 3


Metadata Journal Table 405
Key 410
Id 411
Annotations 412
...
Schema Objects Table 407
Key 414
Id 415
Annotations 416
Role 417
...
Operations Table 409
Key 418
Id 419
Objects 421
...

400

Fig. 4


Client
Raiser 503
Sender 505
Collector 507
Sender 509
Message
Response
metadata
Server
Determiner 511
Generator 515
Responder 513
Saver 517
Sender 519

500

Fig. 5

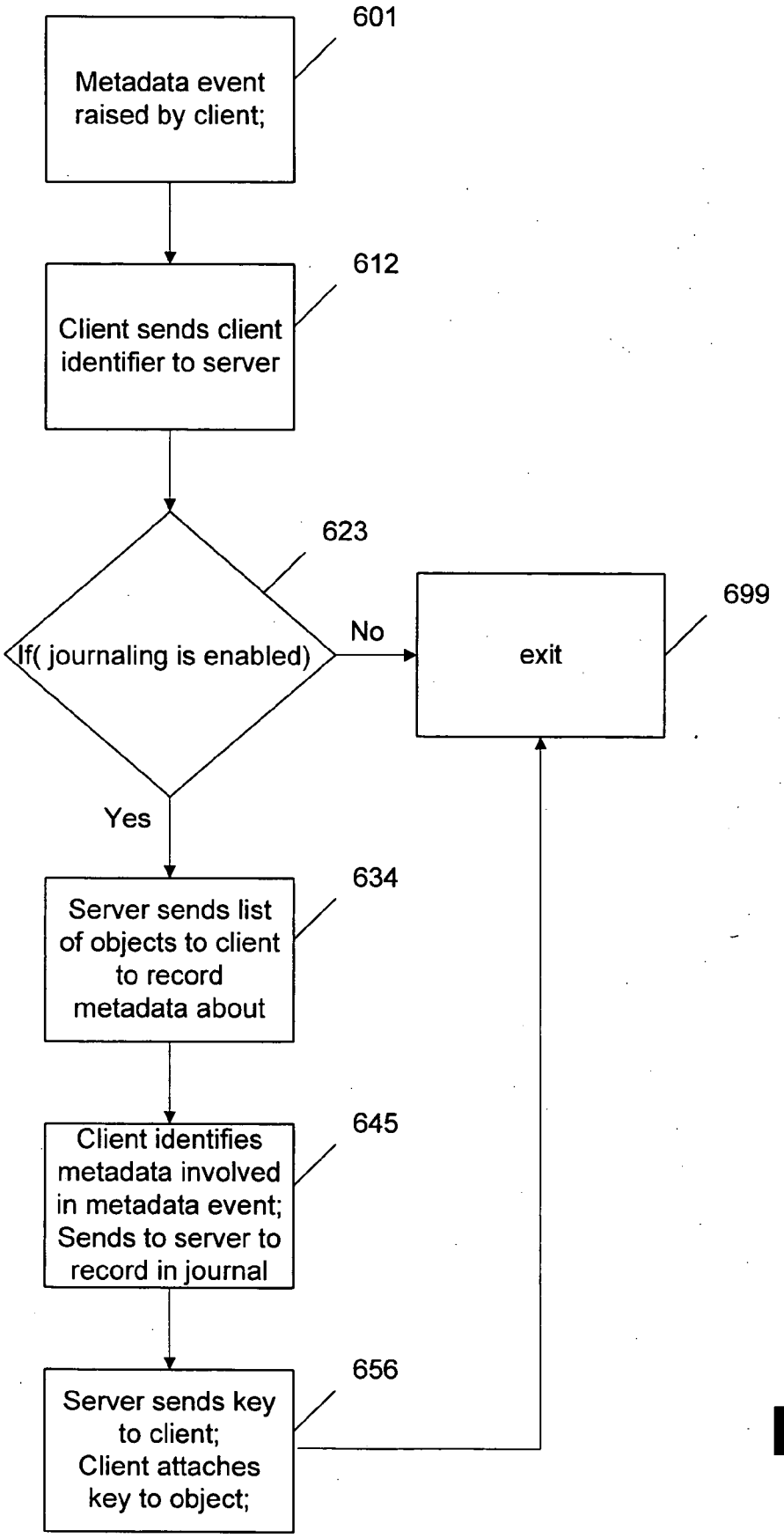

601
Metadata event raised by client;
612
Client sends client identifier to server
623
If(journaling is enabled)
No
699
exit
Yes
634
Server sends list of objects to client to record metadata about
645
Client identifies metadata involved in metadata event; Sends to server to record in journal
656
Server sends key to client; Client attaches key to object;

Fig. 6

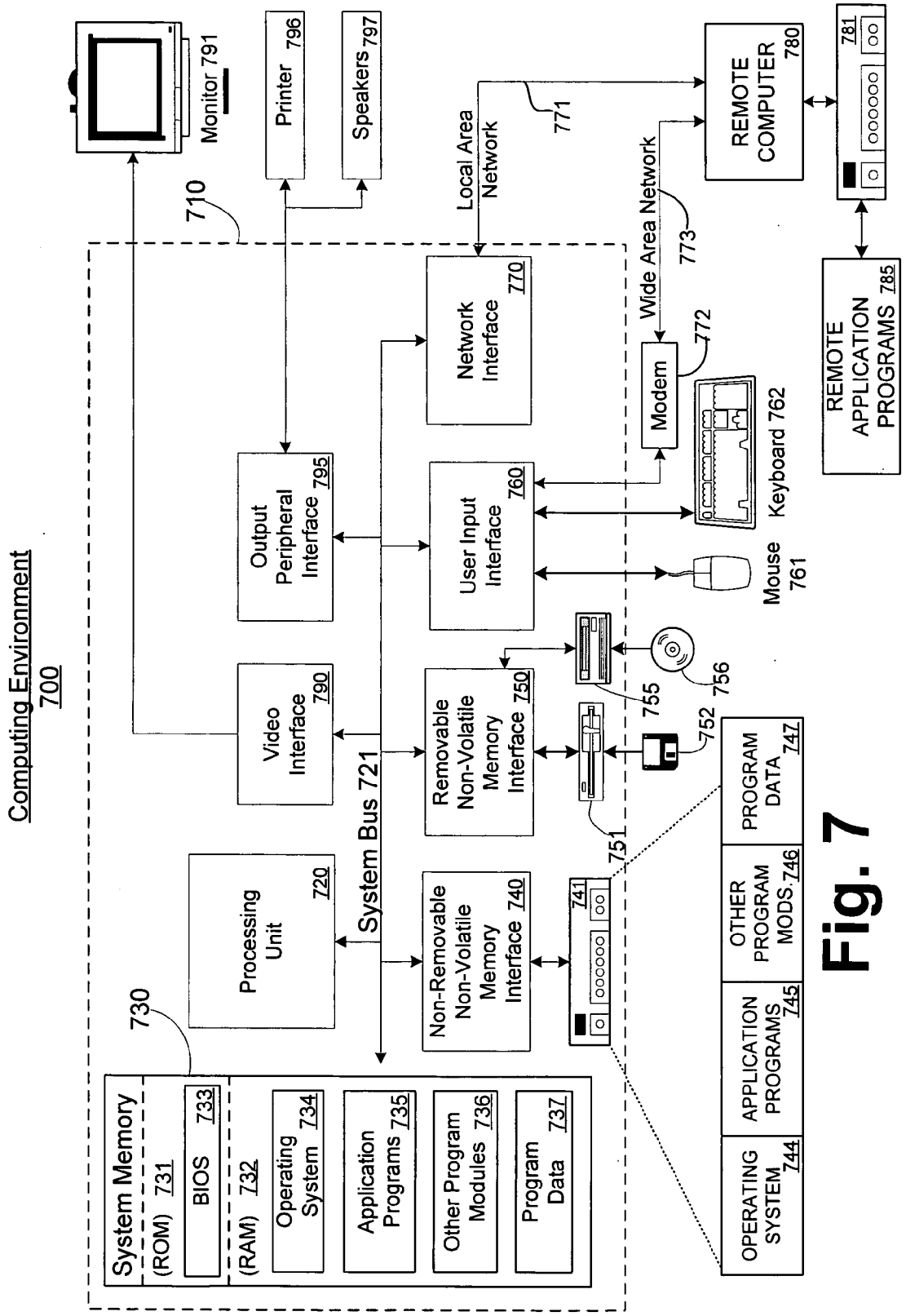

Computing Environment
700
710
Monitor 791
Printer 796
Speakers 797
Local Area Network
771
Wide Area Network
773
REMOTE COMPUTER
780
781
REMOTE APPLICATION PROGRAMS 785
Network Interface 770
Modem
772
Keyboard 762
Mouse 761
User Input Interface 760
Output Peripheral Interface 795
Video Interface 790
Removable Non-Volatile Memory Interface 750
755
756
752
751
System Bus 721
Processing Unit 720
Non-Removable Non-Volatile Memory Interface 740
741
PROGRAM DATA 747
OTHER PROGRAM MODS 746
APPLICATION PROGRAMS 745
OPERATING SYSTEM 744
730
System Memory
(ROM) 731
BIOS 733
(RAM) 732
Operating System 734
Application Programs 735
Other Program Modules 736
Program Data 737

Fig. 7

METADATA JOURNAL FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates in general to the field of metadata storage. More particularly, this invention relates to collection and storage of metadata in a computer system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Metadata can be defined as "data about data." It is essentially information which describes physical data structures, origins of data, and technical and business rules applied to data during various forms of transformation and movement, for example. A metadata journal provides a service for capturing and recording events which impact metadata and data in a warehouse.

[0003] Traditional approaches to metadata management have concentrated on metadata models stored in repositories. These repositories are abstract descriptions of a system which, when browsed or queried, can help the user in understanding the deployed system which it describes.

[0004] Metadata management systems built around metadata models and repositories have had a number of problems. In particular, the value of the system largely depends on the extent to which it really describes the deployed system. This can be affected by a number of factors including whether the model was created from the deployed system or vice versa, the detail the model captures about the deployed system, how changes in the deployed system are synchronized with the model, and how the relationship between the deployed system and the model is described and maintained.

[0005] In many systems, changes occur which are not captured in the repository, whether for technical or operational reasons. Every such change decreases the correspondence between the model and the deployed system and thus decreases the value of the metadata repository.

[0006] In view of the foregoing, there is a need for systems and methods that overcome the limitations of model based metadata solutions.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The following summary of the invention provides a basic understanding of some aspects of the present invention. This summary is not an extensive overview of the invention. It is not intended to identify critical elements of the invention or to delineate the scope of the invention. It is intended to present some concepts of the invention in a simplified form as a prelude to the more detailed description that is presented later.

[0008] The present invention is directed to a system and method for a metadata journal. Applications or clients are configured to raise a metadata event when certain user defined actions take place, such as modification, creation, or deletion of an object. An object can be a file, database, table, or any item in the system that may have metadata associated with it. After raising a metadata event, the client messages a metadata journal server to determine what metadata should be collected and regarding what objects it should collect metadata about. The metadata server determines if the client should record metadata, then returns to the client a list of the objects about which metadata should be recorded. The metadata client can then return the metadata corresponding to the metadata requested by the metadata server.

[0009] After receiving the requested metadata, the metadata server makes an entry in the metadata journal for the object(s) affected in the metadata event. This entry can include schema objects involved with the object, operations performed on the object and annotations associated with the object. This metadata journal can then be used to answer common metadata questions about the system, such as object lineage, execution auditing, impact analysis, and systems discovery, by traversing the journal entries for the object(s).

[0010] Additional features and advantages of the invention will be made apparent from the following detailed description of illustrative embodiments that proceeds with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of various embodiments, is better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there is shown in the drawings exemplary constructions of the invention; however, the invention is not limited to the specific methods and instrumentalities disclosed. In the drawings:

[0012] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram of exemplary metadata journal clients and server in accordance with the present invention;

[0013] **FIG. 2** is a block diagram of further exemplary metadata journal clients and servers in accordance with the present invention;

[0014] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of an exemplary metadata journal system in accordance with the present invention;

[0015] **FIG. 4** is a block diagram of exemplary metadata journal storage in accordance with the present invention;

[0016] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram of another exemplary metadata journal system in accordance with the present invention;

[0017] **FIG. 6** is a flow diagram of an exemplary method for entering metadata in a metadata journal in accordance with the present invention; and

[0018] **FIG. 7** is a block diagram showing an exemplary computing environment in which aspects of the invention may be implemented.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0019] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram of exemplary metadata journal clients and server **100** in accordance with the present invention. This exemplary embodiment includes metadata journal clients **102**, **103** and a metadata journal server **105**. Metadata journal clients **102**, **103** can raise metadata events and transmit data related to those events for storage by the metadata journal server **105**. Metadata journal clients **102**, **103** are provided for illustrative purposes only, and not

meant to limit the invention to only two metadata journal clients. There is no limitation to the number of metadata journal clients that can operate in accordance with the invention, as shown by metadata journal client N.

[0020] The metadata journal clients **102**, **103** can be used to raise metadata events, and call the metadata journal server **105** based on certain predefined events happening. Metadata journal clients can be applications or design tools, or may be a separate service independent of the applications monitoring for situations that can trigger a metadata event. The metadata journal clients **102**, **103** can communicate metadata events to a metadata journal server **105**. The metadata journal server **105** can comprise a server along with a storage device such as a database. The metadata journal **105** can request and store metadata associated with a metadata event from metadata journal clients **102**, **103**.

[0021] In order for the metadata journal clients **102**, **103** to know when to call the metadata journal **105**, they should know that the metadata journaling service is enabled. The metadata data journaling can be coded into the clients. This can require that a special version of a particular application be written to provide for metadata journaling. For example, a design tool/application can be written to call the journaling service when a table is modified or a report is generated.

[0022] Each of the metadata journal clients **102**, **103** can register with the metadata journal server **105**. Registration allows the metadata journal server **105** to assign each of the metadata journal client **102**, **103** a unique client identifier. This identifier can be determined by the metadata journal server **105**. Each of the journal clients **102**, **103** can also register the objects for which it can record metadata. The metadata journal server **105** can assign an object identifier for each object registered. The object identifier is desirably used by the metadata journal server **105** to refer to the objects in the metadata journal.

[0023] After registering with the metadata journal server **105**, the metadata journal clients **102**, **103** can call the metadata journal server **105** when a metadata event is raised. The metadata journal server **105** determines if it can accept metadata from the calling metadata journal client by examining the client identifier for that client. An administrator can have determined from which of the metadata journal clients **102**, **103** it desires to record metadata. In addition, the administrator can have determined that it desires only to collect metadata regarding certain objects. The administrator can configure the metadata journal server **105** to collect only metadata from certain clients and regarding certain objects.

[0024] The metadata journal server **105** can respond to the calling journal client telling the client if it can record metadata, what objects the client can collect metadata from, and at what level of specificity. It may be appreciated that controlling the detail and specificity of the metadata collected by the clients from the server allows an administrator to easily control and adjust the level of the metadata collected.

[0025] The calling metadata client can receive a response from the metadata journal server **105** indicating if it can record metadata, what objects it can collect metadata from, and at what level of specificity. The calling metadata client can then return metadata for all objects involved in the metadata event that match the list returned by the metadata journal server **105**, at the specificity requested by the metadata journal server **105**.

[0026] The metadata journal server **105** can make an entry into the metadata journal for each object involved in the metadata event. This entry can be an entry in a table such as the metadata journal table **405** shown in **FIG. 4**. The metadata server can assign a unique key to the metadata event. This unique key can be stored with each entry in the metadata journal, allowing a user to later retrieve all of the entries in the metadata journal associated with a given metadata event by using the key. In addition, the metadata journal can have received additional information from the calling metadata journal client including schema objects involved in the metadata event and the particular operations involved in the event. These can also be added to the metadata journal along with the unique key.

[0027] The metadata journal server **105** can return to the calling metadata journal client a copy of the unique key. The metadata journal client can attach or store the unique key with any objects involved in the metadata event. It may be appreciated that by storing the key along with the objects, a user of an object may request the metadata associated with the object by requesting the metadata journal entries associated with the keys stored in the particular object.

[0028] **FIG. 2** is a block diagram of exemplary metadata journal clients and servers **200** in accordance with the present invention. This exemplary embodiment includes metadata journal servers **207**, **213**, metadata journal clients **203**, **205**, and a network **201**.

[0029] Metadata journal clients **203**, **205** can raise metadata events and transmit data related to those events across network **201** for storage by one or several of the metadata journal servers **207**, **213**. The metadata journal clients **203**, **205** function similarly to the metadata journal clients **102**, **103** as described in **FIG. 1**. The metadata journal clients **203**, **205** are provided for illustrative purposes only, and not meant to limit the invention to only two metadata journal clients. There is no limitation to the number of metadata journal clients that can operate in accordance with the invention, as shown by metadata journal client Y.

[0030] Metadata journal severs **207**, **213** can be distributed across network **201**, or can exist as separate applications on a computer. Network **201** can be any type of network, such as a WAN type network, such as the internet, or a LAN type network, found in an office building for example. Together, the metadata journal servers **207**, **213** provide similar functionality to the metadata journal server **105** described in **FIG. 1**. The Metadata journal servers **207**, **213** are provided for illustrative purposes only, and not meant to limit the invention to only two metadata journal servers. There is no limitation to the number of metadata journal servers that can operate in accordance with the invention, as shown by metadata journal server X.

[0031] Each metadata journal server **207**, **213** can provide a unique service of the metadata journal, or can operate identically and provide service to the closest metadata journal client **203**, **205**. For example, a metadata journal server can be configured to accept metadata for storage in the schema objects table **407**, as shown in **FIG. 4**. Another metadata journal server can be configured to accept metadata for storage in the metadata journal table **405**, as shown in **FIG. 4**. A metadata client can then be configured to communicate with the appropriate metadata journal server based on the type of metadata collected.

[0032] In another example a metadata journal server can be configured to maintain the listing of what metadata journal clients have journaling enabled, and what metadata should be collected by each of the metadata clients. A separate metadata journal server can be configured to accept and store the collected metadata.

[0033] Metadata journal servers configured to operate identically may each contain the same metadata journal. Metadata journal clients distributed across the network **201** can determine the closest metadata journal server to communicate with. Metadata journal servers can then periodically swap or trade received metadata to insure that the metadata journals remain identical.

[0034] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of an exemplary metadata journal system **300** in accordance with the present invention. As shown, the exemplary metadata journal comprises four components, an event component **303**, an identification component **313**, a gathering component **307**, and a storage component **317**.

[0035] The event component can raise a metadata event by sending a message to a metadata server after some predetermined event takes place. The event component **303** can be part of a metadata journal client, such as metadata journal client **102** described in **FIG. 1**. The message sent by the event component **303** desirably includes a client identifier, that can be used by the identification component **313** to determine the metadata that can be recorded.

[0036] The identification component **313** can generate and send instructions for collecting metadata to a metadata client. The identification component **313** can be part of a metadata journal server, such as metadata journal server **105** described in **FIG. 1**. The instructions are desirably generated by retrieving the user or administrator determined instructions associated with the client identifier from a storage device. The instructions desirably include object identifiers of objects for the gathering component to collect metadata from, the level of detail of the metadata that should be recorded for each object, and the type of annotations that should be recorded for each object. The instructions can be used by the gathering component **307** to collect metadata.

[0037] The gathering component **307** can collect metadata responsive to instructions related to a metadata event, and send the collected metadata to a server for storage. The gathering component **307** can be part of a metadata journal client, such as metadata journal client **102** described in **FIG. 1**. The collected metadata can then be sent to the storage component **317** for storage.

[0038] The storage component **317** can generate a key for a metadata event, send the generated key to a client, and store the key with the collected metadata. The storage component **317** can be part of a metadata journal server, such as metadata journal server **105** described in **FIG. 1**, and can include a storage device such as a database. The generated key can be unique to the metadata journal, and is desirably used by the metadata journal to group objects, operations and schema objects associated with the same metadata event.

[0039] **FIG. 4** is a block diagram of exemplary metadata journal storage **400** in accordance with the present invention. As shown, the metadata journal contains three tables: the metadata journal table **405**, a schema objects table **407**, and an operations table **409**. Additional or alternate tables and/or data structures are contemplated.

[0040] The metadata journal table **405** can contain a row entry for each object involved in a metadata event. A metadata event can be any event where metadata is generated, such as modification or deletion of a file. An object can include any of a variety of suitable items that may have metadata associated with it. Examples of objects include, but are not limited to, files, reports, and OLAP cubes. Each row entry can also contain several columns. In the exemplary embodiment these can include, but are not limited to, a key column **410**, an id column **411**, and an annotations column **412**. It is appreciated that additional columns can be added or removed providing the ability to tailor the type of information collected about the objects.

[0041] The key column **410** can contain a key value associated with each metadata event. Each key can be a unique number or name that may be used to identify the corresponding row entries in the tables of the metadata journal associated with this particular metadata event. This key value can be generated by the metadata server **105** shown in **FIG. 1**. For example, assume an entry for a report in the metadata journal table contains a key of **17** in the key column. The entry in schema objects table **407** for the database that generated that same report will desirably also contain a key of **17** in the key column. It is appreciated that the key column links table entries associated with a metadata event with the other table entries associated with the same metadata event in the metadata journal.

[0042] The id column **411** can contain a unique identifier (referred to herein as "object id") associated with each object. The object id can be assigned by the metadata journal server **105** when a metadata journal client registers the object. The object id can be generated by the metadata journal server **105** or may use a name or number associated with the object in an already existing metadata catalog or repository. For example, for any given object there can already exist metadata stored in a existing metadata repository with a particular number or name. Given that name or number, the existing metadata can be retrieved from the old repository. It is appreciated that storing the unique identifier in the metadata journal table **405** enables interoperation of the metadata journal with a wide variety of other metadata solutions, and allows the metadata associated with a particular object id to be easily retrieved from the metadata journal.

[0043] The annotations column **412** can be used to store contain certain non-canonical information associated with each object. For example, the subject area of a database or a friendly name for the parent system could be stored in the annotations field for an object associated with a metadata event. The annotations column **412** can be a special field in the metadata journal table **405** and can contain an XML structure defined by the metadata journal server **105**. The annotation column **412** can be populated in using any method, such as "snapshot" and "cumulative", for example. This population option can be determined by the metadata journal server **105**. "Snapshot" annotations are the highest level of annotations from the object associated with the metadata event. "Cumulative" annotations are some or all of the annotations associated with the individual objects that can make up the object associated with the metadata event.

For example, an OLAP cube can contain several sources of data, each with its own associated annotations. In "Snapshot" mode, an annotation such as the name of the cube is recorded. In "Cumulative" mode, an annotation is recorded containing some or all of the annotations of each object making up the OLAP cube.

[**0044**] The schema objects table **407** can contain a row entry for each schema object involved in a metadata event. A metadata event can be any suitable event where metadata may be generated, such as modification or deletion of a file. A schema object is an object that a particular object involved in the metadata event may have been created from or depends on. For example, in a metadata event such as a report being generated, the schema object may be the column of data that was the source of the report. Each row entry in the schema objects table **407** can also contain several columns. In the exemplary embodiment, these can include, but are not limited to, a key column **414**, an id column **415**, an annotations column **416**, and a role column **417**. It is appreciated that additional fields may be added or removed providing great flexibility for the user.

[**0045**] The key column **414** can be similar in purpose to the key column **410** described above. Each key can be a unique number or name that can be used to identify the corresponding row entries in the tables of the metadata journal associated with this particular metadata event. It is appreciated that the key column **414** provides the ability to find the schema objects associated with a metadata event by key value.

[**0046**] The id column **415** can be similar in purpose to the id column **411** described above. The field can contain a unique identifier (referred to herein as "schema object id"). The schema object id can be assigned by the metadata journal server **105** when a metadata journal client registers the schema object, or can contain a name or number associated with the schema object in an already existing metadata catalog or repository.

[**0047**] The annotations column **416** can be similar in purpose to the annotations column **412** described above. The annotations column **416** can contain certain non-canonical information associated with each schema object. For example, the subject area of a database or a friendly name for the parent system could be stored in the annotations field for the schema object involved in the metadata event.

[**0048**] The role column **417** can contain the role or purpose that a particular schema object played in the metadata event. For example, in a metadata event such as creation of a file from a database, the database would be the schema object. The entry in the row of role column **417** associated with the database schema object could be the word source, or some code representing the role of the database. This entry can be supplied by the application raising the metadata event.

[**0049**] The operations table **409** can contain a row entry for each operation associated with a metadata event. A metadata event can be any event where metadata is generated, such as modification or deletion of a file. For example, in a metadata event such as a report being generated from a table query, there can be two entries in the operations table **409**, one indicating that a report was created, and another indicating that a query was ran. Each row entry in the operations table **409** can also contain several columns. In an exemplary embodiment, these can include, but are not limited to, a key column **418**, an id column **419**, and an objects column **421**. It is appreciated that additional fields can be added or removed providing great flexibility for the user.

[**0050**] The key column **418** can be similar in purpose to the key column **410** described above. Each key can be a unique number or name that can be used to identify the corresponding row entries in the tables of the metadata journal associated with this particular metadata event. It is appreciated that the key column **418** provides the ability to find some or all operations associated with any metadata event by key value.

[**0051**] The id column **419** can be similar in purpose to the id column **411** described above. The field can contain a unique identifier (referred to as "operation id"). The operation id can be assigned by the metadata journal server **105** when a metadata journal client registers the operation, or can contain a name or number associated with the operation in an already existing metadata catalog or repository.

[**0052**] The objects column **421** can contain some or all of the objects involved in the operation. The objects can be identified by their object id. For example, in a metadata event involving a word processing file being generated from several smaller word processing files there would be an entry in the operations table for the operation of creating a file. In the objects column **421** there would be an entry for the object id of each file used to generate the resulting word processing file.

[**0053**] Given a metadata journal as described in the example embodiments, there are several ways that the journal can be used to provide accurate metadata about an object in the system. A user can desire to retrieve lineage associated with a particular object such as a report. This lineage data describes where the report came from and from what other objects it may depend. The user can query the metadata journal using the object id of the report looking for any entries where this particular report was created or generated. This would lead to the entry in the metadata journal for the metadata event where the report was created from a schema object, for example, a table in a database. The table can have its own object id that can be used to query the metadata journal for information regarding its lineage. The "tree" of lineage can be traced back until the level of metadata that the user desires has been uncovered. By following the trail of metadata journal entries the user is able to reconstruct, at the level of detail specified by the administrator, the lineage data for any object in the metadata journal.

[**0054**] A user can also wish to perform an impact analysis regarding a particular object in a system. An impact analysis for a particular object can provide information regarding what other objects depend on that particular object. For example, a user can wish to delete a table in a database. The user first performs an impact analysis to determine what objects if any may be affected by the deletion. This impact analysis is performed by querying the metadata journal using the object id of the table. This query can return metadata events where the table appears as a source for the creation of another object. Those objects may themselves appear in the metadata journal as the source for the creation

of several other objects. The full impact analysis can be generated for the table by following the metadata trail through the metadata journal for each object that depends on the table.

[0055] **FIG. 5** is block diagram of a metadata journaling system **500** in accordance with the present invention. The metadata journaling system includes several means for performing functions. These means include a raiser **503**, a sender **505**, a collector **507**, a sender **509**, a determiner **511**, a responder **513**, a generator **515**, a saver **517**, and a sender **519**.

[0056] The raiser **503** raises a metadata event after a predetermined happening. An administrator or user desirably determines what events will cause a metadata event to be raised. The raiser **503** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for raising an event. The raiser **503** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The raiser **503** can be a part of the metadata journal client **103**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0057] The sender **505** sends a message indicating that a metadata event was raised. The message desirably includes a client identifier. The sender **505** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for computer messaging. The sender **505** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The sender **505** can be a part of the metadata journal client **103**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0058] The collector **507** collects metadata responsive to instructions. The instructions desirably include the object identifiers of any objects from which to record metadata, the level of detail of the metadata, and the type of annotations to collect. The collector **507** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for collecting data responsive to instructions. The collector **507** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The collector **507** can be a part of the metadata journal client **103**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0059] The sender **509** sends the collected metadata to a server. The collected metadata desirably includes an object identifier for any objects involved in the metadata event, the schema objects identifier for any schema objects involved in the metadata event, and the operations identifier of any operations performed on the objects involved in the metadata event, for example. The sender **509** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for computer messaging. The sender **509** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The sender **509** can be a part of the metadata journal client **103**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0060] The determiner **511** determines what metadata a calling client can record. An administrator or user desirably predetermines what metadata each client can record in a list or database. The metadata that can be recorded for each client can then be retrieved using the client identifier. The determiner **511** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for retrieving, setting, and storing permissions on a computer, for example a database. The determiner **511** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The determiner **511** can be a part of the metadata journal server **105**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0061] The responder **513** responds to the client with what metadata the client can record. The response desirably include the object identifiers of any objects to record metadata from, the level of detail of the metadata, and the type of annotations to collect, for example. The responder **513** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for computer messaging. The responder **513** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The responder **513** can be a part of the metadata journal server **105**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0062] The generator **515** generates a unique key for the metadata event. The unique key is desirably used to associate each metadata journal entry with the metadata event that caused the entry. The generator **515** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for creating a unique identifier, for example a random number generator. The generator **515** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The generator **515** can be a part of the metadata journal server **105**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0063] The saver **517** stores the collected metadata along with the generated key. The metadata is desirably stored in a database or table with an entry for each object, schema object, and operation, in addition to the generated key, for example. The saver **517** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for data storage. The saver **517** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The saver **517** can be a part of the metadata journal server **105**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0064] The sender **519** returns the generated key to the calling client. The generated key can be attached by the client to objects involved in the metadata event, providing a user of the object with the ability to quickly retrieve metadata associated with the object using the generated key. The sender **519** can be any implemented using any suitable system, method or technique known in the art for computer messaging. The sender **519** can be implemented using software, hardware, or a combination of both. The sender **519** can be a part of the metadata journal server **105**, as shown in **FIG. 1**.

[0065] **FIG. 6** is a flow diagram of an exemplary method of updating the metadata journal in accordance with the present invention. In this exemplary embodiment, as described in further detail below, a metadata event is raised by an application or server, the journal service is called by the application or server, the journal service returns a list of objects for which events should be journaled, the application or server calls the journal service to write an entry for each of the matching objects that needs to be journaled, and an entry is made in the metadata journal.

[0066] At **601**, a metadata event is raised by a client or application. The client or application may be configured to raise a metadata event based on the happening of an event involving an object, such as a text file or a report. For example, a user modifying data or the creating of new document may raise a metadata event.

[0067] At **612**, the client or application calls the metadata journal server. The client or application can call the journal server by sending a message or communication containing information that the journaling service uses to identify the

client or application. For example, the client can send a client identifier. It is appreciated that any suitable method, technique, or system for computer messaging can be used.

[0068] At **623**, the journal server receives the client identifier and verifies if the client or application has journaling enabled. The journal service can also determine what objects associated with the event the client or application should be recorded. The journaling service can contain a table or listing of all the servers or applications and what objects, if any, should be journaled by them. For example, an entry for a database application can contain instructions to record entries affecting all tables, or can contain instructions to record entries only effecting specific tables. This allows the administrator or user of the metadata journal to control the specificity and type of metadata recorded.

[0069] If the journal server determines that the client has journaling enabled, the process continues at **634**, otherwise, the process exits at **699**.

[0070] At **634**, the journal server can respond to the client or application by sending a message or communication containing a listing of the objects for which metadata should be recorded. It is appreciated that any method, technique, or system known in the art for computer messaging can be used.

[0071] At **645**, the application or server has received the message or communication containing the listing of objects for which metadata should be recorded. The client or application can now determine what objects matching the received listing of objects were involved in the metadata event. The client or application then sends a message or communication to the journal server to write an entry in the metadata journal table for each affected object. The message can contain an object identifier used to uniquely identify the object in the journal, any annotations associated with the object, either "cumulative" or "snapshot", for example, depending on the journal settings, any names for the object used in previous or legacy metadata solutions, and any other information that may be entered in the metadata journal table of the server. The server can write an entry in the metadata journal table for each object affected and add the received information to the appropriate columns. The server can also assign the metadata event a unique key that is entered in the metadata journal table along with each object entry. The unique key is used to associate each metadata journal entry by metadata event.

[0072] The application or client can also send the schema object identifiers of any schema objects involved in the metadata event. The server can enter each schema object, along with the key and associated information, into the schema objects table. The application or client can also pass the operations involved with the metadata event. The server can enter each operation, along with the key and associated information, into the operations table.

[0073] At **656**, the server returns the generated key to the calling client or application. The key is desirably used by the server or application to attach to objects involved in the metadata event. It may be appreciated that attaching the key associated with a metadata event to an object can allow a user to quickly determine the lineage associated of a particular object by querying the metadata journal server with the key.

[0074] The process then exits at **699**.

[0075] Exemplary Computing Environment

[0076] **FIG. 7** illustrates an example of a suitable computing system environment **700** in which the invention may be implemented. The computing system environment **700** is only one example of a suitable computing environment and is not intended to suggest any limitation as to the scope of use or functionality of the invention. Neither should the computing environment **700** be interpreted as having any dependency or requirement relating to any one or combination of components illustrated in the exemplary operating environment **700**.

[0077] The invention is operational with numerous other general purpose or special purpose computing system environments or configurations, such as for example, personal computers, server computers, hand-held or laptop devices, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based systems, set top boxes, programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, minicomputers, mainframe computers, distributed computing environments that include any of the above systems or devices, and the like.

[0078] With reference to **FIG. 7**, an exemplary system for implementing the invention includes a general purpose computing device in the form of a computer **710**. Components of computer **710** may include, but are not limited to, a processing unit **720**, a system memory **730**, and a system bus **721** that couples various system components including the system memory to the processing unit **720**. The system bus **721** may be any of several types of bus structures including a memory bus or memory controller, a peripheral bus, and a local bus using any of a variety of bus architectures.

[0079] Computer **710** typically includes a variety of computer readable media, and includes both volatile and non-volatile media, removable and non-removable media.

[0080] The system memory **730** includes computer storage media in the form of volatile and/or non-volatile memory such as ROM **731** and RAM **732**. A basic input/output system **733** (BIOS), containing the basic routines that help to transfer information between elements within computer **710**, such as during start-up, is typically stored in ROM **731**. By way of example, and not limitation, **FIG. 7** illustrates operating system **734**, application programs **735**, other program modules **736**, and program data **737**.

[0081] The computer **710** may also include other removable/non-removable, volatile/non-volatile computer storage media. By way of example only, **FIG. 7** illustrates a hard disk drive **741** that reads from or writes to non-removable, non-volatile magnetic media, a magnetic disk drive **751** that reads from or writes to a removable, non-volatile magnetic disk **752**, and an optical disk drive **755** that reads from or writes to a removable, non-volatile optical disk **756**. The hard disk drive **741** is typically connected to the system bus **721** through a non-removable memory interface such as interface **740**, and magnetic disk drive **751** and optical disk drive **755** are typically connected to the system bus **721** by a removable memory interface, such as interface **750**.

[0082] The drives and their associated computer storage media provide storage of computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules and other data for the

computer **710**. In **FIG. 7**, for example, hard disk drive **741** is illustrated as storing operating system **744**, application programs **745**, other program modules **746**, and program data **747**. Note that these components can either be the same as or different from operating system **734**, application programs **735**, other program modules **736**, and program data **737**. A user may enter commands and information into the computer **710** through input devices such as a keyboard **762** and pointing device **761**, commonly referred to as a mouse, trackball or touch pad. These and other input devices are often connected to the processing unit **720** through a user input interface **760** that is coupled to the system bus, but may be connected by other interface and bus structures. A monitor **791** or other type of display device is also connected to the system bus **721** via an interface, such as a video interface **790**. In addition to the monitor, computers may also include other peripheral output devices such as speakers **797** and printer **796**, which may be connected through an output peripheral interface **795**.

[**0083**] The computer **710** may operate in a networked environment using logical connections to one or more remote computers, such as a remote computer **780**. The remote computer **780** may be a personal computer, a server, a router, a network PC, a peer device or other common network node, and typically includes many or all of the elements described above relative to the computer **710**, although only a memory storage device **781** has been illustrated in **FIG. 7**. The logical connections depicted include a LAN **771** and a WAN **773**, but may also include other networks.

[**0084**] When used in a LAN networking environment, the computer **710** is connected to the LAN **771** through a network interface or adapter **770**. When used in a WAN networking environment, the computer **710** typically includes a modem **772** or other means for establishing communications over the WAN **773**, such as the internet. The modem **772**, which may be internal or external, may be connected to the system bus **721** via the user input interface **760**, or other appropriate mechanism. In a networked environment, program modules depicted relative to the computer **710**, or portions thereof, may be stored in the remote memory storage device. By way of example, and not limitation, **FIG. 7** illustrates remote application programs **785** as residing on memory device **781**. It will be appreciated that the network connections shown are exemplary and other means of establishing a communications link between the computers may be used.

[**0085**] As mentioned above, while exemplary embodiments of the present invention have been described in connection with various computing devices, the underlying concepts may be applied to any computing device or system. The various techniques described herein may be implemented in connection with hardware or software or, where appropriate, with a combination of both. Thus, the methods and apparatus of the present invention, or certain aspects or portions thereof, may take the form of program code (i.e., instructions) embodied in tangible media, such as floppy diskettes, CD-ROMs, hard drives, or any other machine-readable storage medium, wherein, when the program code is loaded into and executed by a machine, such as a computer, the machine becomes an apparatus for practicing the invention. In the case of program code execution on programmable computers, the computing device will generally include a processor, a storage medium readable by the processor (including volatile and non-volatile memory and/or storage elements), at least one input device, and at least one output device. The program(s) can be implemented in assembly or machine language, if desired. In any case, the language may be a compiled or interpreted language, and combined with hardware implementations.

[**0086**] The methods and apparatus of the present invention may also be practiced via communications embodied in the form of program code that is transmitted over some transmission medium, such as over electrical wiring or cabling, through fiber optics, or via any other form of transmission, wherein, when the program code is received and loaded into and executed by a machine, such as an EPROM, a gate array, a programmable logic device (PLD), a client computer, or the like, the machine becomes an apparatus for practicing the invention. When implemented on a general-purpose processor, the program code combines with the processor to provide a unique apparatus that operates to invoke the functionality of the present invention. Additionally, any storage techniques used in connection with the present invention may invariably be a combination of hardware and software.

[**0087**] As mentioned above, while exemplary embodiments of the present invention have been described in connection with various computing devices, the underlying concepts may be applied to any computing device or system.

[**0088**] The various techniques described herein may be implemented in connection with hardware or software or, where appropriate, with a combination of both. Thus, the methods and apparatus of the present invention, or certain aspects or portions thereof, may take the form of program code (i.e., instructions) embodied in tangible media, such as floppy diskettes, CD-ROMs, hard drives, or any other machine-readable storage medium, wherein, when the program code is loaded into and executed by a machine, such as a computer, the machine becomes an apparatus for practicing the invention. In the case of program code execution on programmable computers, the computing device will generally include a processor, a storage medium readable by the processor (including volatile and non-volatile memory and/or storage elements), at least one input device, and at least one output device. The program(s) can be implemented in assembly or machine language, if desired. In any case, the language may be a compiled or interpreted language, and combined with hardware implementations.

[**0089**] The methods and apparatus of the present invention may also be practiced via communications embodied in the form of program code that is transmitted over some transmission medium, such as over electrical wiring or cabling, through fiber optics, or via any other form of transmission, wherein, when the program code is received and loaded into and executed by a machine, such as an EPROM, a gate array, a programmable logic device (PLD), a client computer, or the like, the machine becomes an apparatus for practicing the invention. When implemented on a general-purpose processor, the program code combines with the processor to provide a unique apparatus that operates to invoke the functionality of the present invention. Additionally, any storage techniques used in connection with the present invention may invariably be a combination of hardware and software.

[0090] While the present invention has been described in connection with the preferred embodiments of the various Figures, it is to be understood that other similar embodiments may be used or modifications and additions may be made to the described embodiments for performing the same function of the present invention without deviating therefrom. Therefore, the present invention should not be limited to any single embodiment, but rather should be construed in breadth and scope in accordance with the appended claims.

What is claimed:

1. A system that facilitates metadata journaling comprising:

an event component that raises a metadata event, and sends a message indicative of the event that includes a client identifier to a server; and

a gathering component that collects metadata responsive to instructions related to the metadata event, and sends the collected metadata to the server.

2. The system of claim 1, the instructions comprising object identifiers of objects for the client to record metadata from.

3. The system of claim 1, the instructions comprising the level of detail of the metadata that should be recorded for each object.

4. The system of claim 1, the instructions comprising the type of annotations that should be recorded from each object.

5. The system of claim 1, the collected metadata comprising object identifiers of objects involved in the metadata event matching object identifiers in the instructions.

6. The system of claim 1, the collected metadata comprising schema object identifiers of schema objects involved in the metadata event.

7. The system of claim 1, the collected metadata comprising operation identifiers for operations performed on the objects involved in the metadata event.

8. A system that facilitates metadata journaling comprising:

a storage component that generates a key for a metadata event, sends the key to a client, and stores the key with received metadata from the client; and

an identification component that generates instructions for collecting metadata and sends the instructions to the client.

9. The system of claim 8, the received metadata comprising object identifiers of objects involved in the metadata event matching object identifiers in the instructions.

10. The system of claim 8, the received metadata comprising schema object identifiers of schema objects involved in the metadata event.

11. The system of claim 8, the received metadata comprising operation identifiers for operations performed on objects involved in the metadata event.

12. The system of claim 8, the instructions comprising object identifiers of objects for the client to record metadata from.

13. The system of claim 8, the instructions comprising the level of detail of the metadata to be recorded for each object.

14. The system of claim 8, the instructions comprising the type of annotations that should be recorded from each object.

15. The system of claim 8, wherein the instructions for collecting metadata are generated using a client identifier.

16. The system of claim 8, wherein the instructions for collecting metadata are predetermined by a user or administrator.

17. A method for metadata journaling comprising:

raising a metadata event by a client;

sending a message to a server indicating that the metadata event was raised;

determining metadata the client may record;

responding to the client with instructions for the metadata to record;

collecting metadata responsive to the instructions by the client; and sending the collected metadata to the server.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

generating a key for the metadata event;

storing the collected metadata and key at the server; and

returning the key to the client.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein storing the collected metadata and generated key by the server comprises:

receiving the collected metadata from the client, including an object identifier for each object involved in the metadata event corresponding to the requested objects in the instructions, along with a schema object identifier for schema objects associated with the object and an operation identifier for operations performed on the object;

making an entry for each object identifier in an objects table along with the key;

making an entry for each schema object identifier in a schema objects table along with the key; and

making an entry for each operation identifier in an operations table along with the key.

20. The method of claim 17, wherein sending the message to the server indicating that the metadata event was raised includes sending a client identifier.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein determining the metadata the client may record is responsive to the client identifier.

22. The method of claim 17, wherein determining the metadata the client may record comprises looking up the client in a storage device using a client identifier and returning the instructions associated with the client identifier contained in the storage device.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the instructions associated with the client identifier comprise:

object identifiers of objects for the client to record metadata from;

the level of detail of the metadata to be recorded for each object; and

the type of annotations to be recorded from each object.

24. The method of claim 17, wherein the instructions for what metadata to record are predetermined.

25. The method of claim 17, wherein collecting metadata responsive to the instructions by the client and sending the collected metadata to the server comprises:

determining which objects involved in the metadata event correspond to the requested objects in the instructions;

determining if schema objects are associated with the corresponding objects; and

determining operations performed on the corresponding objects.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising sending an object identifier for each object involved in the metadata event corresponding to the requested objects in the instructions, along with a schema object identifier for the schema objects associated with the object and an operation identifier for the operations performed on the object, to the server.

27. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing a method for metadata journaling comprising:

raising a metadata event by a client;

sending a message to a server indicating that the metadata event was raised;

collecting metadata responsive to instructions by the client; and

sending the collected metadata to the server.

28. The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein sending a message to the server indicating that the metadata event was raised includes sending a client identifier.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 27, wherein collecting metadata responsive to the instructions by the client and sending the collected metadata to the server comprises computer-executable instructions for:

determining which objects involved in the metadata event correspond to the requested objects in the instructions;

determining if schema objects are associated with the corresponding objects; and

determining operations performed on the corresponding objects.

30. The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising computer-executable instructions for sending an object identifier for each object involved in the metadata event corresponding to the requested objects in the instructions, along with a schema object identifier for schema objects associated with the object and a operation identifier for operations performed on the object, to the server.

31. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing a method for metadata journaling comprising:

generating a key for a metadata event;

determining the metadata the client may record;

responding to the client with instructions for the metadata to record;

storing the collected metadata and key at the server; and

returning the key to the client.

32. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein storing the collected metadata and generated key comprises computer-executable instructions for:

receiving the collected metadata from the client, including an object identifier for each object involved in the metadata event corresponding to the requested objects in the instructions, along with a schema object identifier for schema objects associated with the object and an operation identifier for operations performed on the object;

making an entry for each object identifier in an objects table along with the key;

making an entry for each schema object identifier in a schema objects table along with the key; and

making an entry for each operation identifier in an operations table along with the key.

33. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein determining the metadata the client may record is performed by the server using a client identifier.

34. The computer-readable medium of claim 33, wherein determining what metadata the client may record comprises computer-executable instructions for looking up the client in a storage device using a client identifier and returning the instructions associated with the client identifier contained in the storage device.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein the instructions associated with the client identifier comprise:

object identifiers of objects for the client to record metadata from;

the level of detail of the metadata that should be recorded for each object; and the type of annotations that should be recorded from each object.

36. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the instructions for what metadata to record are predetermined.

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

a first data field containing data representing a key value associated with a metadata event;

a second data field containing data representing an object associated with the metadata event; and

a third data field containing data representing an annotation value associated with the object.

38. The data structure of claim 37, wherein the object is a schema object and further comprising a fourth data field containing a role value associated with the schema object.

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

a first data field containing data representing a key value associated with a metadata event;

a second data field containing data representing an operation identifier associated with the metadata event; and

a third data field containing data representing an object associated with the operation identifier.

40. A system that facilitates metadata journaling comprising:

means for raising a metadata event;

means for sending a message indicating that a metadata event was raised;

means for collecting metadata responsive to instructions;

means for sending the collected metadata to a server;

means for determining what metadata a client can record;

means for responding to the client with the metadata to record;

means for generating a key for the metadata event;

means for saving the collected metadata and key; and

means for sending the key to the client.

41. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for saving the collected metadata and key comprises:

means for storing an entry for a schema object identifier along with the key;

means for storing an entry for an object identifier along with the key; and

means for making an entry for an operation identifier along with the key.

42. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for determining what metadata the client can record comprises means for looking up the client in a storage device using a client identifier and returning instructions associated with the client identifier contained in the storage device.

43. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for collecting metadata responsive to instructions comprises:

means for determining which objects involved in the metadata event correspond to requested objects in the instructions;

means for determining if schema objects are associated with the corresponding objects; and

means for determining operations that were performed on the corresponding objects.

44. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for sending the collected metadata to a server comprises:

means for sending object identifiers of objects involved in the metadata event corresponding to requested objects in the instructions;

means for sending schema object identifiers of schema objects associated with the corresponding objects; and

means for sending operation identifiers of operations performed on the corresponding objects.

45. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for sending a message indicating that a metadata event was raised includes means for sending a client identifier.

46. The system of claim 40, wherein the means for responding to the client with the metadata to record comprise means for sending instructions containing object identifiers of objects for the client to record metadata from, the level of detail of the metadata to be recorded for each object, and the type of annotations to be recorded from each object.

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