

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.

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

providing an object version watermark for an object in the original data file, the object version watermark indicating a lowest version of the application program that can interpret all properties in the object; and determining characteristics of the original data file by comparing the object version watermark to an object version in the active version of the application program.

11. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

12. A method for reading an original data file to be compatible with an active version and a previous 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 previous version of the application program; and loading the original data file without changes into the active version, when said comparing step determines that the original data file corresponds to the previous version.

13. A method according to claim 12, 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.

14. A method according to claim 13, 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.

15. A method according to claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

saving the information converted in said converting step; and saving the unconverted old information from the original data file.

16. A method according to claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

saving the information converted in said converting step; generating information that corresponds to the old information from the original data file; and saving the information generated in said generating step.

17. A method according to claim 12, wherein said original data file comprises an object property list.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein said object property list comprises an object property list array.

19. A method according to claim 18, 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.

20. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 12.

21. A method for reading an original data file to be compatible with an active version and a previous version of an application program, said method 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; comparing the last version watermark to the active version of the application program to determine whether the original data file corresponds to the previous 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 previous version, said loading step comprises the steps of: determining whether the previous version includes a deleted item that has been deleted from the active version; ignoring old information in the original data file corresponding to the deleted item when said determining step determines that the previous version includes the deleted item; and loading information from the original data file that corresponds to an item other than the deleted item.

22. A method according to claim 21, wherein the deleted item comprises an object property.

23. A method according to claim 21, wherein the deleted item comprises an object.

24. A method according to claim 21, further comprising the steps of:

saving a modified version of the original data file; and saving information corresponding to the deleted item of the original data file.