

downloading the selected input device layout over the network from a server having a plurality of input device layouts based upon the determination.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the retrieving further comprises:

determining if the selected input device layout is already loaded in the input device; and

downloading an applet containing the selected input device layout over the network from a server having a plurality of applets capable of processing input device layouts based upon the determination.

9. A method of configuring an input device for a data processing system, the input device having a set of display elements capable of displaying symbols, the method comprising:

selecting an input device layout;

determining whether the selected input device layout is displayed;

determining a location of the selected input device layout when it is determined that the selected input device layout is not displayed;

retrieving the selected input device layout from a smartcard; and

displaying a set of symbols on the display elements corresponding to the input device layout.

10. An input device for a data processing system, the input device having a set of display elements capable of displaying symbols, comprising:

a memory having program instructions to display symbols on the input device; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to select an input device layout, determine whether the selected input device layout is displayed, determine a location of the selected input device layout when it is determined that the selected input device layout is not displayed, retrieve the selected input device layout from a network, and display a set of symbols on the display elements corresponding to the input device layout.

11. The input device in claim 10 wherein the processor reads a layout flag that indicates the input device layout to the processor.

12. The input device of claim 10 wherein the processor is operatively coupled to a switching mechanism that indicates the input device layout to the processor.

13. The input device of claim 10 wherein the processor is operatively coupled to a smartcard that indicates the input device layout to the processor.

14. The input device of claim 10 wherein the memory further comprises instructions to download the selected input device layout from a server connected to the network, and wherein the processor is responsive to the instructions to download the selected input device layout from the server connected to the network.

15. The input device of claim 10 wherein the memory further comprises instructions to download an applet, containing the selected input device layout, over the network from a server having a plurality of applets capable of processing input device layouts and wherein the processor is responsive to the instructions to download an applet, containing the selected input device layout, over the network from a server having a plurality of applets capable of processing input device layouts.

16. The input device of claim 10 wherein the memory further comprises instructions to determine if the selected input device layout is already displayed on the input device,

and download the selected input device layout over the network from a server having a plurality of input device layouts based upon the determination and wherein the processor is responsive to the instructions to determine if the selected input device layout is already displayed on the input device, and download the selected input device layout over the network from a server having a plurality of input device layouts based upon the determination.

17. The input device of claim 10 wherein the memory further comprises instructions to determine if the selected input device layout is already displayed on the input device, and download an applet having the selected input device layout over the network from a server having a plurality of applets capable of processing the input device layout based upon the determination and wherein the processor is responsive to the instructions to determine if the selected input device layout is already displayed on the input device, and download an applet having the selected input device layout over network from a server having a plurality of applets capable of processing the input device layout based upon the determination.

18. An input device for a data processing system, the input device having a set of display elements capable of displaying symbols, comprising:

means for storing program instructions that display symbols on the input device;

means for processing the program instructions to select an input device layout to display symbols on the display elements;

means for determining whether the selected input device layout is displayed;

means for determining a location of the selected input device layout when it is determined that the selected device layout is not displayed;

means for retrieving the selected input device layout; and means for displaying a set of symbols on the display elements corresponding to the selected input device layout.

19. A method of configuring an input device for a data processing system, the input device having a set of display elements capable of displaying symbols, the method comprising:

storing a plurality of input device layouts;

selecting one of the stored input device layouts;

determining whether the selected input device layout is displayed;

determining a location of the selected input device layout when it is determined that the selected device layout is not displayed;

retrieving the selected input device layout;

invoking an applet to control the input device;

loading the selected input device layout into the input device; and

displaying symbols on the display elements corresponding to the input device layout.

20. A method, executed on a data processing system, that facilitates the configuration of an input device having a set of display elements, comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of input device layouts;

determining whether the input device layout is displayed;

determining a location of the input device layout when it is determined that the input device layout is not displayed; and

downloading the plurality of input device layouts over a network into the input device.