

embodiments, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that various modifications can be made without departing from the invention. Accordingly, the invention is defined by the following claims.

I claim:

1. A version management system for storing and retrieving user-selectable versions of a document maintained in a computer which has a displayer, comprising:

a user interface;

document processing software executable by the computer for driving said displayer to generate a display representing at least a portion of the document;

a first version control file for storing an original version of the document and at least one set of variable-sized delta-formatted data records representing differences between two user-selectable versions of the document;

a second version control file comprising at least one set of pointers for selecting a set of said delta-formatted records from said first version control file; said set of pointers corresponding to a user-selectable version of the document; and

a version management processor for fetching and processing said delta-formatted difference data to regenerate said user-selectable version of the document and supplying said regenerated user-selectable version of a document to said document processing software in accordance with selection by the user.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said version management processor comprises a delta processor for applying said delta-formatted data records from said first version control file to said original version of the document to regenerate a second version of the document.

3. The system of claim 1, additionally comprising:

means for selecting a first and a second version of the document; and

means for formatting and displaying said first version of a document comprised of the plurality of display fields with a first of said display fields displaying document data in a first format where said document data is the same in said second version as in said first version and with a second of said display fields displaying document data in a modified format where said document data is different in said second version than in said first version.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein said modified format is selected from the group of bolding, font selection or color.

5. The system of claim 3, additionally comprising a configuration file for storing user-alterable data; wherein said modified format is selectable according to said user-alterable data.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said document processing software is spreadsheet processing software and said original version document is a spreadsheet document.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein said spreadsheet processing software is selected from the group of Lotus 1-2-3, Microsoft Excel and Borland Quattro Pro.

8. The system of claim 7, additionally comprising formatting means to display said differences on said regenerated next document wherein unchanged data is represented with a value of 0.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein said document processing software is a word processing software and said original version document is a word processing document.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein said word processing software is selected from the group of Microsoft Word, WordPerfect and Lotus Ami Pro.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein said delta-formatted data records represent differences between two consecutive versions of the document.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein said delta-formatted data records represent differences between a user-selectable version of the document and said original version of the document.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein said second version control file additionally comprises data for identifying a version of the document.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein said user-selection means comprises means for selecting the document by identifying the document by a name and a version number.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said document name and said version are selectable from a list of existing document versions.

16. A method for storing, retrieving and displaying a user-selectable version document maintained in a computer and supplying said version documents to document processing software, comprising the steps of:

1) identifying said user-selectable version document by a name and a version number;

2) retrieving an original version of said user-selectable version document to form a first prior version document;

3) retrieving a set of variable-sized delta-formatted data representing difference data from said first prior version document;

4) applying said difference data to said first prior version document to regenerate a next prior version document;

5) repeating steps 3-4 for until said delta-formatted data representative of said user-selectable version document has been processed;

6) supplying said regenerated document to said document processing software; and

7) creating a display which includes at least a portion of said regenerated document.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein said document processing software is spreadsheet processing software and said documents are spreadsheet documents.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein said spreadsheet processing software is selected from the group of Lotus 1-2-3, Microsoft Excel and Borland Quattro Pro.

19. The system of claim 16, wherein said document processing software is a word processing software and said documents are word processing documents.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein said word processing software is selected from the group of Microsoft Word, WordPerfect and Lotus Ami Pro.

21. A method for storing, retrieving and displaying a user-selectable version document maintained in a computer and supplying said documents to document processing software, comprising the steps of:

1) identifying said user-selectable version document by a name and a version number;

2) retrieving an original version of said user-selectable version document;

3) retrieving a set of variable-sized delta-formatted data representing difference data from said original version document to said user-selectable version document;

4) applying said difference data to said original version document to regenerate said user-selectable version document;

5) supplying said regenerated document to said document processing software; and