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Method, system and software application for real time data processing

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ABSTRACT

Method, System and Software Application for Real Time Data Processing

The Invention relates to a method for locking data objects in a computer system, the method comprising a first processing module requesting a lock service module to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data objects, said method further comprising:

- 0 - the lock service receiving names of one or more (m) key fields of the one or more data objects to be locked;
- the lock service receiving n values for each of the m key fields of n data objects to be locked;
- the lock service receiving a maximum number (k) of locks to lock the n data objects;
- 15 - the lock service checking whether $n \leq k$ and
in case yes,
creating one or more lock objects comprising the m names and n values for the m key fields
- 20 in case no,
querying the n values of the m key fields and
determining numbers (y1 to ym) of different
values
(Val_{1.1} to Val_{m.ym}) of the key fields 1 to m;
- 25 - the lock service determining consecutively from a first to i-th field where $i \leq m$ until $y1 \dots yi \geq k$ and in case the condition is satisfied,
- creating one or more lock objects comprising the names of the key fields 1 to m and values Val_{1.1} to Val_{(i-1).y(i-1)} for
- 30 the key fields 1 to i-1 and comprising wildcards for the remaining key fields.

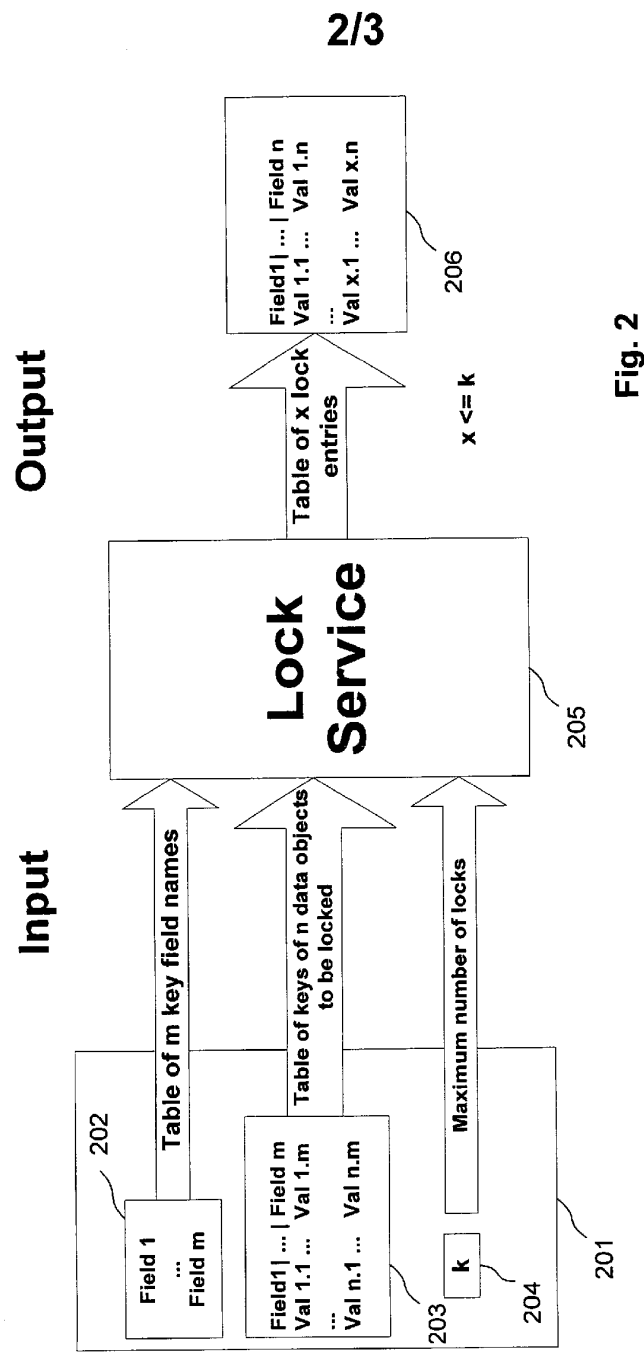


Fig. 2

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Applicant(s):

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Invention Title:

METHOD, SYSTEM AND SOFTWARE APPLICATION FOR REAL TIME
DATA PROCESSING

The following statement is a full description of this
invention, including the best method of performing it known to
me/us:

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TITLE

Method, System and Software Application for Real Time Data
Processing

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

The technical field of this invention is in the area of electronic data processing. More particularly, the invention relates to methods, computer program products and systems for data locking.

10 Background of the Invention

A data base management system is usually equipped with a special lock mechanism that synchronizes access to data on the database. The purpose of the lock mechanism is to prevent two transactions from changing the same data on the database simultaneously.

15 Locks may be defined generically as "lock objects". A lock entry is a specific instance of a lock object and locks a certain database object, such as a correction or a table entry or a file or a whole table.

20 Locks are usually set and deleted automatically when user programs access a data object and release it again. When interactive transactions are programmed, locks may be set and released by calling specific function modules.

25 The tables in which data records should be locked with a lock entry are defined in a lock object together with their key fields. When tables are selected, one table (the primary table) is first selected. Further tables (secondary tables) can also be added using foreign key relationships.

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The lock argument of a table in the lock object consists of the key fields of the table.

The lock argument fields of a lock object may be used as input parameters in the function modules for setting and removing

5 locks generated from the lock object definition. When these function modules are called, the table entries to be locked or unlocked are specified by defining certain values in these fields. These values can also be generic or wildcards. The lock argument fields therefore define which subset of the table
10 entries should be locked.

A simple case of a lock object consists of exactly one table and the lock argument of the table is the primary key of this table. Several tables can also be included in a lock object. A lock entry therefore can lock an entire logical object, and not
15 only a record of a table. Such a logical object can be for example a document comprising an entry in a header table and N entries in a position table.

Further, a lock mode may be assigned for each table in the lock object. This mode defines how other users can access a locked
20 record of the table.

The lock mode controls whether several users can access data records at the same time. The lock mode can be assigned separately for each table in the lock object. When the lock is
25 set, the corresponding lock entry is stored in the lock table of the system for each table.

Access by more than one user can be synchronized in the following ways:

Exclusive lock: The locked data can only be displayed or edited
30 by a single user. A request for another exclusive lock or for a shared lock is rejected.

Shared lock: More than one user can access the locked data at the same time in display mode. A request for another shared

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lock is accepted, even if it comes from another user. An exclusive lock is rejected.

Exclusive but not cumulative: Exclusive locks can be requested several times from the same transaction and are processed successively. In contrast, exclusive but not cumulative locks can be called only once from the same transaction. All other lock requests are rejected.

It is possible to synchronize access by several programs to the same data with a logical lock mechanism having two main functions: A program can tell other programs which data records it is just reading or changing. A program can prevent itself from reading data that is just being changed by another program.

15 Data records of a table to be locked may also be defined by a logical condition. When a lock is set, this logical condition is entered in a lock table. This entry is retained until it is removed by the program or the program comes to an end. All the locks set by a program are thus removed at the end of the

20 program.

When accessing data records, the records just being edited by other programs may be identified by the entry in the lock table. Such an entry for the lock may define a number of fully specified key fields. That is either a value is passed for the

25 key field or this field is locked generically by means of a wildcard.

In a multi-user system environment as is frequently the case in enterprise business software and computer systems, data that is
30 being processed by one user has to be locked, so that no second user can change it at the same time. This is essential to avoid data inconsistencies.

Usually, the data is being locked via the key of the processed data (e.g. document number, cost centre id). However, business

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5 transactions that process a lot of data at the same time (e.g.
the costing of a car with several thousand components or the
evaluation of a value flow net between many cost centres,
activities and cost objects) can not lock every single piece of
10 data via its key, since the number of locks that can be set is
restricted because of limited hardware resources. For instance,
a reasonable number of locks per transaction may be around 50
for larger multi user systems. Anything more could harm the
performance of the system. This is especially true, if several
15 hundreds or thousands of users work at the same time setting
locks in the system.

Thus, the mentioned mass transactions can not lock every single
piece of data (e.g. every product number or cost centre ID).
Instead wildcards are being used in a lock entry so that it
20 affects several single keys and many pieces of data can be
locked via one entry. Document US 6,047,283 discloses such a
lock mechanism in which a dynamic lock table is used for
managing the collision of lock requests of several users
accessing a database, e.g. by means of wildcards.

20 But the wildcards have to be used with care. Otherwise too much
data is being locked and other users can't continue with their
tasks, since they can't access needed data. E.g. during the
calculation of a product with 100 sub-products, one can not
25 lock all products by only having wildcard in the lock entry for
product, otherwise not second user could run a costing of an
independent product.

Thus, there is a need for a method, software application and/or
30 data processing system providing a more efficient solution of
at least a part of the problems described above; particularly
it is desirable to provide a software application having a
mechanism for using wildcards in data locking more efficiently.

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The above description is based on the knowledge of the present inventors and not necessarily that known in the art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 In a first aspect, the present invention provides a method for locking data objects in a computer system, the method comprising a lock service receiving from a first processing module a request to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data
10 objects, said method further comprising:

the lock service receiving names of one or more (m) key fields of the one or more data objects to be locked;

the lock service receiving n values for each of the m key fields of n data objects to be locked;

15 the lock service receiving a maximum number (k) of locks to lock the n data objects;

the lock service checking whether $n \leq k$ and

in case yes,

20 creating one or more lock objects comprising the m names and n values for the m key fields;

in case no,

querying the n values of the m key fields and determining numbers (y1 to ym) of different values (Val_1.1 to Val_m.ym) of the key fields 1 to m;

25 the lock service determining consecutively from a first to i-th field where $i \leq m$ until $y1 \dots yi \geq k$ and in case the condition is satisfied;

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creating one or more lock objects comprising the names of the key fields 1 to m and values Val_1.1 to Val_(i-1).y(i-1) for the key fields 1 to i-1 and comprising wildcards for the remaining key fields.

5 In a second aspect, the present invention provides a computer system comprising a lock mechanism for locking data objects, the lock mechanism comprising a lock service module capable of receiving a lock request from a first processing module to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data objects, comprising:

memory having program instructions;

input means for receiving and entering data;

output means for sending and presenting data storage means
15 for storing data;

a processor responsive to the program instructions;

said program instructions comprising program code means for performing a method according to any of claims 1 to 2 when the program instructions are loaded into the memory and
20 executed by the processor.

In a third aspect, the present invention provides a computer readable medium comprising program instructions for locking data objects in a computer system, the program instructions comprising instructions for:

25 performing a method according the first aspect of the invention when the program instructions are executed in the computer system.

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In a fourth aspect the present invention provides a computer program product comprising a computer readable medium according to the third aspect of the invention.

- 5 In accordance with the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, methods and systems consistent with the principles in this specification provide a method for locking data objects in a computer system, the method comprising a lock service module receiving from a first processing module a request to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data objects, said method further comprising:
- the lock service receiving names of one or more (m) key fields of the one or more data objects to be locked;
 - the lock service receiving n values for each of the m key fields of n data objects to locked;
 - the lock service receiving a maximum number (k) of locks to lock the n data objects;
 - 20 - the lock service checking whether $n \leq k$ and in case yes, creating one or more lock objects comprising the m names and n values for the m key fields in case no,
 - 25 querying the n values of the m key fields and determining numbers (y1 to ym) of different values (Val_1.1 to Val_m.ym) of the key fields 1 to m;
 - the lock service determining consecutively from a first to i-th field where $i \leq m$ until $y1 \dots yi \geq k$ and in case the condition is satisfied,
 - 30 - creating one or more lock objects comprising the names of the

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key fields 1 to m and values Val_1.1 to Val_(i-1).y(i-1) for the key fields 1 to i-1 and comprising wildcards for the remaining key fields.

5 The data objects are then locked according to the created lock objects. The method can be used to optimize the locks in a generic way and thus replace existing ones, what results in a better maintainability of the system.

0 Embodiments of the invention are further directed to a computer system, a computer program, a computer readable medium and a carrier signal, each comprising program code or instructions of locking data sets in a computer system according to the above method and its embodiments.

15 Such computer program can be installed as one or more programs or program modules on different hardware systems (computers or computer systems), and run separately and independently of each other, in their entirety being capable of performing the
20 inventive method and its embodiments. The different systems may be connected in the form of a network to communicate with each other.

Additional objects and advantages of the various embodiments of
25 the invention will be set forth in part in the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the embodiments of the invention will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims. Embodiments of
30 the invention are disclosed in the detailed description section and in the appended independent and dependent claims. The various embodiments can include and/or exclude different aspects, features and/or advantages, where applicable. In

addition, various embodiments can combine one or more aspects or features of other embodiments, where applicable.

It is understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the embodiments of the invention, as claimed. The description of aspects, features and/or advantages of particular embodiments should not be construed as limiting other embodiments or the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and, together with the description, explain the principles of the invention. In the drawings,

Fig. 1 is a block diagrams for illustrating an implementation of the claimed method by means of a computer system;

Fig. 2 shows for illustration an example of possible interactions between program modules and data according to an embodiment the invention by means of a block diagram;

Fig. 3 is an exemplary flow diagram for illustrating an example of the method according to the principles described in this disclosure.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Within the concept of this specification, the terms used shall have their usual meaning in the context of the field of data processing unless defined otherwise. Particularly, a computer system broadly refers to any stand alone computer such as a PC

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or a laptop or a series of computers connected via a network, e.g. a network within a company, or a series of computers connected via the internet. Computer systems and programs may be closely related. As used herein, phrases, such as "the computer provides" and "the program provides or performs specific actions", "a user performs a specific action" are used to express actions by a computer system that may be controlled by a program or to express that the program or program module may be designed to enable the computer system to perform the specific action or to enable a user to perform the specific action by means of a computer system.

In this context, the term "automatically" is not intended to exclude a user's interactions with the computer system in the course of processing.

The disclosed methods as described in the summary section may be implemented by means of a computer system and a computer software, which allows the creation of business software applications and which allows the use of data bases or database applications and Internet applications. Particularly, a lock object may be implemented as on or more lines of one or more tables in a data base, preferably in a relational data base. In object oriented programming languages, a lock object may be implemented as an instance of a class. The term data object broadly refers to any data in a data base, which is identified by a key.

An embodiment of the inventive method as described in the summary section is characterized in that the method further comprises determining one or more common characteristics of different values of a key field for the remaining key fields and writing the determined common characteristics and one or more wildcards into the remaining key fields of the or each

lock object. A common characteristics may be a character string consisting of one or more consecutive characters of the characters forming the value. For example, in values like A1BC123, A2BC234, "A" and "BC" are common characteristics. Thus, A3BC345 may be replaced by A?BC*. In this case "?" is a wildcard for a single character, "*" is a wildcard for any number of characters.

Processors suitable for the execution of a computer program include, by way of example, both general and special purpose microprocessors, and any one or more processors of any kind of digital computer. Generally, a processor will receive instructions and data from a read-only memory or a random access memory or both. The essential elements of a computer are a processor for executing instructions and one or more memory devices for storing instructions and data. Generally, a computer will also include, or be operatively coupled to receive data from or transfer data to, or both, one or more mass storage devices (storage means) for storing data, e.g., magnetic, magneto-optical disks, or optical disks. Information carriers suitable for embodying computer program instructions and data include all forms of non-volatile memory, including by way of example semiconductor memory devices, such as EPROM, EEPROM, and flash memory devices; magnetic disks such as internal hard disks and removable disks; magneto-optical disks; and CD-ROM and DVD-ROM disks. The processor and the memory can be supplemented by, or incorporated in, ASICs (application-specific integrated circuits).

To provide for interaction with a user, the invention can be implemented on a computer system having a display device such as a CRT (cathode ray tube) or LCD (liquid crystal display) monitor for displaying information to the user and a keyboard

and a pointing device such as a mouse or a trackball by which the user can provide input to the computer. Other kinds of devices can be used to provide for interaction with a user as well; for example, feedback provided to the user can be any form of sensory feedback, such as visual feedback, auditory feedback, or haptic feedback; and input from the user can be received in any form, including acoustic, speech, or haptic input.

FIGURES

Reference will now be made in detail to the principles of the invention and its embodiments by an explanation on the basis of a data processing process, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings

Referring now to FIG. 1, a computer system 101 comprising computer 102 and operating means 103, 104, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the method and apparatus of the present invention apply equally to any computer system, regardless of whether the computer system is a complicated multi-user computing apparatus or a single user device such as a personal computer or workstation. Computer 102 suitably comprises a processor 105, main memory 108, a memory controller 106, an auxiliary storage interface 112c, a general input/output interface 112b and a terminal interface 112a, all of which are interconnected via a system bus 114. Note that various modifications, additions, or deletions may be made to computer system 101 illustrated in FIG. 1 within the scope of the present invention such as the addition of cache memory or other peripheral devices. FIG. 1 is

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presented to simply illustrate some of the salient features of computer system 101.

Processor 105 performs computation and control functions of computer system 101, and comprises a suitable central processing unit (CPU). Processor 105 may comprise a single integrated circuit, such as a microprocessor, or may comprise any suitable number of integrated circuit devices and/or circuit boards working in cooperation to accomplish the functions of a processor. Processor 105 may suitably execute (object-oriented) computer programs within main memory 108.

Auxiliary storage interface 112c allows computer system 101 to store and retrieve information from auxiliary storage devices, such as magnetic disk (e.g., hard disks or floppy diskettes) or optical storage devices (e.g., CD-ROM). One suitable storage device is a direct access storage device (DASD) 107. As shown in FIG. 1, DASD 107 may be a hard disk drive which may read programs and data from a hard disk. It is important to note that while the present invention has been (and will continue to be) described in the context of a fully functional computer

system, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the mechanisms of the present invention are capable of being distributed as a program product in a variety of forms, and that the present invention applies equally regardless of the particular type of signal bearing media to actually carry out the distribution. Further examples of signal bearing media include: recordable type media such as floppy disks and CD ROMS, and transmission type media such as digital and analogous communication links, including wireless communication links. Memory controller 106, through use of a processor is

responsible for moving requested information from main memory 108 and/or through auxiliary storage interface 112c to processor 105. While for the purposes of explanation, memory controller 106 is shown as a separate entity. Those skilled in

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the art understand that, in practice, portions of the function provided by memory controller 106 may actually reside in the circuitry associated with processor 105, main memory 108, and/or auxiliary storage interface 112c.

5 Terminal interface 112a allows system administrators and computer programmers to communicate with computer system 101, normally through monitor 104, keyboard 103, mouse, trackball and the like or through programmable workstations. Although the system 101 depicted in FIG. 1 contains only a single main
0 processor 105 and a single system bus 114, it should be understood that the present invention applies equally to computer systems having multiple processors and multiple system buses. Similarly, although the system bus 114 of the preferred embodiment is a typical hardwired, multidrop bus, any
15 connection means that supports directional communication in a computer-related environment could be used. Input/output interface 112b allows computer system 101 via processor 105 to communicate with general input/output means 109, including a net connection 110, for sending and/or
20 receiving data, e.g. for a net connection with one or more further computer systems 111, or for sending or receiving of data to or from other parties. A plurality of computer systems like computer system 101, can be connected via the net connection 110 in the form of a network. In such a case, the
25 network computers 111 can be used as further input/output means, including the use as further storage locations. In the preferred embodiment, memory 108 suitably includes an operating system, programs and data, particularly a lock service module 113 (lock service), a first processing module 114, a
30 further processing module 115 and a lock object 116 for locking data objects in a database 117 available in DASD storage 107. It should be understood that for purposes of this application, in memory 108 is used in its broadest sense, and can include

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Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM), Static RAM (SRAM), flash memory, cache memory, etc. While not explicitly shown in FIG. 1, memory 108 may be a single type of memory component or may be composed of many different types of memory components. For example, memory 108 and CPU 105 may be distributed across several different computers that collectively comprise system 101. It should also be understood that programs in memory 108 can include any and all forms of computer programs, including source code, intermediate code, machine code, and any other representation of a computer program.

The operating system provides the basic functionality that controls the computer system 101. Operating system can comprise any suitable operating system, such as IBM's OS/400, OS/2, Microsoft's Windows, Java and the various flavours of UNIX. The database 117 provides the mechanism for persistently storing object data in the computer system 101, and can be any suitable, preferably relational database such as those available from IBM, Oracle or Microsoft.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that more than one of the mentioned processors may work in parallel in a computer system.

Referring now to figure 2, a further preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated by a first processing module 201, a lock service 205 and a lock object 206 located in a main memory of a computer system like the one shown in Fig. 1.

Before accessing one or more data objects in a database, processing module 201 passes the names of m key fields 202 of the n data objects to be locked, a table 203 of the values of the key fields for the n data objects to be locked and a number 204 of the maximum number of locks (here k) to the lock service 205. Thereby, the names of the key fields have to be in an

order, which fits to the structure of the data base and the data objects to be locked. After processing the received data, lock service 205 generates a lock object 206 having $x \leq k$ entries for the n data objects. The entries comprise values for the $x \cdot m$ key fields that are used to lock the n data objects. If n is smaller or equal than k , a table (lock object) is returned, which comprises the $n \cdot m$ values of the $n \cdot m$ key fields, since the number of data keys does not exceed the possible number of locks and all data objects can be locked with their full key. Otherwise, if n greater than k , wildcards are used to lock several values for one key field at once. To determine where to use the wildcards, the lock service 205 may use a heuristic method to optimise the locks. According to such a heuristic method, lock service 205 may first collect all values that appear per key field. This may be implemented by means of a table as shown by table 1:

Tab. 1: Internal table of key field values

Key Field	number of different values	Value
Field 1	y1	Val 1.1
		...
		Val 1.y1
...	...	...
Field m	ym	Val m.1
		...
		Val m.ym

20

The first column contains the names of the key fields 1 to m .
The second column contains a number $y1$ to ym of different

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values contained in the respective key field. The third column contains the different values val_1.1 to val_m.ym of the key fields 1 to m. Therefore, a field per key field is subdivided into a number of ym sub fields for a field m. The lock service
5 205 may then loop over the key fields and check, whether the number yi (i->1 to m) of different values is smaller than k. If yes, all the values for this key can be locked, if not, all key values are locked per wildcard. The method continues that way with the next key field considering, that the number of
0 created lock entries is the product of the number of values per key field, which must not exceed k ($k \leq y_1 * \dots * y_m$). In a preferred embodiment, table 1 may be sorted according to ascending or descending values yi before the loop described above is performed.

15

The following tables shows by way of non- limiting example how a lock object could look like. The example consists of a table 2 defining m=3 key fields 1 to 3, .a table 3 defining keys of n=18 data objects to be locked and a maximum number of k=10
20 locks.

Tab. 2: Names of key fields

Field no	Name
1	Controlling Area
2	Activity
3	Branch

Tab. 3: Keys of data objects to be locked

Controlling Area	Activity	Branch
1000	Open Account	A1
1000	Open Account	A2
1000	Open Account	A3
1000	Open Account	A4
1000	Open Account	A5
1000	Open Account	A6
1000	Open Account	A7
1000	Open Account	A8
1000	Open Account	A9
1000	Close Account	A1
1000	Close Account	A2
1000	Close Account	A3
1000	Close Account	A4
1000	Close Account	A5
1000	Close Account	A6
1000	Close Account	A7
1000	Close Account	A8
1000	Close Account	A9

These data are passed to the lock service 205 by processing module 201. After receipt, lock service 205 creates an internal table (table 4 in the example) in order to determine a balanced number of locks containing wildcards.

Tab. 4: Internal table of key field values

Key Field	Number of different values	Value
Controlling Area	1	1000
Activity	2	Open Account
		Close Account
Branch	9	A1
		A2
		A3
		A4
		A5
		A6
		A7
		A8
		A9

Look service 205 then checks, whether n is smaller or equal than k . Since this is not the case in the example, lock

5 service 205 loops over table 4 starting with field 1: The number of values for that field is smaller than 10 and therefore, all values for that field can be locked. Continuing with field 2, lock service 205 calculates the maximum number of lock entries for fields 1 and 2, which is 2, what is still

10 smaller than 10 and therefore, all values for fields 1 and 2 can be locked. Continuing with field 3, the analogous calculation yields a maximum number of 18 lock entries, what is greater than 10, and therefore, the values for field 3 can not be locked and are replaced by wildcards. Consequently, lock

service 205 creates a lock object having two entries. This can be seen in table 5: the lock object comprises a table with a column for each key field. The values of key fields 1 and 2 are entered in the respective fields, whereas the values of the key field 3 is replaced by a wildcard (**). As result, the 18 data objects in the database represented by the keys in table 3, are locked with a lock object having two entries. Thus, the activities open/close account would be locked in controlling area 1000 for all branches. If a second process should try to get access to data objects with those activities and controlling area part in branches B1 to B2, for example, this would not be possible, because the wildcards cover these branches as well.

15 Table 5: Lock object having 2 entries

Controlling Area	Activity	Branch
1000	Open Account	**
	Close Account	**

This situation may be improved by another embodiment of the invention according to which common characteristics of different values of a key field are determined and the determined common characteristics are entered together with a wildcard into the key fields. This is now explained in more detail by way of continuation of the preceding example.

When checking for common characteristics of the values of the key field 3, lock service 205 finds that the character 'A' is a common characteristic of all values of key field 3. This character can now be combined with a wildcard and the

combination can be entered in state of the mere wildcard into the fields of key field 3. The result is shown in table 6.

Now a second process could have access to those activities in the branches B1 to B9 at the same time.

Table 6: Lock object having 2 complete entries in the first 2 key fields and a common characteristic together with a wildcard in the remaining key field

Controlling Area	Activity	Branch
1000	Open Account	A*
	Close Account	A*

10

Referring now to figure 3, a further preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated by a flow diagram, which summarizes processing steps of an example of a lock service module. After a starting step 301, the lock service receives data from a data processing module 303 in a step 302. The data comprise m field names, m*n values of key fields for the n data objects to be locked and a maximum number of k lock entries. The lock service then determines in a step 304 an optimized number of $x \leq k$ lock entries, for example by creating and evaluating an internal table like table 4 described before. The lock service then determines in a step 305 whether values or wildcards are entered into the fields of the x entries of a lock object 307 to be created in step 306. The process then returns to step 302 and waits for a new lock request or ends in a step 308.

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Modifications and adaptations of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein.

5 The foregoing description of an implementation of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not exhaustive and does not limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may

0 be acquired from the practicing of the invention. For example, the described implementation includes software, but systems and methods consistent with the present invention may be implemented as a combination of hardware and software or in hardware alone. Additionally, although aspects of the present

15 invention are described for being stored in memory, one skilled in the art will appreciate that these aspects can also be stored on other types of computer-readable media, such as secondary storage devices, for example, hard disks, floppy disks, or CD-ROM; the Internet or other propagation medium; or

20 other forms of RAM or ROM.

Computer programs based on the written description and flow charts of this invention are within the skill of an experienced developer. The various programs or program modules can be

25 created using any of the techniques known to one skilled in the art or can be designed in connection with existing software. For example, programs or program modules can be designed in or by means of Java, C++, HTML, XML, or HTML with included Java applets or in SAP R/3 or ABAP. One or more of such modules can

30 be integrated in existing e-mail or browser software.

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While illustrative embodiments of the invention have been described herein, the present invention is not limited to the various preferred embodiments described herein, but includes any and all embodiments having equivalent elements, modifications, omissions, combinations (e.g., of aspects across various embodiments), adaptations and/or alterations as would be appreciated by those in the art based on the present disclosure. The limitations in the claims are to be interpreted broadly based on the language employed in the claims and not limited to examples described in the present specification or during the prosecution of the application, which examples are to be construed as non-exclusive. For example, in the present disclosure, the term "preferably" is non-exclusive and means "preferably, but not limited to."

15 Means-plus-function or step-plus-function limitations will only be employed where for a specific claim limitation all of the following conditions are present in that limitation: a) "means for" or "step for" is expressly recited; b) a corresponding function is expressly recited; and c) structure, material or

20 acts that support that structure are not recited.

Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended that

25 the specification and examples be considered as exemplary only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.

In the claims which follow and in the preceding

30 description of the invention, except where the context requires otherwise due to express language or necessary implication, the word "comprise" or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising" is used in an inclusive sense, i.e. to specify the presence of the stated features but not to preclude the

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presence or addition of further features in various embodiments of the invention.

5 A reference herein to a prior art document is not an admission that the document forms part of the common general knowledge in the art in Australia.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method for locking data objects in a computer system, the method comprising a lock service module receiving from a first processing module a request to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data objects, said method further comprising:
 - the lock service receiving names of one or more (m) key fields of the one or more data objects to be locked;
 - the lock service receiving n values for each of the m key fields of n data objects to locked;
 - the lock service receiving a maximum number (k) of locks to lock the n data objects;
 - the lock service checking whether $n \leq k$ and
 - 15 in case yes,
 - creating one or more lock objects comprising the m names and n values for the m key fields
 - in case no,
 - 20 querying the n values of the m key fields and determining numbers (y1 to ym) of different values (Val_1.1 to Val_m.ym) of the key fields 1 to m;
 - the lock service determining consecutively from a first to i-th field where $i \leq m$ until $y1 * \dots * yi \geq k$ and in case the condition is satisfied,
 - 25 - creating one or more lock objects comprising the names of the key fields 1 to m and values Val_1.1 to Val_(i-1).y(i-1) for the key fields 1 to i-1 and comprising wildcards for the remaining key fields.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - 30 determining one or more common characteristics of different values of a key field for the remaining key fields and writing the determined common characteristics and one or

more wildcards into the remaining key fields of the or each lock object.

3. A computer system comprising a lock mechanism for locking data objects, the lock mechanism comprising a lock service module capable of receiving a lock request from a first processing module to lock one or more (n) data objects for access for further data processing modules by creating one or more lock objects for the one or more data objects, comprising:
 - memory having program instructions;
 - input means for receiving and entering data;
 - output means for sending and presenting data
 - storage means for storing data;
 - a processor responsive to the program instructions;
 - said program instructions comprising program code means for performing a method according to any of claims 1 to 2 when the program instructions are loaded into the memory and executed by the processor.
4. A computer readable medium comprising program instructions for locking data objects in a computer system, the program instructions comprising instructions for: performing a method according to any of claims 1 or 2 when the program instructions are executed in the computer system.
5. A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium according to claim 4.
6. A method for locking data objects substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
7. A computer system comprising a lock mechanism substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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8. A computer readable medium substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
9. A computer program product substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

; Dated this 18th day of February 2004

) SAP AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT
By its Patent Attorneys
GRIFFITH HACK

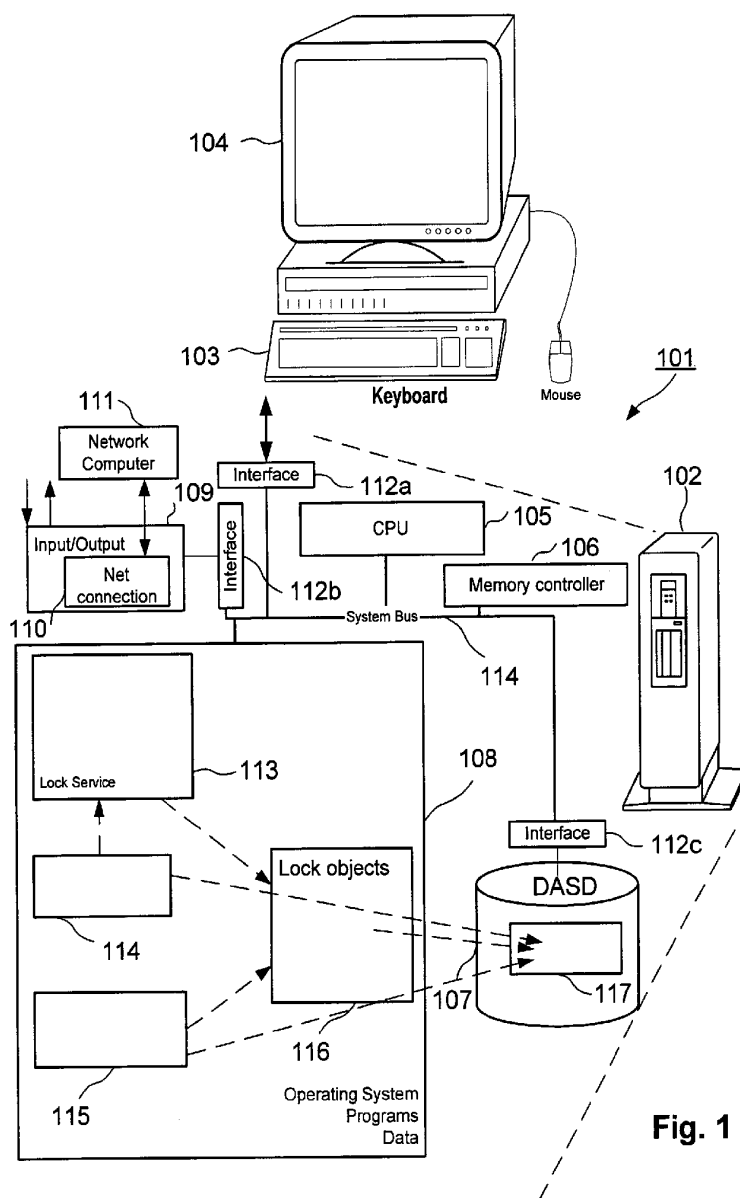


Fig. 1

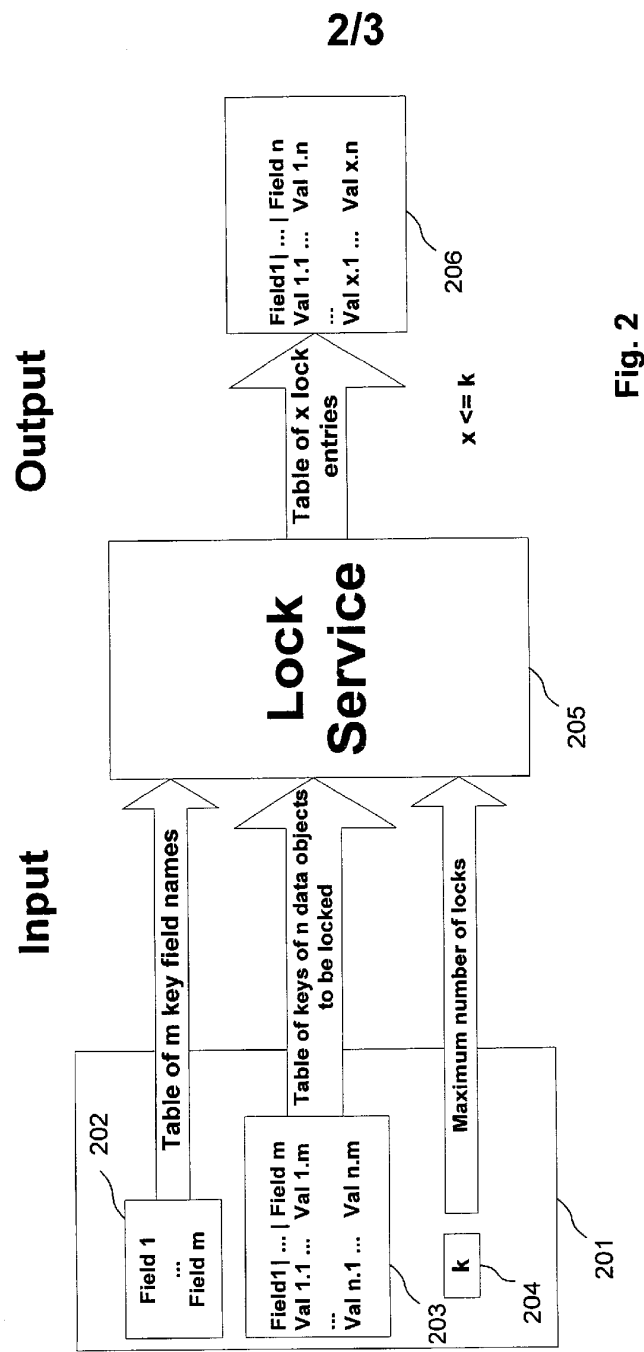


Fig. 2

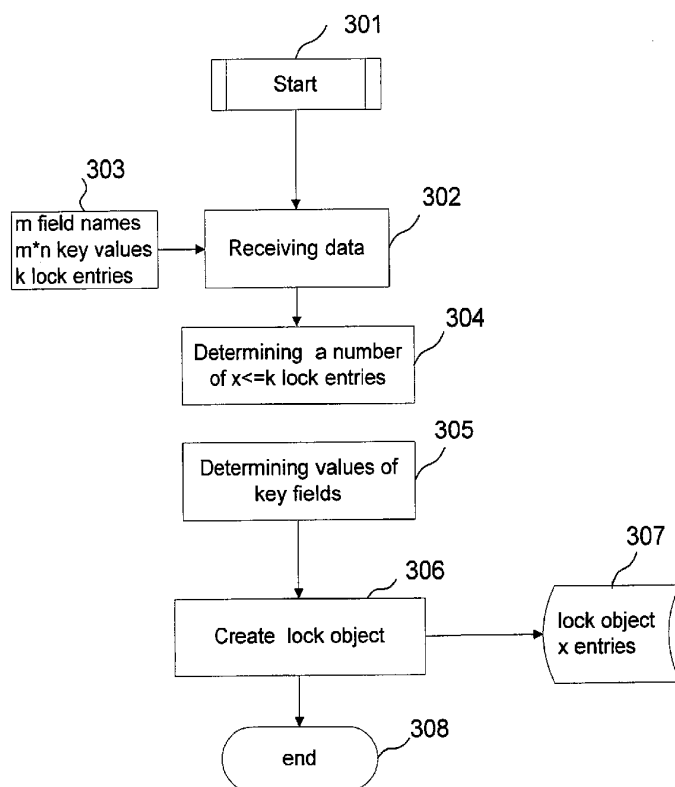


Fig. 3