VOLUME MOUNT AUTHENTICATION

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74 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets

Abstract

There is a variety of media that may be inserted into a reading or writing device, such as CD's, USB drives, floppy disks, memory sticks, and many other devices. Media is inserted into a media reading or writing device that is in communication with a computer or network device. Upon insertion of the media, a number of metadata regarding that media is available to the computer. The trustworthy calculator is typically a plug-in software module that processes each piece of volume metadata and applies a weighted score, resulting in a Trustworthy Factor. A scoring matrix denotes ranges of values of the Trustworthy Factor into a level of Trust Zone. Based on the Level of Trust Zone, appropriate action handlers may direct the computer to disallow the mounting of the media, may require specific authentication action to take place prior to allowing a mount of the media, or may indicate that the media may be mounted without further authentication. Upon completion of the execution of the action handlers, a decision to allow or disallow the mount is made.

473
Detect Insertion of Media 1 into Media Device 2

Extract Metadata 6

Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9

Calculate Trustworthy Factor Score 27

Load Scoring Matrix 11

Determine Level of Trust Zone 12

Execute Appropriate Zone Action Handler 14 to determine Zone Action Handler Response 28

Mount Media 1?

Disallow Mount

Allow Mount

Figure 1
User Logs into PC (Computing Device 3)

Automatically Start VolumeTrust 50 Application

Wait for media notification to analyze volume mount point 5

Spawn a Thread 29 (Supports multiple analyses to occur simultaneously)

Display Progress Bar 15

Calculate a Normalized Trustworthy Factor Score 27

FOR EACH metadata element 8 compute a score value 24 and a maximum possible score value 25. Apply weighing factors 23. Accumulate as a raw score 10 and accumulate as an overall maximum score 26.

Execute Zone Action Handler 14 for Determined Level of Trust Zone 12

Initialize Calculator 9 and Load Weighing Factors 23

Load Scoring Matrix (Plug-In) 11

Determine Level of Trust Zone 12

Convert Logical Disk 17 to Partition 18

Convert Partition 18 to Physical Drive 19

Fetch Logical Disk Data Metadata Element 8

Fetch Disk Partition Data Metadata Element 8

Fetch Physical Media Data Metadata Element 8

Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator (Plug-In) 9

Disallow Mount

Allow Mount

Figure 2
S110

User Logs Into Computing Device 3

S120

Automatically Start VolumeTrust 50 Application

S130

Identify Existing Volume Mount Points 5'

S160

Spawn a Thread 29 (Supports multiple analyses to occur simultaneously)

Figure 3
Execute Zone Action Handler 14 for Determined Level of Trust Zone 12

Mount Media 1? Zone Action Handler Response 39

No → Disallow Mount

Yes → Allow Mount

Add Volume Mount Point Icon 40 to Show Level of Trust Zone 12

Figure 4
Calculate a Trustworthy Factor Score 27

Load Scoring Matrix (Plug-In) 11

Identify Location (Network, Printer, Scanner, etc.)

Lookup Alternate Scoring Matrix 11' for Current Location

Determine Level of Trust Zone 12'

Figure 5
S300

Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 (Plug-In)

S310
Identify Location

S320
Lookup Calculation Steps 22 based on current location

S330
Load Calculation Steps 22 from Local PC

S350
Initialize Calculator and Load Weighing Factors 23

Figure 6
Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 (Plug-In)

- Identify Location
- Lookup Calculation Steps 22' for current location
- Download Calculation Steps 22' from Remote PC 32
- Initialize Calculator and Load Weighing Factors 23

Figure 7
Determine Level of Trust Zone 12

S700

Execute Zone Action Handler 14 for Determined Level of Trust Zone 12

Is Media 1' Previously Trusted?

S735

Always Associate Media 1' with Mount or Dismount Conclusion, Remember Media Action Handler 33

S760

Prompt for Password Action Handler 13

S710

Prompt for Biometric Action Handler 13'

S720

Prompt for Security Token Card Action Handler 13''

S730

Determine if user belongs to the Administrator Security Group Action Handler 13''

S740

Remember Media Zone Action Handler Response 33?

S750

Mount Media 1'' Zone Action Handler Response 33''

S800

Figure 8

Disallow Mount

Allow Mount
User Logs Into Computing Device 3

Automatically Start VolumeTrust 50 Application

Wait for media notification to analyze volume mount point 5

Spawn a Thread 29 (Supports multiple analyses to occur simultaneously)

User uses IR to "beam" data

Figure 9
1. **VOLUME MOUNT AUTHENTICATION**

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [ ] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.

**BACKGROUND**

1. **Field of the Invention**

   The present invention relates to the authentication of volume mount points, and in particular the ability of an operating system to selectively accept or reject a volume mount point request for media based on a configurable set of rules.

2. **Description of Prior Art**

   Individuals, corporations and governments face an increasing threat from within. Unethical individuals have at their disposal a multitude of high volume storage mediums available by simply walking into a local electronics store. Anyone can pay several hundred dollars or less to purchase storage devices that are highly resistant to detection. These devices assuredly help simplify the act of corporate and government espionage and greatly facilitate the proliferation of computer viruses, electronic Trojan Horses, and similar objects of computer mass infiltration. Even institutions that employ security checkpoints where backpacks and briefcases are searched and everyone must walk through a metal detector face the daunting challenge of detecting and deterring someone from walking out the front door with 256 MB, 512 MB, 2 GB, 4 GB or more of business intelligence, classified drawings, or sensitive financial documents on a device that is roughly the size of a compact disc.

   Undoubtedly plug-and-play hard drives, palm-sized mobile storage solutions, infrared and radio frequency (RF) over-the-air digital data communications are now pervasive in today's society. As the popularity and number of these types of devices continue to grow, enterprise Information Technology (IT) departments, as well as a growing consumer base, are demanding methods to authenticate and trust certain physical devices while rejecting access to other physically identical devices. Obtaining such authentication and trust has to be accomplished in a way that does not compromise business productivity. To illustrate by example, consider employee A, who steps away from a physically secured laptop computer. Visitor B is able to quickly plug a USB flash drive into the computer. Visitor B may quickly copy trade secrets from the computer to the USB flash drive, or may download a computer virus from the USB flash drive to the computer. Visitor B is able to complete these tasks and remove the USB flash drive prior to employee A's return. Employee A will have little chance to know that business intelligence was taken, nor that a virus was implanted.

**BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention provides a dynamic and expedient means of authenticating one or more mountable volumes. If the circumstances surrounding the volume undergoing authentication are found to be sufficiently proper, the volume is considered trustworthy and a mounting request is allowed to proceed. If circumstances are found to be outside the range of that considered proper, the mounting request is denied. In the case of a volume already mounted, dismounting action may be taken. The present invention further provides a means of determining whether the found circumstances are proper, that is trustworthy, or not.

The core application, called Volume Trust, relies on a series of fuzzy logic calculations that inspect the attributes (size, number of sectors, drive interface type, etc.) of a volume, applying weighted calculations to determine a raw score and an overall maximum possible score. This raw score is then mathematically adjusted to be within the range of 0 to 100, resulting in a Trustworthy Factor score for the volume undergoing authentication. The Trustworthy Factor score can be calculated in a completely non-intrusive way, meaning that no data whatsoever has to be written to the volume during this process. As a result, read-only media such as CD-ROM's and DVD's may be assigned unique Trustworthy Factor scores and there is no change in the amount of free space available on read/write volumes after the process completes.

The Trustworthy Factor score is not an absolute threshold. Analogies can be drawn to the popular consumer credit rating system. In that system, the higher the credit score, the less risk there is that the consumer will default on a loan. However, regardless of how high the credit score is, there is always the possibility of the consumer defaulting on the loan. Similarly, the Trustworthy Factor score increases, the likelihood of the volume containing malicious code or being used for malicious purposes decreases, though the threat is never entirely eradicated. The only true way to eradicate the threat from mobile, external storage devices is to build a computer that has no external ports and is physically secured to ensure new drives can not be inserted. In the course of day-to-day business operations, such a device is impractical and would be a large impediment to business productivity.

By its very nature, a weighted scoring system provides administrators the ability to factor each capability of the volume in a different way. For instance, consider this example that inspects only the disk interface. An IDE hard drive mounted as a fixed disk inside a computer, where the computer case has been secured, might score a Trustworthy Factor score in the mid-sixties and be considered a highly trustable volume, a high level of trust. A 160 GB external IEEE 1394 drive, which resides outside the computer case, might score a Trustworthy Factor score in the low thirties. It may be considered a moderately trustable volume, since there are no pocket-sized or palm-sized drives meeting that description. A 64 MB USB keychain drive might yield a Trustworthy Factor score less than twenty, meaning that it should be considered as untrustworthy and potentially a security threat, a low level of trust.

Typically, over twenty five different factors, called metadata elements, are examined in the computation of a volume's Trustworthy Factor score. Each factor can be given different weighing factors, as appropriate for the organization being served. For example, consider two devices, one that discloses the number of sectors and tracks it contains and another that does not. The device that discloses the number of sectors and information is more trustworthy than the device that fails to disclose. Thus, the disclosing device receives a slightly higher Trustworthy Factor score. However, other factors may be more important in determining the trustworthiness of the device. Another factor is the interface type used to interact with the device (IDE, USB, IEEE 1394, et cetera). This factor indicates the portability of the volume. IDE is considered more trustworthy than USB for the simple fact that it is difficult to mount an IDE drive outside the computer case. Thus, an IDE drive mounted inside a locked computer case should be considered to have a high level of trust.

One of the benefits of the present invention is the use of administrator-configured weighing factors to discriminate more important volume factors, metadata elements, from others. This allows the Volume Trust application to be adjusted to
OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

While the present invention may be practiced using software, hardware or firmware, it is an object of the present invention to provide a software based solution to volume mount authentication.

An advantage of the present invention is that it may be cost-effectively deployed to a large installation base through common software distribution techniques and does not require technicians to manipulate computer hardware.

The present invention is backwards compatible, easily working with existing computer infrastructure.

The present invention is operating system independent.

The present invention is independent of programming language.

The present invention allows a storage device, such as a DVD or CD-ROM drive, or card reader, to remain online while scrutinizing the media associated with the storage device.

The present invention does not require the modification of existing user security privileges, nor does it require the creation or modification of specialized security privilege groups.

The present invention operates in real-time by leveraging the event notification mechanisms built into most operating systems.

The present invention does not rely on cryptographic algorithms susceptible to aging, which become insecure over time, nor does it rely on expensive and administratively time-consuming Public Key Identification (PKI).

The present invention does not require any modification of existing computer or computer peripheral manufacturing techniques.

The present invention allows an administrator or user to refine the fuzzy logic used to establish trust between the device and media without requiring access to source code and redistributing new binary run-time objects.

The present invention allows for easy audit and logging of external storage device interactions through its robust and flexible daisy-chained list of zone action handlers.

The present invention works on virtually all devices that contain a microprocessor, from computers to phones to personal digital assistants across operating systems and programming languages.

The present invention provides the ability to slide the level of trust based upon external security factors, such as different states of terrorist alerts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

The present invention and its advantages will be better understood by referring to the following detailed description and the attached drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is an overall flow-chart view of the basic process steps of the volume mount authentication process, S100 through S800;

FIG. 2 is a detailed flow-chart view of the core process steps of the volume mount authentication process;

FIG. 3 is a flow-chart view of the boot analysis steps;

FIG. 4 is a flow-chart view of the graphic identification steps;

FIG. 5 is a flow-chart view of dynamic adjustment of the scoring matrix, based on the perceived location of the computing device;

FIG. 6 is a flow-chart view of dynamic adjustment of the calculating steps of the Trustworthy Factor Calculator, based on the perceived location of the computing device;

FIG. 7 is a flow-chart view of remotely accessed dynamic adjustment of the calculating steps of the Trustworthy Factor Calculator, based on the perceived location of the computing device;

FIG. 8 is a flow-chart view of the authentication steps;

FIG. 9 is a flow-chart view of the volume mount point steps; and

FIG. 10 is a flow-chart view of the metadata extraction steps.

REFERENCE NUMERALS

1 Media
2 Media device
3 Computing device
4 Computer
5 Volume mount point
6 Metadata
7 Metadata object
8 Metadata element
9 Trustworthy factor calculator
10 Raw score
11 Scoring matrix
12 Level of trust zone
13 Action handler
14 Zone action handler
15 Progress bar
16 Volume mount notification
17 Logical disk information
18 Physical disk partition address
19 Physical storage device address
20 Data communication channels
21 Media computing devices
22 Calculation steps
23 Weighing factors
24 Score value
25 Maximum possible score value
26 Overall maximum score
27 Trustworthy factor score
28 Ultimate signal
29 Thread
30 Alternate calculation steps
31 Alternate scoring matrix
32 Remote location
33 Remember Media action handler
34 Media Previously Trusted action handler
35 External security level
36 Data structures
37 Matrix of numerical scores
38 Matrix of weighing factors
39 Zone action handler response
40 volume mount point icon
50 Volume Trust (application)
S100 Detect Insertion of Media
S110 User Logs onto Computer
S120 Automatically Start Application
S130 Identify Existing Mount Points
S140 Wait for Media Notification
S150 User Inserts External Storage Device with Media
S160 Spawn a Thread
S170 Display Progress Bar
S200 Extract Media Metadata
S210 Convert Logical Disk to Partition
S220 Convert Partition to Physical Drive
S230 Fetch Storage Device Data
S240 Fetch Logical Disk Data
S250 Fetch Disk Partition Data
S260 Fetch Physical Media Data
S270 Fetch Data Channel Data
S280 Fetch Media Device Data
S300 Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator
S310 Identify Location
S320 Lookup Trustworthy Factor for Identified Location
S330 Load Trustworthy Factor Calculator from Local Computer
S340 Download Trustworthy Factor Calculator from Remote Location
S350 Initialize Calculator and Load Weight Factors
S400 Calculate Trustworthiness Factor
S410 Compute Actual and Maximum Possible Score
S420 Calculate Normalized Trustworthiness Factor
S500 Load Scoring Matrix
S510 Identify Location
S520 Lookup Scoring Matrix for Identified Location
S600 Determine Level of Trust Zone
S700 Execute Appropriate Zone Action Handlers
S705 Check if Media Previously Trusted
S710 Prompt for Password
S720 Prompt for Biometric
S730 Prompt for Security Token Card
S740 Determine if User Belongs to the Administrator Security Group
S750 Remember Media Decision
S760 Always Associate Media with Mount or Dismount Conclusion
S770 Determine and Track Association with an Expiration Date
S800 Allow—Disallow Mount
S810 Show Level of Trust Zone

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

An overall flow-chart view of the basic process steps of the volume mount authentication process, S100 through S800, is shown in FIG. 1. There is a wide assortment of media currently available that may be inserted into a media reading or writing device. Examples include, but are not limited to: CD’s, USB drives, floppy disks, memory sticks, and many other devices. Media 1 is inserted into a media reading or writing device 2 that is in communication with a computing device 3, such as a computer or network device. Computing device 3 detects insertion of the media, step S100. Upon insertion of media 1, data structures containing metadata 6 related to media 1 becomes available to computing device 3. For example, metadata may include information about the type of media, its cryptographic characteristics including its ID, its actual physical size, the file architecture used (such as “FAT32”, “FAT16”, etcetera), sector size, etcetera. Metadata 6 is extracted, step S200. If not already available, a trustworthy factor calculator 9 is loaded, step S300. Trustworthy factor calculator 9 is typically a plug-in software module that processes each metadata element and applies a weighed score, resulting in a trustworthy factor score 27, step S400. A scoring matrix 11 is loaded, step S500. Scoring matrix 11 denotes ranges of values of the trustworthy factor score 27 into zones, typically four zones. Scoring matrix 11 is used to convert trustworthy factor score 27 into a zone number, called a Level of Trust Zone 12, step S600. Based on the value of Level of Trust Zone 12, an appropriate Zone Action Handler 14 is selected, step S700. By returning a Zone Action Handler Response 28, Zone Action Handler 14 may direct computing device 3 to disallow the mounting of media 1, may require specific authentication action to take place prior to allowing a mount of media 1, or may indicate that media 1 may be mounted without further authentication. Typically, Zone Action Handler 14 comprises a plurality of action handlers that are executed in succession. Upon completion of execution of Zone Action Handler 14, a decision to allow or disallow the mount is made, step S800.

Furthermore, a media device may be hosted by a second computing device. Such second computing device may abstract the media device from the first computing device. For example, a desktop PC is a first computing device which is performing volume mount authentication on a PDA (a handheld portable computer) that contains a media device such as a hard disk storage drive. The PDA in this example is a second computing device which is hosting the media device. In all cases, the second computing device, or any computing intermediary, is effectively the same as a media device which it is hosting. The meaning of the term media device may include any media device, its host, or other computing intermediary.

A detailed flow-chart view of the core process steps of the volume mount authentication process is illustrated in FIG. 2. Typically, a user logs into computing device 3, step S110. A personal computer is used for purposes of illustration, but computing device 3 may be any of a myriad of devices either now known or developed in the future. For example, computing device 3 may be a Windows or LINUX based personal computer, a Macintosh, a UNIX machine, a Personal Digital Assistant, a telephone or telephone system, a network controller, server, workstation, digital appliance, computerized test equipment, custom computer, etcetera. Typically, the volume mount authentication application, called Volume Trust 50, is started automatically, step S120. Application Volume Trust 50 polls or waits for notification to analyze a volume mount point 5, step S140. A volume mount point is an abstraction of the memory addresses that reference a device or media capable of being mounted or recognized by the computer. Volume mount points exist for all typical computer devices, especially those holding data, such as hard drives, floppy disks, CD/DVD drives, etcetera. Volume mount points also exist for devices connected by way of infrared and radio signals. Beaming data to a computer by way of an infrared signal creates a volume mount point, as does personal area networks, such as “Blue Tooth”, and even radio frequency connections to telephone cell towers. The volume mount point, regardless of the form it takes, establishes the link between the logical connection and the physical connection to a device and its media. When a user inserts an external storage media device 2 with media 1, or media 1 into a connected storage media device 2, step S150, a volume mount notification 16 occurs and is recognized by application Volume Trust 50. Application Volume Trust 50 spawns a thread 29, step S160, to begin the volume trust authentication process. While it is not necessary to spawn a thread in order to practice the present invention, it is of great advantage to use multi-threading techniques. Use of multi-threading allows
authentication of a plurality of media while the first media is still undergoing authentication. Optionally, a progress bar is displayed for the user's benefit, step S170.

Volume mount notification must be decoded so metadata that is related to media may be extracted. This is done by first converting the logical disk information 17 into a physical disk partition address 18, step S210. Note, physical disk partition address 18 is commonly known to refer to any block of storage space that may be read from, written to, or is both readable and writable. Physical disk partition address 18 is then converted into a physical storage device address 19, step S220. These steps of deabstracting the information are typically performed using routine libraries, and these steps are well known to those skilled in the art. Once the physical drive information is obtained, the storage device data is extracted, step S230, along with logical disk data, S240, disk partition data, S250, and physical media data, S260, from their respective data structures, as is appropriate for the media being authenticated. Such collected metadata 6 is stored as a volume metadata object 7. Typically, at least two dozen metadata elements describing media and media device are gathered.

One or more data communications channels may exist between the computing device and the media device or media itself. In such cases, it is also possible to collect metadata associated with the data communications channel.

The media may also be associated with one or more media devices, data communications channels, or media computing devices, each of which are abstracted behind the volume mount point. For instance, the computing device under authentication may detect a volume mount point from an infrared signal being sent from a handheld computing device containing a miniature hard disk drive that is plugged into the handheld computing device's USB port. The miniature hard disk drive represents the media device. In such a configuration, the computing device under authentication may retrieve metadata from the inter-communication channel, the handheld computing device itself, its USB data channel, and the miniature hard disk drive.

Trustworthy factor calculator 9 is loaded, step S300. Typically, in a Windows operating system, trustworthy factor calculator 9 is a dynamic linked library, a plug in module. Trustworthy factor calculator 9 looks up and loads calculation steps associated with the metadata elements of interest. Trustworthy factor calculator 9 loads weighing factors which correspond to the metadata elements, step S350. For each metadata element 8, Trustworthy factor calculator 9, using calculation steps, determines a score value and its maximum possible score value. Weighing factors are applied to each score value and each maximum possible score value. Weighing factors 23 are accumulated as a raw score 10 and the maximum possible score values 25 are accumulated as an overall maximum score 26, step S410. Accumulated raw score 10 is normalized, based on overall maximum score 26, step S420, establishing a trustworthy factor score 27. Typically, for convenience, trustworthy factor score 27 is set to create a range of zero (0) to one hundred (100). This is accomplished by simply dividing accumulated raw score 10 by overall maximum score 26 and multiplying by one hundred (100).

Scoring matrix 11 is loaded, step S500. Typically, in a Windows brand operating system, this module is a dynamic linked library, a plug in module. Scoring matrix 11 is a set of established thresholds used to classify resulting Trustworthy Factor Score 27 created the Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9. The zone encompassing Trustworthy Factor Score 27 is identified as the Level of Trust Zone 12, step S600. For example, a trustworthy factor score falling between 0 to 15 may be classed as zone one (1), a trustworthy factor score falling between 16 to 50 as zone two (2), a trustworthy factor score falling between 51 to 80 as zone three (3), and a trustworthy factor score falling between 81 to 100 as zone four (4). Once Level of Trust Zone 12 is identified, the zone information is used to select and execute a Zone Action Handler 14 for that Level of Trust Zone 12, step S700. Continuing the example, a trustworthy factor score of 45 falls between 16 and 50 and is therefore classed as zone two (2). The Zone Action Handler corresponding to that zone two (2) is then executed.

Zone Action Handler 14 may perform a variety of actions, which will be detailed in FIG. 6.

Zone Action Handler 14 returns an ultimate signal, a Zone Action Handler Response 39, to allow mount of media 1 or disallow mount of media 1, step S800. This concludes the volume mount authentication process.

FIG. 3 further details the boot analysis steps in the case of authenticating existing volume mount points. Typically, a user logs into computing device 3, step S110. Typically, application Volume Trust 50 is started automatically, step S120. Application Volume Trust 50 polls for existing volume mount points seen by computing device 3, step S140. For each volume mount point 5, application Volume Trust 50 spawns a thread, step S160, to begin the volume mount authentication process for each detected volume mount point 5.

FIG. 4 illustrates an optional step of alerting the user that a volume mount has been authenticated by the Volume Trust application. Zone Action Handler 14 returns Zone Action Handler Response 39 to allow mount of media 1 or disallow mount of media 1, step S800. If the mount is allowed, a volume mount point icon is displayed or otherwise communicated, reflecting the Level of Trust Zone for which the mount was allowed. This alerts the user of the trust level circumstances which allowed media 1 or media device 2 to be mounted. This icon or communication may be used by the operating system, throughout the operating system application dialogs, to denote the Level of Trust Zone.

FIG. 5 illustrates use of the device connection information to guide dynamic adjustment of scoring matrix 11. Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 returns Trustworthy Factor Score 27, step S420. The initial scoring matrix 11 is loaded, step S500. Devices connected to computing device 3 such as network connections, printers, media devices are identified, step S510, establishing a perceived location for computing device 3. For example, it may be found that computing device 3, say a laptop computer, is connected to a wireless network at a remote location rather than docked to a high-security network inside an office at a fixed location. Adjustments to the scoring matrix 11 are selected from one or more alternate scoring matrices 11', based on the perceived location of computing device 3, step S520. Continuing with the laptop computer example, scoring matrix 11 may be adjusted, or an alternate scoring matrix 11' loaded, to reflect a higher score requirement in order to produce a mount authentication. The Level of Trust Zone 12 is determined by comparing the Trustworthy Factor Score 27 to the adjusted scoring matrix 11', step S600.

FIG. 6 illustrates use of device connection information to guide dynamic adjustment of the Trustworthy Factor Calculator. Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 is loaded, step S300. Devices connected to computing device 3 are identified, step S310. Based on the perceived identified location, the appropriate calculation steps are selected, step S320. For example, it may be found that computing device 3, say a laptop computer, is connected to a wireless network at a remote location rather than docked to a high-security network.
inside an office at a fixed location. This means that calculation steps 22, one for remote wireless operation, are required. Calculation steps 22 are loaded, step S330. Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 then loads weighing factors 23 which have been previously determined for the media 1 and media device 2 undergoing authentication, step S350.

FIG. 7 illustrates use of device connection information to guide dynamic adjustment of Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9, where calculation steps 22 are obtained from a remote location 32, such as over a network or the internet. Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 is loaded, step S300. Devices connected to computing device 3 are identified, step S310. Based on the perceived identified location, the appropriate calculation steps 22 to use are selected, step S320. For example, it may be found that computing device 3, say a laptop computer, is connected to a wireless network at a remote location rather than docked to a high-security network inside an office at a fixed location. This means that calculation steps 22, one for remote wireless operation, are required. For very high security situations, it may be required that calculation steps 22 may not be obtained from computing device 3, rather must be downloaded from a specific secure remote location. Calculation steps 22 are loaded from a remote location, step S340. Trustworthy Factor Calculator 9 then loads weighing factors 23 which have been previously determined for the media 1 and media device 2 undergoing authentication, step S350.

FIG. 8 illustrates various details of the authentication process, including actions for external additional authentication, which may be called upon by a selected Zone Action Handler. Scoring matrix 11 is used to convert Trustworthy Factor Score 27 into Level of Trust Zone 12, step S600. Based on Level of Trust Zone 12, Zone Action Handler 14 is selected, step S700. Note that Zone Action Handler 14 may in practice embody one or more action handlers 13, each of which performs particular tasks. Zone Action Handler 14 refers to the collective actions of all action handlers 13. Zone Action Handler 14 may return a response that recommends or directs computing device 3 to disallow the mounting of media 1, may require specific authentication action to take place prior to allowing a mount of media 1, or may indicate that media 1 may be mounted without further authentication. For instance, one action handler 13 may prompt the user for a password, step S710, then call a second action handler 13 to prompt for biometric information, step S720, which in turn calls a third action handler 13 to prompt for a security token card, step S730, then calling a fourth action handler 13 to determine whether the user belongs to an administrative security group, step S740. Each of these action handlers 13, 13', 13", returns a response. Various other authentication steps, now known or to be developed, may be programmed into a Zone Action Handler 14 or its action handlers 13. Upon completion of execution of Zone Action Handler 14, a Zone Action Handler Response 39 is returned and a decision to allow or disallow the mount is made, step S800.

In an alternative embodiment, Zone Action Handler 14 may include the capability to decide whether to remember the external additional authentication for the particular media or media device being authenticated, step S750. In such case, Zone Action Handler 14 includes a Remember Media Action Handler 33, which may be configured to always associate the particular media 1 with a mount or dismount conclusion, step S760. Such being the case, the next time that particular media 1 is subject to an authentication request, another action handler, the Media Previously Trusted Action Handler 34, may directly return a mount or dismount conclusion without invoking other action handlers to prompt for password, biometrics, security token card, or administrator security group determination, step S780. An additional alternate embodiment is to enable the Remember Media Action Handler 33 to grant such mount or dismount association for a fixed period of time, or other validity condition, step S770. In such case, Media Previously Trusted Action Handler 34 uses the period of time or other validity condition in making its mount or dismount conclusion.

FIG. 9 illustrates volume mount point steps. Typically, a user logs into computing device 3, step S110. Typically, application Volume Trust 50 is started automatically, step S120. Application Volume Trust 50 polls or waits for notification to analyze a volume mount point 5, step S140. A notification may occur when a device beams an infrared or wireless signal to the computing device or a device attached to the computing device, step S155. Application Volume Trust 50 spawns thread 29, step S160, to begin the volume mount authentication process.

FIG. 10 illustrates various details of the metadata extraction process. Partition information 18 is converted into physical drive information 19, step S220. Once the physical drive information 19 is obtained, the storage device data is extracted, step S230, along with logical disk data, step S240, disk partition data, step S250, and physical media data, step S260, as is appropriate for the media being authenticated. Additionally, it is optionally possible to obtain data associated with the data communications channel 20, step S270, and the media device 2 itself, including its hosted computing device, if one exists, step S280. The collected metadata 6 is stored as a volume metadata object 7, composed of metadata elements 8. The Trustworthy Factor Calculator is loaded, step S300.

An alternate embodiment of the present invention includes use of external reporting of security levels to adjust the scoring matrix. A governmental agency, an industry, a specific plant or locale may issue security alerts of various levels. For example, a refinery may receive "red", "orange", "yellow", and "green" security levels, depending on external intelligence, terrorist action, or geopolitical conditions. These external security levels may be used to automatically modify the scoring matrix. In this example, a "red" or "orange" security level, indicating a threatening security condition, may be used to require greater trustworthy factor scores to meet specific level of trust zone thresholds. In such case, the external security levels are used as indicators to adjust or replace the scoring matrix to reflect these more stringent security requirements.

Although the description above contains many specifications, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments of this present invention. Persons skilled in the art will understand that the method and apparatus described herein may be practiced, including but not limited to, the embodiments described. Further, it should be understood that the invention is not to be unduly limited to the foregoing which has been set forth for illustrative purposes. Various modifications and alternatives will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the true scope of the invention. While there has been illustrated and described particular embodiments of the present invention, it will be appreciated that numerous changes and modifications will occur to those skilled in the art, and it is intended as herein disclosed to cover those changes and modifications which fall within the true spirit and scope of the present invention.

1. A method for authenticating computer media for communication with a computing device, comprising the steps of:
a) detecting a media volume mount point;
b) deabstracting a logical address of said media volume mount point into a physical disk partition address;

c) receiving a plurality of metadata elements from data structures associated with one or more components from the list comprising: said computer media, said physical storage device address, a data communications channel, and said media volume mount point;
d) loading a trustworthy factor calculator wherein said trustworthy factor calculator comprises calculation steps producing score values and maximum possible score values associated with said metadata elements;
e) initializing said trustworthy factor calculator with a matrix of weighing factors associated with said plurality of metadata elements;
f) accumulating a raw score based on said score values for said plurality of metadata elements, wherein each score value used in said accumulation of raw said raw score is adjusted by said associated weighing factors, accumulating an overall maximum possible score for said maximum possible score values, wherein each maximum possible score value used in said accumulation of said overall maximum score is adjusted by said associated weighing factors, normalizing said raw score withsaid overall maximum score, whereby a trustworthy factor score is produced;
g) initializing said trustworthy factor calculator with a scoring matrix having discrete level of trust zone values associated with trustworthy factor scores;
h) comparing said trustworthy factor score with said scoring matrix, whereby a level of trust zone value is produced;
i) executing at least one zone action handler based on said level of trust zone value, said zone action handler returning at least one zone action handler response; and
j) determining whether said volume mount point authentication should be permitted or denied based on the result of said zone action handlers response.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said detecting a media volume mount point comprises detecting existing volume mount points recognized by the computing device.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to said computing device.

4. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to an operating system of said computing device.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to a user of said computing device.

6. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said trustworthy factor calculator loads calculation steps from a remote location.

7. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said trustworthy factor calculator loads calculation steps locally from said computing device.

8. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
a) identifying devices connected to said computing device; and

b) loading alternate calculation steps producing score values and maximum possible score values associated with said metadata elements, said alternate loading based on the results of said identifying of devices connected to said computing device.

9. The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein said alternate calculation steps are loaded from said computing device.

10. The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein said alternate calculation steps are loaded from a remote location.

11. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
a) identifying devices connected to said computing device; and

b) adjusting said scoring matrix based upon the results of said identification of devices connected to said computing device.

12. The method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said adjustments to said scoring matrix are loaded from a remote location.

13. The method as claimed in claim 11 wherein said adjustments to said scoring matrix are loaded from said computing device.

14. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said scoring matrix having discrete level of trust zone values is loaded from said computing device.

15. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said scoring matrix having discrete level of trust zone values is loaded from a remote location.

16. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of requiring specific authentication action.

17. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler further comprises the step of determining whether the user belongs to a particular group.

18. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler further comprises the step of determining whether the user belongs to an administrative security group.

19. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting the user for a password.

20. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting for biometric information.

21. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting a security token card.

22. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the step of recording said zone action handler responses for said computer media undergoing authentication.

23. The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein said recording of zone action handler responses is made on said computing device.

24. The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein said recording of zone action handler responses is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

25. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said recording of said validity condition is made on said computing device.

26. The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein said recording of said validity condition is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

27. The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein said recording of said validity condition is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

28. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the step of recording a validity period of time.
29. The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein said recording of said validity period of time is made on said computing device.

30. The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein said recording of said validity period of time is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

31. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of:
   a) detecting a recorded zone action handler response; and
   b) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said recorded zone action handler response.

32. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of:
   a) detecting a recorded validity condition;
   b) testing for said validity condition; and
   c) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said testing of said validity condition.

33. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of:
   a) detecting a recorded validity period of time;
   b) obtaining a present time;
   c) determining whether said present time is within said validity period of time; and
   d) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said determination.

34. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said computing device communicates with said media through at least one communications channel.

35. The method as claimed in claim 34, further comprising the step of receiving a plurality of metadata elements from data structures associated with said communications channel.

36. The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of receiving a plurality of metadata elements from data structures associated with devices abstracted behind said media volume mount point.

37. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
   a) identifying an external security level indicator; and
   b) adjusting said discrete level of trust zone values associated with trustworthy factor scores, based on the results of said identification of external security level.

38. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of deabstracting said media volume mount point into a physical storage device address comprises:
   a) deabstracting a logical address of said media mount point into a physical disk partition address; and
   b) deabstracting said physical disk partition address media volume mount point into said physical storage device address.

39. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said detecting a media volume mount point comprises detecting existing volume mount points recognized by the computing device.

40. The method as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to said computing device.

41. The method as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to an operating system of said computing device.

42. The method as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the step of communicating said level of trust zone value to a user of said computing device.

43. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said trustworthy factor calculator loads calculation steps from a remote location.

44. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said trustworthy factor calculator loads calculation steps locally from said computing device.

45. The method as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the steps of:
   a) identifying devices connected to said computing device; and
   b) loading alternate calculation steps producing score values and maximum possible score values associated with said metadata elements, said alternate loading based on the results of said identifying of devices connected to said computing device.

46. The method as claimed in claim 45 wherein said alternate calculation steps are loaded from said computing device.

47. The method as claimed in claim 45 wherein said alternate calculation steps are loaded from a remote location.

48. The method as claimed in claim 48 further comprising the steps of:
   a) identifying devices connected to said computing device; and
   b) adjusting said scoring matrix based upon the results of said identification of devices connected to said computing device.

49. The method as claimed in claim 48 wherein said adjustments to said scoring matrix are loaded from a remote location.

50. The method as claimed in claim 48 wherein said adjustments to said scoring matrix are loaded from said computing device.

51. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said scoring matrix having discrete level of trust zone values is loaded from said computing device.

52. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said scoring matrix having discrete level of trust zone values is loaded from a remote location.

53. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of requiring specific authentication action.

54. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler further comprises the step of determining whether the user belongs to a particular group.

55. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler further comprises the step of determining whether the user belongs to an administrative security group.

56. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting the user for a password.

57. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting for biometric information.

58. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of a zone action handler comprises the step of prompting a security token card.

59. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the step of recording said zone action handler responses for said computer media undergoing authentication.

60. The method as claimed in claim 59, wherein said recording of zone action handler responses is made on said computing device.

61. The method as claimed in claim 59, wherein said recording of zone action handler responses is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

62. The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the step of recording a validity condition.
63. The method as claimed in claim 62, wherein said recording of said validity condition is made on said computing device.

64. The method as claimed in claim 62, wherein said recording of said validity condition is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

65. The method as claimed in claim 38, wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the step of recording a validity period of time.

66. The method as claimed in claim 65, wherein said recording of said validity period of time is made on said computing device.

67. The method as claimed in claim 65, wherein said recording of said validity period of time is made on said computer media undergoing authentication.

68. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of: a) detecting a recorded zone action handler response; and b) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said recorded zone action handler response.

69. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of: a) detecting a recorded validity condition; b) testing for said validity condition; and c) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said testing of said validity condition.

70. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said execution of at least one of said zone action handler comprises the steps of: a) detecting a recorded validity period of time; b) obtaining a present time; c) determining whether said present time is within said validity period of time; and d) returning a zone action handler response, based upon said determination.

71. The method as claimed in claim 38 wherein said computing device communicates with said media through at least one communications channel.

72. The method as claimed in claim 71, further comprising the step of receiving a plurality of metadata elements from data structures associated with said communications channel.

73. The method as claimed in claim 38, further comprising the step of receiving a plurality of metadata elements from data structures associated with devices abstracted behind said media volume mount point.

74. The method as claimed in claim 38 further comprising the steps of: a) identifying an external security level indicator; and b) adjusting said discrete level of trust zone values associated with trustworthy factor scores, based on the results of said identification of external security level.