What is claimed is~~HAT IS CLAIMED IS~~:

1. A method for upgrading a database that is still being accessed in an online service, comprising:

starting an upgrade process of a database used in the online service that includes updating a schema that is used by the database; wherein the database being upgraded continues to receive, and process, and perform requests from web servers for database operations throughout the upgrade process of the schema;

upgrading the~~a~~ schema of the database currently being utilized to an upgraded schema; wherein the upgraded schema is backwards compatible with the schema;

after upgrading the ~~current~~ schema to the upgraded schema, upgrading web servers of the online service to use the upgraded schema; and

the upgraded web servers accessing the database using the upgraded schema.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a nullable column to an end of a table.

3. The method of Claim 2, further comprising adding a value to the nullable column when a subsequent request to the database accesses data comprising the nullable column.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a table.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding an index during the upgrade process and calculating the index after the upgrade process is complete.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising after the upgrade process of the database schema is complete and the upgraded web servers are accessing the database using the upgraded schema, automatically determining when to remove unused tables and columns from the database.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein upgrading the web servers of the online service comprises upgrading software on the web servers such that requests to the database continue to be fulfilled during the upgrading of the software on the web servers.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein upgrading the web servers of the online service comprises activating a set of web servers that use the upgraded schema and directing requests to the new set of web servers.

9. The method of Claim 1, wherein the online service is a document collaboration service, and the database is a tenant database is maintained that includes a single row for each tenant.

108. A computer-readable storage medium, excluding signals, having computer-executable instructions for upgrading a database currently in use in an online service, comprising:

starting an upgrade process of a database used in the online service; wherein the database being upgraded continues to receive, ~~and~~ process and perform requests from web servers for database operations during the upgrade process; wherein the online service comprises a document collaboration service; wherein the database is a SQL database;

upgrading a schema of the database currently being utilized to an upgraded schema;

wherein the upgraded schema is backwards compatible with the schema;~~, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a nullable column to an end of a table and after the upgrade process has completed adding a value to the nullable column when a subsequent request to the database accesses data comprising the nullable column;~~

~~restricting write operations to the database that relate to the upgrade process of the schema when the schema of the database is being upgraded~~

after upgrading the current schema has completed, upgrading the web servers of the online service to use the upgraded schema; and

accessing the database using the upgraded web servers utilizing the upgraded schema.

11. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a nullable column to an end of a table and after the upgrade process has completed adding a value to the nullable column when a subsequent request to the database accesses data comprising the nullable column.

12. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, further comprising restricting write operations to the database that relate to the upgrade process of the schema when the schema of the database is being upgraded.

13. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, wherein the database is a tenant database is maintained that includes a single row for each tenant.

14. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding an index during the upgrade process and

setting an option such that a table associated with the index remains unlocked when the index is initially built.

15. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, further comprising after the upgrade process of the database schema is complete and the upgraded web servers are accessing the database using the upgraded schema, automatically determining when to remove unused tables and columns from the database.

16. The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 10, wherein upgrading the web servers of the online service comprises continuing to fulfill requests to the database during the upgrading of the software on the web servers and activating a set of web servers that use the upgraded schema and directing requests to the new set of web servers.

179. A system for upgrading a database currently in use in an online service, comprising:

a network comprising web servers, back-end servers and a database; wherein a current schema is associated with the database;

a processor and a computer-readable storage medium excluding signals;

an operating environment stored on the computer-readable medium and executing on the processor; and

an upgrade manager operative to:

start an upgrade process of the database; wherein the database continues to receive, ~~and~~ process ~~requests~~ and perform from the web servers for database operations during the upgrade process; wherein the online service comprises a document collaboration service;

upgrade the schema of the database currently being utilized to an upgraded schema; wherein the upgraded schema is backwards compatible with the schema; ~~wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a nullable column to a table and after the upgrade process has completed adding a value to the nullable column when a subsequent request to the database accesses data comprising the nullable column and a check of the nullable column determines that a value of the nullable column is null;~~

after the upgrade of the schema has completed, upgrading the web servers to use the upgraded schema; and

accessing the database using the upgraded web server utilizing the upgraded schema.

18. The system of Claim 17, wherein upgrading the schema of the database comprises adding a nullable column to a table and after the upgrade process has completed adding a value to the nullable column when a subsequent request to the database accesses data comprising the nullable column and a check of the nullable column determines that a value of the nullable column is null.

19. The system of Claim 17, further comprising restricting write operations to the database that relate to the upgrade process of the schema when the schema of the database is being upgraded.

20~~10~~. The system of Claim 17~~9~~, wherein upgrading the web servers of the online service comprises continuing to fulfill requests to the database during the upgrading of the software on the web servers and activating a set of web servers that use the upgraded schema and directing requests to the new set of web servers.