

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license, the information processing apparatus comprising:

a holding means configured to hold a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

a reception means configured to receive an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

a checking means configured to check whether the serial number corresponding to the first license held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other; and

a control means configured to control the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the serial number received by the reception means along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the serial number corresponding to the first license held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other.

2. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control means does not return the

first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the serial number corresponding to the first license held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are the same as each other.

3. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the control means returns a license that is a license other than the first license held by the holding means, the other license being issued by the licensing server based on a same serial number from the serial number received by the reception means and already held by the holding means, together with the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the serial number corresponding to the first license that is held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other.

4. The information processing apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the checking means further checks whether product information contained in the first license and product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different from each other, the further check being performed if the checking means confirms that the serial number corresponding to the first license and the serial

number received by the reception means are different,

wherein the control means returns the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are the same,

wherein the control means does not return the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different, and

wherein the product information is information assigned in such a manner that common information is assigned to same software applications at different versions.

5. The information processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the checking means further checks whether the software that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the first license, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different from each other,

wherein the control means returns the first license to the licensing server if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license does not support the software that operates under the control based on the first license, and

wherein the control means does not return the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the first license.

6. The information processing apparatus according to claim 4 or 5, wherein, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are the same,

the control means returns the first license, if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license does not support software that operates under control based on a third license that is issued based on a same serial number as the first license and contains different product information from the product information of the first license, and

the control means does not return the first license, if the checking means confirms that the software

that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the third license.

7. The information processing apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the software that operates under the control based on the second license is add-in software for extending a function of the software that operates under the control based on the first license.

8. A method to be performed by an information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license, the method comprising:

holding a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

receiving an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

checking whether the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other; and

controlling the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the received serial number along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if it is confirmed that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other.

9. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license to perform a method, the method comprising the steps of:

holding a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

receiving an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

checking whether the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the serial number received in the receiving step are different from each other; and

controlling the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the serial number received in the receiving step along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if it is confirmed in the checking step that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license, the information processing apparatus comprising:

a holding means configured to hold a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

a reception means configured to receive an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

a checking means configured to check whether the serial number, corresponding to the first license, held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other; and

a control means configured to control the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the serial number received by the reception means along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the serial number, corresponding to the first license, held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other,

wherein the control means returns to the licensing server, together with the first license, all licenses that are licenses other than the first license of which serial number is held by the holding means, the other licenses being issued by the licensing server based on a serial number which is same as the serial number corresponding to the first license and is already held by the holding means, if the checking means confirms that the serial number, corresponding to the first license, held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other.

2. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control means does not return the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the serial number, corresponding to the first license, held by the holding means and the serial number received by the reception means are the same as each other.

3. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the checking means further checks whether product information contained in the first license and product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different from each other, the further check being performed if the checking means confirms that the serial number corresponding to the first license and the serial number received by the reception means are different from each other,

wherein the control means returns the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are the same,

wherein the control means does not return the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different from each other, and

wherein the product information is information assigned in such a manner that common information is assigned to same software applications at different versions.

4. The information processing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the checking means further checks whether the software that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the first license, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are different from each other,

wherein the control means returns the first license to the licensing server if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license does not support the software that operates under the control based on the first license, and

wherein the control means does not return the first license to the licensing server, if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the first license.

5. The information processing apparatus according to claim 3 or 4, wherein, if the checking means confirms that the product information contained in the first license and the product information of the software that operates under the control based on the second license are the same,

the control means returns the first license, if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license does not support software that operates under control based on a third license that is issued based on a same serial number as the first license and contains different product information from the product information of the first license, and

the control means does not return the first license, if the checking means confirms that the software that operates under the control based on the second license supports the software that operates under the control based on the third license.

6. The information processing apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the software that operates under the control based on the second license is add-in software for extending a function of the software that operates under the control based on the first license.

7. A method to be performed by an information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license, the method comprising:

holding a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

receiving an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

checking whether the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other;

controlling the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the received serial number along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if it is confirmed that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other,

and returning to the licensing server, together with the first license, all licenses that are licenses other than the first license of which serial number is held, the other licenses being issued by the licensing server based on a serial number which is same as the serial number corresponding to the held first license, if it is confirmed in the checking step that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other.

8. A program to be executed by an information processing apparatus configured to control an operation of software based on an issued license to perform a method, the method comprising the steps of:

holding a serial number input to issue a first license for controlling the operation of the software;

receiving an input of a serial number required to issue a second license for controlling the operation of the software at a different version;

checking whether the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the serial number received in the receiving step are different from each other;

controlling the software based on the second license issued by a licensing server based on the serial number received in the receiving step along with returning the first license to the licensing server, if it is confirmed in the checking step that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other,

and returning to the licensing server, together with the first license, all licenses that are licenses other than the first license of which serial number is held in the holding step, the other licenses being issued by the licensing server based on a serial number which is same as the serial number corresponding to the first license and is already held in the holding step, if it is confirmed in the checking step that the serial number corresponding to the held first license and the received serial number are different from each other.