ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A system and method for extending the functionality of an object previewer in a shell browser to improve the user experience. The shell browser provides an extensibility mechanism so that third party developers can extend the functionality of the default previewer for particular file types. A graphical user interface includes a control which enables a user to select a previewer for displayed files from a plurality of available previewers. Alternatively, the shell browser can automatically select a previewer from a plurality of available previewers. A data structure contains information indicative of the availability of multiple previewers in a shell browser.