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(71) Applicant(s):  
 Connected Data Inc  
 2460 North First Street, Suite 100, San Jose,  
 CA 95131, United States of America

(72) Inventor(s):  
 Geoffrey S Barrall  
 John B Turner  
 David Gary Mendleson  
 Brad Lee Morse  
 Joel Feaster

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service:  
 Gill Jennings & Every LLP  
 The Broadgate Tower, 20 Primrose Street, LONDON,  
 EC2A 2ES, United Kingdom

(54) Title of the Invention: **System and method for managing user data in a plurality of storage appliances over a wide area network for collaboration, protection, publication,**  
 Abstract Title: **System and method for managing user data in a plurality of storage appliances over a wide area network for collaboration, protection, publication,**

(57) In various embodiments, the present invention relates to a method of operating a server to manage user data in a plurality of storage appliances. The method involves establishing in a database system, via the server, information for each registered user; establishing and storing in the database system a set of relationships, based on designations by the users, among registered storage appliances and container designations; and using a central service running on the server to deliver storage appliance-container relationship data to the storage appliances so as to enable the appliances to substantiate the containers therein, and to replicate user data with other storage appliances that have substantiated corresponding containers, in a manner consistent with the stored relationships, and wherein the central service operates without interaction with user data stored in the containers.

