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(54) **DOCUMENT TRACKING ON A DISTRIBUTED LEDGER**

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(71) Applicant: **TD Bank Group**, Toronto (CA)

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(72) Inventors: **Arthur Carroll CHOW**, Toronto (CA);
Paul Mon-Wah CHAN, Toronto (CA);
Perry Aaron Jones HALDENBY,
Toronto (CA); **John Jong Suk LEE**,
Toronto (CA)

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(73) Assignee: **TD Bank Group**, Toronto (CA)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **15/235,528**

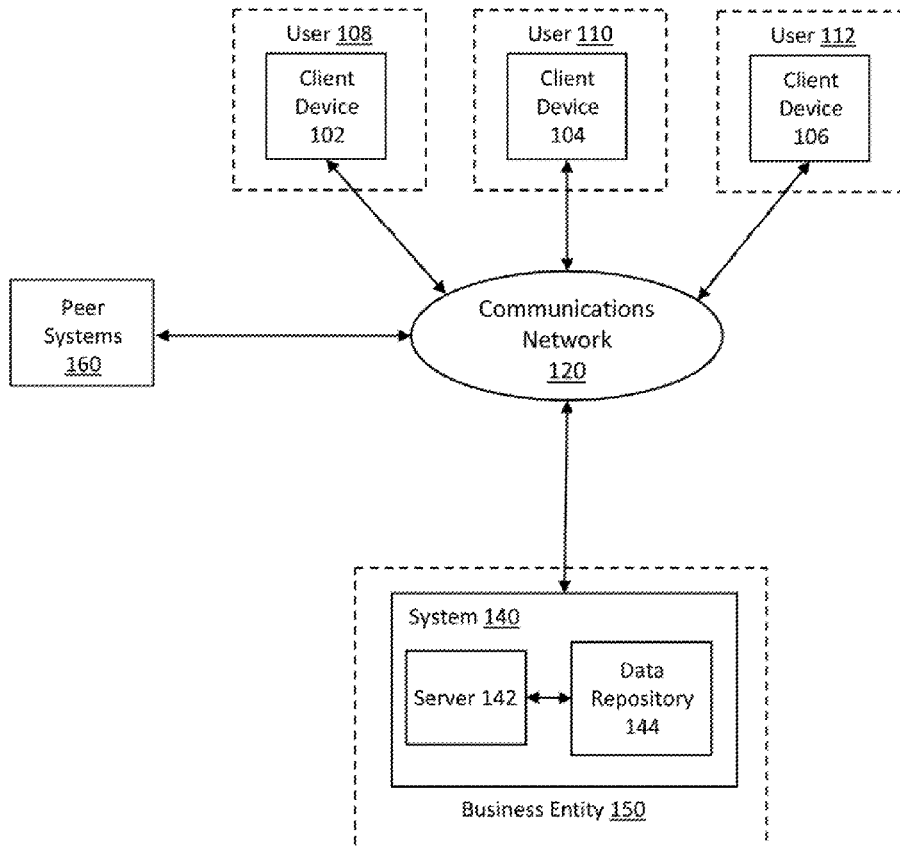
An apparatus for use in electronic document control includes a storage device a processor coupled to the storage device. The storage device storing software instructions for controlling the processor that when executed by the processor configure the processor to: receive a signal representing data including an original document, append a unique identifier to the original document to generate a modified document, generate a hash value of the modified document, and transmit the hash value corresponding to the modified document to an electronic distributed ledger.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 62/204,768, filed on Aug. 13, 2015.

100



100

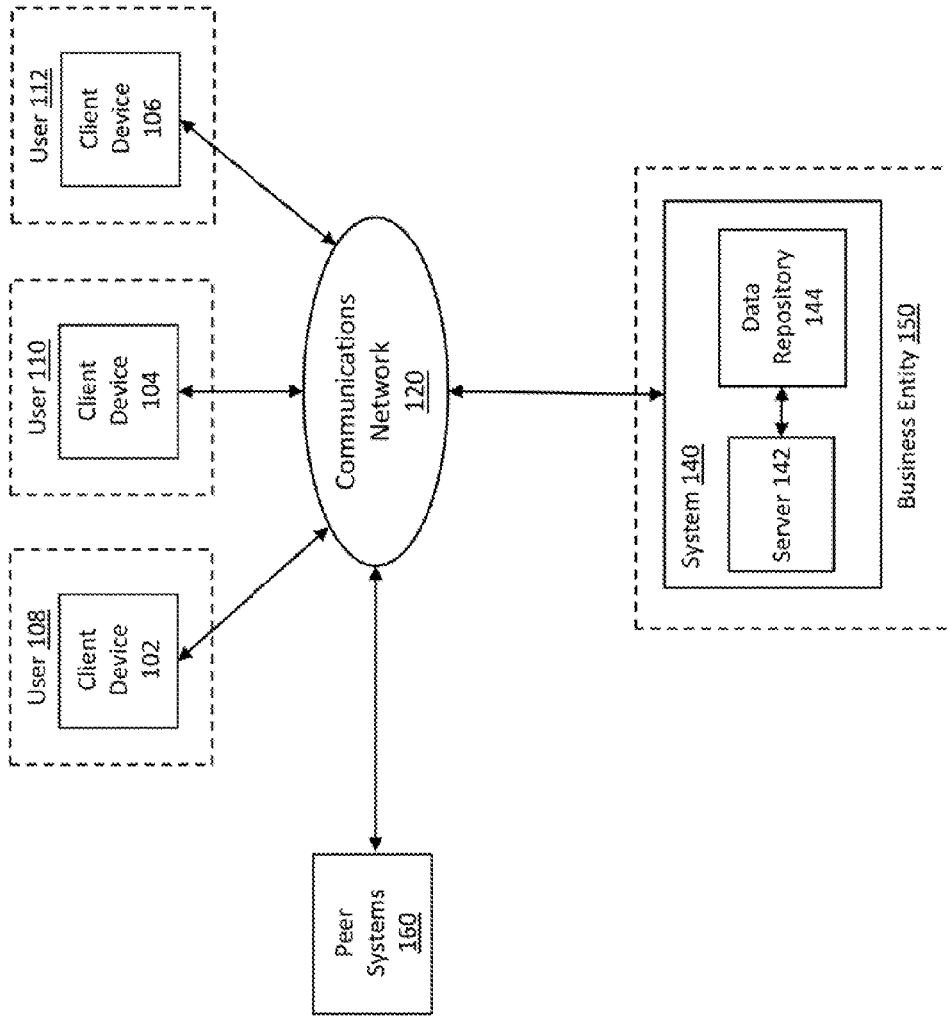


FIG. 1

200

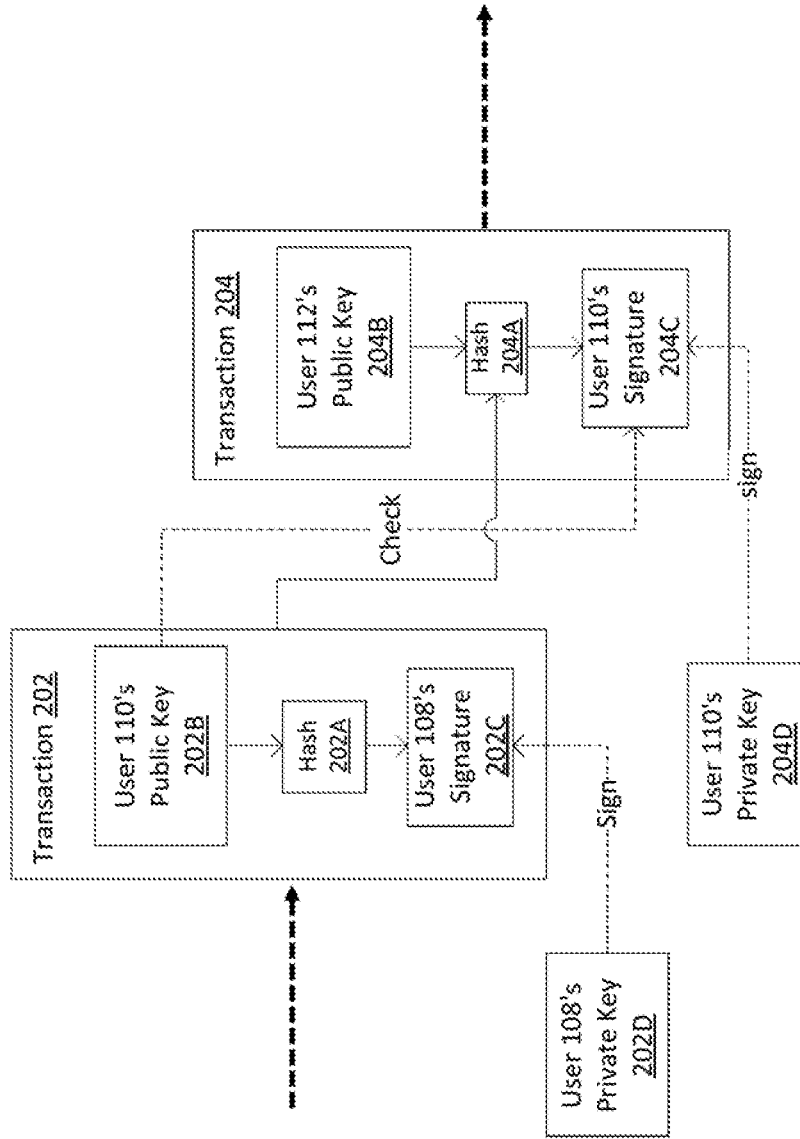


FIG. 2

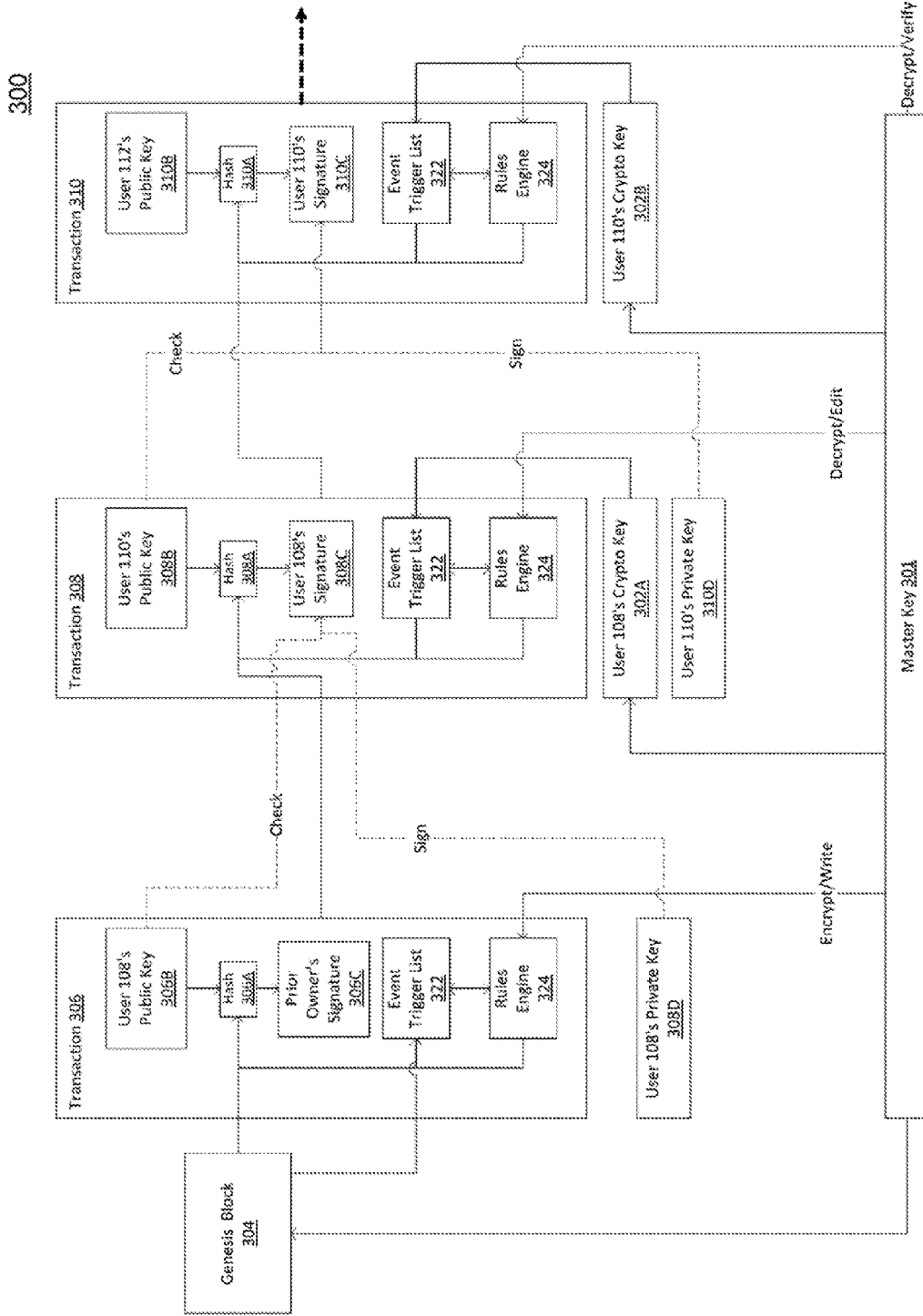


FIG. 3

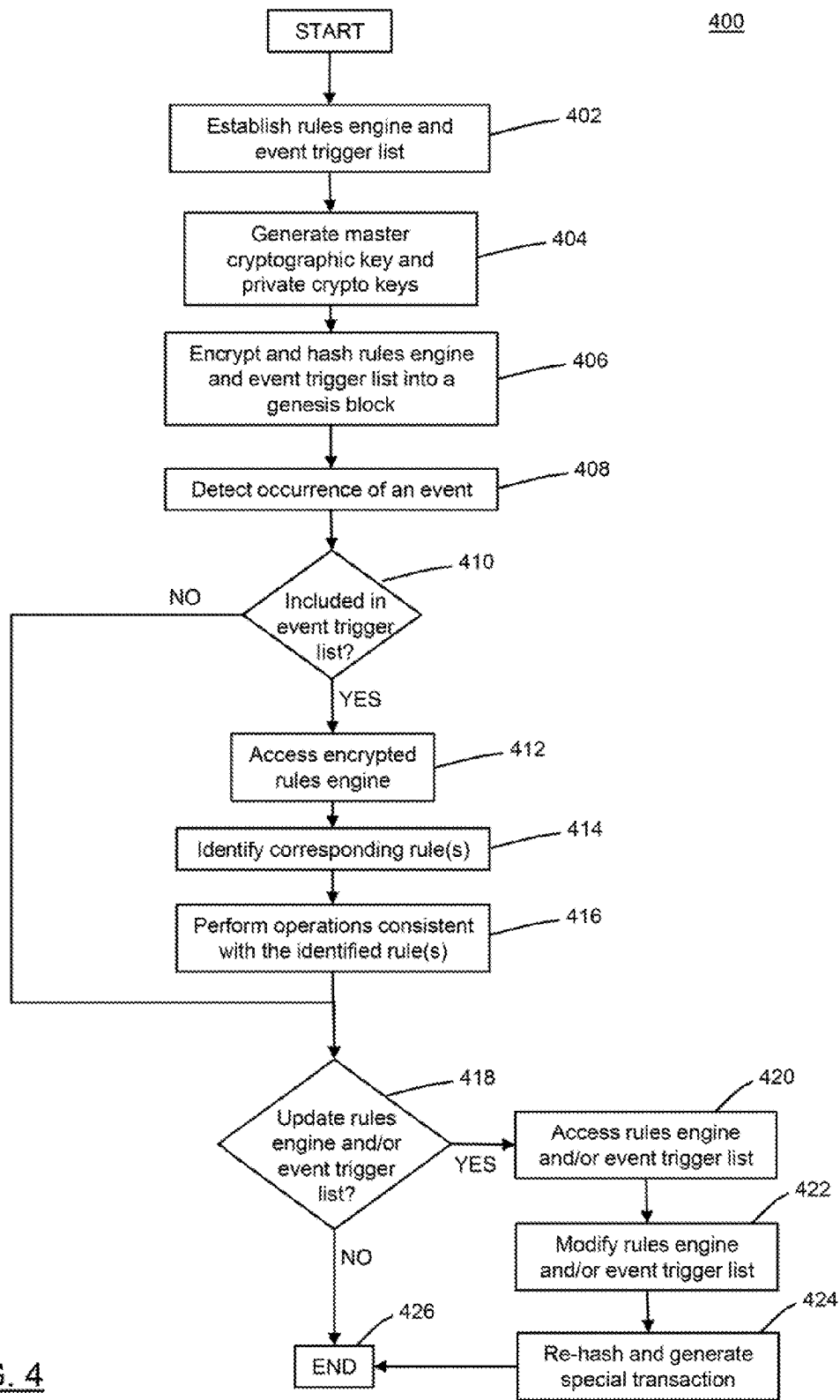


FIG. 4

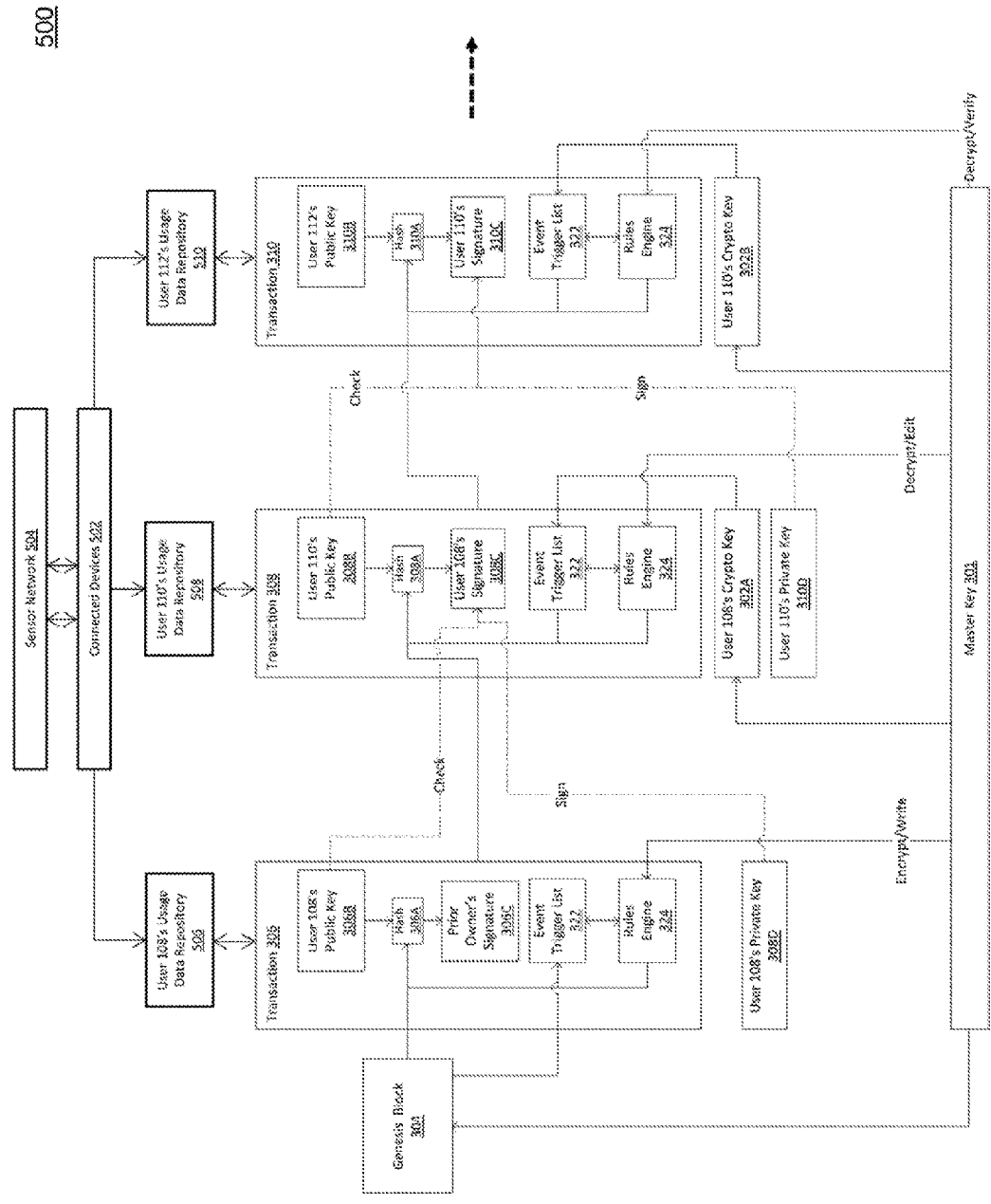


FIG. 5

700

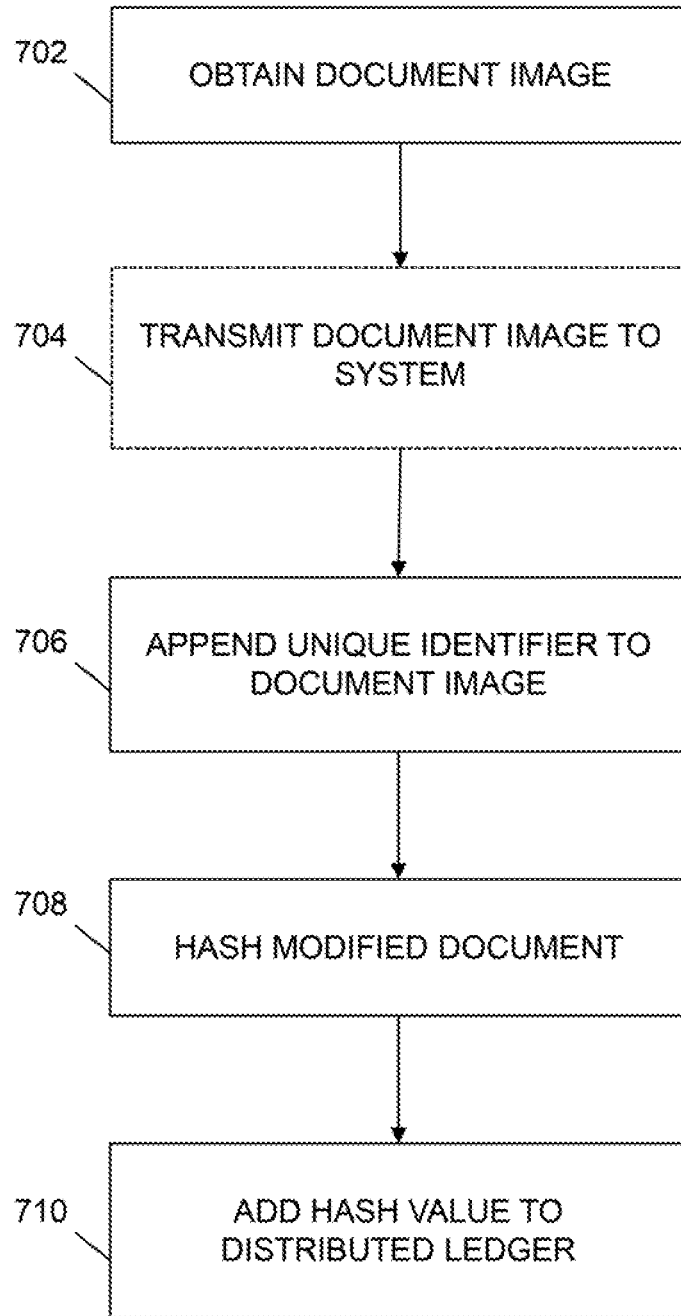


FIG. 6

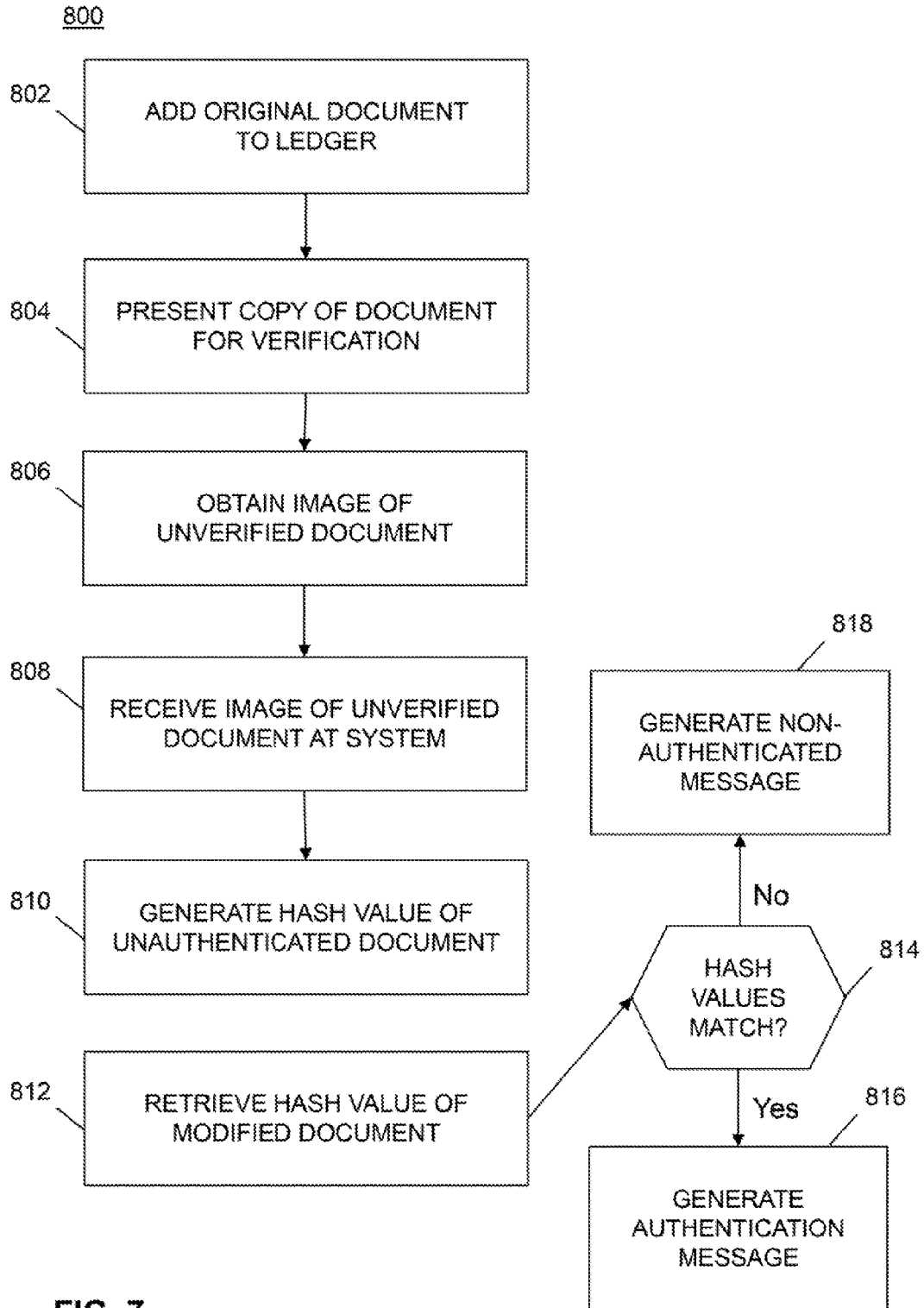


FIG. 7

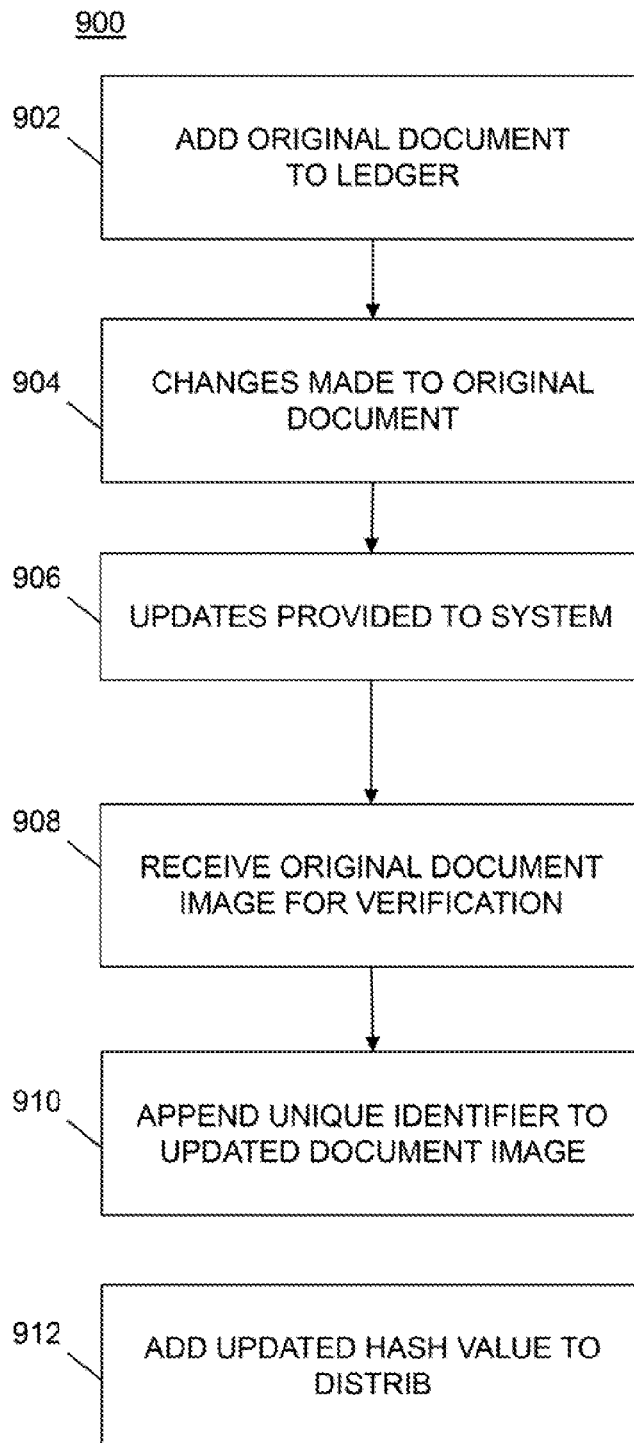


FIG. 8

DOCUMENT TRACKING ON A DISTRIBUTED LEDGER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) from co-pending U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 62/204,768 filed Aug. 13, 2015, the entirety which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Virtual and crypto-currencies, such as Bitcoin™, are gaining acceptance as viable mechanisms for performing purchase transactions and other financial services transactions. The transfer of units of these virtual and crypto-currencies between owners, which is essential to the ultimate success of these virtual and crypto-currencies, relies on a robust distributed ledger structure that, due to its public nature, redundant verification, and resistance to fraudulent activity, offers advantages over existing centralized server systems.

[0003] Despite its many advantages, conventional distributed ledger systems have several drawbacks, especially when used to track assets in secure, high-risk, and/or sensitive contexts.

SUMMARY

[0004] In some embodiments of the present disclosure, an apparatus for use in electronic document control is disclosed. The apparatus includes a storage device a processor coupled to the storage device. The storage device storing software instructions for controlling the processor that when executed by the processor configure the processor to: receive a signal representing data including an original document, append a unique identifier to the original document to generate a modified document, generate a hash value of the modified document, and transmit the hash value corresponding to the modified document to an electronic distributed ledger.

[0005] In some embodiments of the present disclosure, a method of document tracking and verification is disclosed. The method includes receiving a signal representing data including an original document. The original document is modified to include a unique image verification identifier. A hash value of the modified document is generated. The hash value corresponding to the modified document is transmitted to an electronic distributed ledger.

[0006] In some embodiments of the present disclosure, a method of verifying a document is disclosed. The method includes receiving, from a third party, an unverified document image. A distributed ledger maintained by a trusted authority is accessed. The distributed ledger includes one or more blocks each storing at least one verified document image. A hash value of the unverified document image is generated according to one or more rules stored in the distributed ledger. The hash value of the unverified document is compared to a hash value of the at least one verified document image stored by the distributed ledger. An authentication message is generated if the hash value of the unverified document image and the hash value of the verified document image are the same. A not-authenticated

message is generated if the hash value of the unverified document image and the hash value of the verified document image are different.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The following will be apparent from elements of the figures, which are provided for illustrative purposes and are not necessarily to scale.

[0008] FIG. 1 is a diagram of a system in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0009] FIG. 2 is a diagram of a conventional distributed ledger architecture.

[0010] FIG. 3 is a diagram of a hybrid public-private distributed ledger architecture in accordance with some embodiments.

[0011] FIG. 4 is a flowchart of a process for performing event-based operations on assets tracked within a hybrid distributed ledger in accordance with some embodiments.

[0012] FIG. 5 is a flowchart of a process of storing a document image on a hybrid distributed ledger in accordance with some embodiments.

[0013] FIG. 6 illustrates one embodiment of a method for adding a document image to a distributed ledger-based tracking system, such as a hybrid distributed ledger, in accordance with some embodiments.

[0014] FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a method of document version tracking and verification in a distributed ledger, in accordance with some embodiments.

[0015] FIG. 8 is a flow chart illustrating one embodiment of a method for tracking changes to the original document, in accordance with some embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] This description of the exemplary embodiments is intended to be read in connection with the accompanying drawings, which are to be considered part of the entire written description. The use of the singular includes the plural unless specifically stated otherwise. The use of “or” means “and/or” unless stated otherwise. Furthermore, the use of the term “including,” as well as other forms such as “includes” and “included,” is not limiting. In addition, terms such as “element” or “component” encompass both elements and components comprising one unit, and elements and components that comprise more than one subunit, unless specifically stated otherwise. Additionally, the section headings used herein are for organizational purposes only, and are not to be construed as limiting the subject matter described.

[0017] In some embodiments, systems and methods for storing, tracking, and authenticating one or more documents using a distributed ledger, such as a distributed ledger, is disclosed. The method includes generating a document image of an original document, modifying the document image using a unique identifier, and generating a hash of the modified document for storage and tracking by a distributed ledger. In some embodiments, the system is configured to verify authenticity of unverified document images of documents tracked by the distributed ledger. In some embodiments, the system is configured to track one or more changes to the documents tracked by the distributed ledger.

[0018] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system 100 in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure. System 100 may be a computing environment includ-

ing client devices **102**, **104**, and **106**, system **140**, one or more peer systems **160**, and a communications network **120** connecting various components of system **100**. Although three client devices are shown in this example, any number of client devices may be present.

[0019] Various components of computing environment **100** are configured to address problems associated with conventional distributed ledgers by embedding a master encryption key architecture into a conventional distributed architecture (e.g., a distributed architecture associated with the public Bitcoin™ ledger). In various embodiments, the resulting hybrid public-private distributed architecture facilitates selective encryption of information by client devices **102**, **104**, and **106**, system **140**, and/or peer systems **160**, thus providing a solution that protects sensitive and/or confidential instructions.

[0020] The conventional distributed architecture is described below with reference to FIG. 2, and then hybrid public-private distributed architectures configured to store and/or track document images in accordance with various embodiments are described.

[0021] Asset Tracking Using Conventional Distributed Ledgers

[0022] FIG. 2 is a diagram of a structure **200** of a conventional distributed ledger, which may be generated through the interaction of components of computing environment **100**. In the example of FIG. 2, user **110** is associated with client device **104**, which executes a stored software application (e.g., a wallet application) capable of obtaining a current version of a conventional distributed ledger from one or more networked computer systems (e.g., one of peer systems **160** configured to “mine” broadcasted transaction data and update ledgers). The current version of a conventional distributed ledger may represent a “longest” distributed ledger than includes a maximum number of discrete “blocks.” The blocks identify respective transactions that transfer and/or distribute portions of tracked assets among various owners, including user **110**.

[0023] FIG. 2 shows blocks corresponding to two transactions **202** and **204**, with arrows to the left and right of these transactions indicating that these are merely two transactions in a potentially longer series of chained blocks (hence the term “distributed ledger”). In the first transaction (transaction **202**) depicted in FIG. 2, user **108** transfers ownership of a portion of tracked assets (e.g., of some amount of a virtual currency or cryptocurrency) to user **110**. In the second transaction (transaction **204**), user **110** transfers ownership to user **112**. In general, any number of transactions may be supported.

[0024] Client device **104** obtains the current distributed ledger and processes the distributed ledger to determine that a prior owner (user **108** in this example) transferred ownership of a portion of the tracked assets to user **110** in transaction **202**. One or more peer systems **160** previously verified, processed, and packed data associated with transaction **202** into a corresponding block of the conventional distributed ledger.

[0025] Transaction **202** includes a cryptographic hash (e.g., hash **202A**) of one or more prior transactions, and a public key of the recipient (e.g., public key **202B** of user **110**). The transaction data may also include a digital signature **202C** of user **108** (the prior owner), which is applied to hash **202A** and public key **202B** using a private key **202D** of user **108** through any of a number of techniques apparent to

one of skill in the art. The presence of user **108**'s public key within transaction data included within the conventional distributed ledger facilitates verification of user **108**'s digital signature **202C** by client device **104** and/or peer systems **160**.

[0026] In the second transaction (transaction **204**), user **110** transfers the tracked asset portion to user **112**. For example, client device **104** may execute one or more software applications (e.g., wallet applications) that generate data specifying a transaction (e.g., transaction **204**) transferring ownership of the tracked asset portion from user **110** to user **112**, and further. The software application(s) transmit the generated data to one or more of peer systems **160** for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the distributed ledger.

[0027] For example, data specifying transaction **204** may include a cryptographic hash **204A** of prior transaction **202**, a quantity or number of units of the tracked asset portion that are subject to transfer in transaction **204**, and a public key of the recipient (e.g., public key **204B** of user **112**). Further, in some aspects, the data specifying transaction **204** may include a digital signature **204C** of the user **110**, which may be applied to hash **204A** and public key **204B** using a private key **204D** of user **110**. Further, and by way of example, the presence of user **110**'s public key **202B** within transaction data included within the conventional distributed ledger may enable various devices and systems (e.g., client devices **106**, **106**, and/or **108**, peer systems **160**, etc.) to verify user **110**'s digital signature **204C**, as applied to data specifying transaction **204**.

[0028] One or more of peer systems **160** may receive the data specifying transaction **204** from client device **104**. In certain instances, peer systems **160** may act as “miners” for the distributed ledger, and may competitively process the received transaction data (either alone or in conjunction with other data) to generate additional blocks of the ledger, which may be appended to the distributed ledger and distributed across peer systems **160** (e.g., through a peer-to-peer network) and to other connected devices of environment **100**.

[0029] Conventional distributed ledger architectures enable the public to review content of the ledgers and verify ownership details. The decentralized nature of conventional distributed ledgers enables multiple distributed networks to verify the contents of a single ledger. The resulting redundancy may render conventional distributed ledger architecture more robust than centralized server systems, and effectively eliminates the falsification of ledger data by malicious parties.

[0030] Despite these positive characteristics, conventional distributed ledger architectures have certain drawbacks when implemented by secured, high-risk systems. For example, unencrypted conventional ledger blocks may represent a security concern for transactions of sensitive nature and may represent a privacy concern for members of the general public. For instance, information indicative of an interaction of a prior asset owner and a corresponding device, as present within conventional distributed ledgers, may represent private information that should not be available to future owners, let alone members of the public.

[0031] Furthermore, if an owner loses his/her private key, the distributed nature of conventional distributed ledger architectures provides little or no opportunity to recover possession of the tracked asset(s). The rigidity and inflexibility of these conventional distributed ledger architectures,

and their inability to adapt to changing circumstances (e.g., loss of private keys, theft of tracked assets due to fraudulent or malicious activity), often results in volatility in the usage of the tracked assets and an erosion in the public's trust of conventional distributed ledgers.

[0032] Further, current distributed ledgers fail to provide systems and methods for storing, tracking, verifying, and/or updating documents generated by one or more entities, such as deal documents, mortgage or other loan documents, business documents, identification documents, and/or any other suitable documents. The non-centralized nature of current ledgers can prevent confidence levels of business and/or individuals from reaching a level necessary to entrust the distributed ledger with sensitive business, personal, or other documents.

[0033] Various embodiments address the foregoing deficiencies of conventional distributed ledger architectures by providing security features suitable for use in high-risk, sensitive scenarios. Furthermore, various embodiments provide a framework that gives recourse to owners or holders of assets tracked by distributed ledger architectures in the event of fraud or malicious activity, while maintaining the public availability and verification characteristics of distributed ledgers.

[0034] Client Devices

[0035] Referring back to FIG. 1, each of client devices **102**, **104**, and **106** may include a computing device, such as a hashing computer, a personal computer, a laptop computer, a tablet computer, a notebook computer, a hand-held computer, a personal digital assistant, a portable navigation device, a mobile phone, a smart phone, a wearable computing device (e.g., a smart watch, a wearable activity monitor, wearable smart jewelry, and glasses and other optical devices that include optical head-mounted displays (OHMDs), an embedded computing device (e.g., in communication with a smart textile or electronic fabric), and any other type of computing device that may be configured to store data and software instructions, execute software instructions to perform operations, and/or display information on a display device. At least one of client devices **102**, **104**, and **106** may be associated with one or more users, such as users **108**, **110**, and **112**, as shown in FIG. 1. For example, user **110** operates client device **104** and causes it to perform one or more operations in accordance with various embodiments.

[0036] Each client device **102**, **104**, **106** includes one or more tangible, non-transitory memories that store data and/or software instructions, and one or more processors configured to execute software instructions. Client devices **102**, **104**, and **106** may include one or more display devices that display information to a user and one or more input devices (e.g., keypad, keyboard, touchscreen, voice activated control technologies, scanners, cameras, or any other type of known input device) to allow the user to input information to the client device.

[0037] In one aspect, each client device **102**, **104**, and **106** stores in memory one or more software applications that run on the client device and are executed by the one or more processors. In some instances, each client device stores software applications that, when executed by one or more processors, perform operations that establish communications with one or more of peer systems **160** (e.g., across network **120**) and that obtain, from peer systems **160**, a

current version of a hybrid distributed ledger generated and maintained in accordance with various embodiments.

[0038] Each client device **102**, **104**, and **106** may execute the stored software application(s) to obtain data from the hybrid distributed ledger that includes data identifying one or more tracked assets, and/or a public key of one or more users. The executed software applications may cause client devices **102**, **104**, and **106** to extract, from one or more accessed transaction blocks of the distributed ledger, a copy of an encrypted and/or hashed ownership/rules portion of the transaction block(s) (e.g., including the identification of a holder of a master key) and/or a copy of an encrypted and/or hashed master data block (e.g., encrypted using the master key and including rules permitting preconfigured and/or permissible actions involving the tracked assets). Client devices **102**, **104**, and **106** may provide information associated with one or more actions or transactions involving the tracked assets (e.g., information identifying the actions or transaction, information identifying the assets, a public key, a digital signature, etc.) to peer systems **160**, along with copies of document images and/or other information regarding a tracked document.

[0039] In some embodiments, the stored application(s) include a wallet application provided by business entity **150** (e.g., a mobile wallet application or an application executable on a desktop computer). The wallet application is capable of initiating transactions denominated in one or more currencies, including virtual currencies such as Bitcoin™.

[0040] Exemplary Computer Systems

[0041] System **140** may be a computing system configured to execute software instructions to perform one or more operations in accordance with various embodiments. In one aspect, system **140** is associated with a business entity **150** (e.g., a financial institution) that provides financial accounts, financial services transactions, and investment services to one or more users (e.g., customers of business entity **150**). In some aspects, system **140** is a distributed system that includes computing components distributed across one or more networks, e.g., network **120**.

[0042] In one aspect, system **140** includes computing components configured to store, maintain, and generate data and software instructions. For example, system **140** may include one or more servers (e.g., server **142**) and tangible, non-transitory memory devices (e.g., data repository **144**). Server **142** may include one or more computing devices configured to execute software instructions to perform one or more processes in accordance with various embodiments. In one example, server **142** is a computing device that executes software instructions to perform operations that provide information to at least one other component of computing environment **100**.

[0043] In one embodiment, server **142** includes a computer (e.g., a personal computer, network computer, or mainframe computer) having one or more processors that are selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program. In one aspect, server **142** (or other computing components of system **140**) may be configured to provide one or more websites, digital portals, etc., that provide services consistent with business entity **150**, such as a digital banking or investment portal. For instance, server **142** may be configured to provide information associated with a requested web page over communications network **120** to client device **104**, which may render the received informa-

tion and present content from the web page on a display device, e.g., a touchscreen display unit.

[0044] In other aspects, server 142 (or other computing components of system 140) may be configured to provide information to one or more application programs executed by client device 104, e.g., through a corresponding application programming interface (API). For example, client device 104 may execute an application program associated with and provided by business entity 150, such a mobile banking application and/or a mobile document tracking application, to provide services in accordance with various embodiments. In some instances, server 142 provides information to client devices 102, 104, and/or 106 (e.g., through the API associated with the executed application program), and client devices 102, 104, and/or 106 present portions of the information to corresponding users through a corresponding graphical user interface (GUI).

[0045] Server 142 (or other computing components of system 140) may be configured to provide to client devices 102, 104, and/or 106 (and/or receive from any of the client devices) information associated with services provided by business entity 150. For example, client device 104 may receive the transmitted information, and store portions of the information in locally accessible storage device and/or network-accessible storage devices and data repositories (e.g., cloud-based storage). In one instance, client device 104 executes stored instructions (e.g., an application program, a web browser, a mobile banking application, and/or a mobile wallet application) to process portions of the stored data and render portions of the stored data for presentation to user 110. Additionally, server 142 may be incorporated as a corresponding node in a distributed network or as a corresponding networked server in a cloud-computing environment. Furthermore, server 142 may communicate via network 120 with one or more additional servers (not shown), which may facilitate the distribution of processes for parallel execution by the additional servers.

[0046] In further aspects, business entity 150 may represent a “controlling entity” capable of regulating transactions assets (e.g., units of virtual currency, units of various financial instruments, physical assets, etc.) tracked within hybrid public-private ledgers in accordance with various embodiments. For example, one or more computing components of system 140 (e.g., server 142) may be configured (e.g., by executed software instructions) to establish one or more rules that regulate a distributions of and/or transactions associated with the tracked assets, an initiation of transfers of the tracked assets (e.g., a sale, a use of the tracked assets as collateral in a secured transaction etc.), and any other action involving the tracked assets and/or the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., processes that generate additional cryptographic key sets for user 110, processes that recover assets tracked in the hybrid public-private ledger, etc.).

[0047] System 140 may establish causal relationships between one or more of the established rules and one or more events that trigger an initiation of one or more corresponding regulated distributions, transfers, and/or other actions involving assets tracked within the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., “triggering events”). For example, a confirmed loss of a document master copy may represent a triggering event to verify a user’s identity, generate a new master copy of the document from a tracked document image, and transmit the new master copy through secure,

non-accessible processes (e.g., by mail), in accordance with one or more established rules.

[0048] In some aspects, system 140 is configured to establish one or more of the rules, and one or more of the causal relationships and triggering events, based on internal regulations associated with business entity 150. For example, the internal regulations associated with business entity 150 may specify that system 140 verify an identity of user 110 (e.g., based on various forms of multi-factor authentication data) and/or obtain specific elements of documentation prior to initiating the lost master copy protocol outlined above. In other aspects, system 140 may establish one or more of the rules and/or triggering events based on information received from user 110 (e.g., as input provided to a web page or other graphical user interface (GUI) presented by client device 104 and provided to system 140). For example, user 110 may specify, as input to the web page or GUI presented by client device 104, one or more individuals that would need to review and/or execute a tracked document upon completion of one or more tasks and/or in the event of user 110’s accidental death. Various embodiments are, however, not limited to the exemplary triggering events and established rules described above, and in other aspects, various embodiments may be configured to generate any other user- and system-specified rules and triggering events consistent with the hybrid public-private ledger and appropriate to the tracked assets, user 110, and/or business entity 150 (acting as a centralized authority for the hybrid public-private ledger).

[0049] System 140 may be configured to store the one or more established rules (e.g., as a rules engine) and one or more of the established trigger events (e.g., as an event trigger list) within a portion of a local data repository (e.g., data repository 144). System 140 may be configured to store portions of the rules engine and/or event trigger list within a secure data repository accessible to system 140 across network 140 (e.g., cloud-based storage).

[0050] One or more computing components of system 140 (e.g., server 142) may be configured to generate pairs of public and private keys for user 110 (e.g., user 110’s public/private key pair), and to provide the generated private key to user 110 through secure, non-accessible and/or out-of-band communications (e.g., by mail, etc.). In further embodiments, the one or more components of system 140 (e.g., server 142) may be configured to generate and maintain additional cryptographic keys that facilitate a generation and maintenance of portions of the hybrid public-private ledger. For instance, system 140 may be configured to generate a master key, which system 140 may leverage to encrypt the stored rules engine. System 140 may store copies of the generated master key in a portion of data repository 144 that is not accessible to user 110 (and any other users), thus maintaining a confidence of the generated master key.

[0051] System 140 may be configured to generate and maintain a private crypto key on behalf of user 110 (and users 108 and 112), which system 140 may leverage to encrypt the stored event trigger list, and which may be provided to user 110 (and/or to users 108, 112) through secure, non-accessible and/or out-of-band communications. System 140 may store copies of the private crypto keys in a portion of data repository 144.

[0052] In some embodiments, one or more computing components of system 140 (e.g., server 140) is configured to hash the generated (and encrypted) rules engine and event

trigger list into a genesis block associated with the hybrid public-private ledger. System 140 may provide the encrypted rules engine and event triggers list to one or more of peer systems 160, which may be configured to hash the encrypted rules engine and event trigger list into the genesis block. By hashing the encrypted rules engine and event trigger list into the genesis block of the hybrid public-private ledger, various embodiments enable an in-band communication of the encrypted rules engine and event triggers from user to user within blocks (e.g., transactions) of the hybrid public-private ledger.

[0053] Exemplary Data Repositories and Stored Data

[0054] Data repository 144 may include one or more memories that are configured to store and provide access to data and/or software instructions. Such memories may include tangible non-transitory computer-readable media that store software instructions that, when executed by one or more processors (e.g., of server 132), perform one or more operations in accordance with various embodiments. Data repository 144 may also be configured to store information relating to business entity 150, e.g., a financial institution.

[0055] For instance, data repository 144 may store customer data that uniquely identifies customers of a financial institution associated with system 140. As one example, a customer of the financial institution (e.g., any of users 108, 110, and 112) may access a web page associated with system 140 (e.g., through a web server executed by a corresponding front end), and may register for digital banking services and provide data, which may be linked to corresponding ones of users 108, 110, and/or 112, and stored as customer data within data repository 144. The stored customer data may, for example, include personal information, government-issued identifiers, employment information, and contact information. The stored customer data may also include authentication credentials associated with registered users of the financial institution, e.g., a user name, a user-specified password, a system-generated password, an alphanumeric identification number (e.g., a PIN number) specified by the users or assigned by financial system 140, biometric information, and information facilitating enhanced authentication techniques.

[0056] Data repository 144 may store a rules engine identifying one or more rules that regulate tracking, viewing, verification, updating, and/or access to tracked document images, an initiation of one or more transactions involving the tracked assets (e.g., a sale, a transfer in ownership, a use of the tracked assets as collateral in a secured transaction etc.), and any other action involving the tracked assets and/or the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., processes that generate additional cryptographic key sets for users 108, 110, and/or 112, processes that recover assets tracked in the hybrid public-private ledger, etc.). Data repository 144 may also store information identifying an event triggers list that identifies causal relationships established by system 140 between one or more of the established rules and one or more events that trigger an initiation of one or more corresponding regulated transactions of tracked document images within the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., “triggering events”).

[0057] Data repository 144 may also store a copy of a master key, private crypto keys associated with users 108, 110, and 112, and additional private crypto keys associated with other users. For example, system 140 may be config-

ured to store the private crypto keys in a data structure that includes information that associates the private crypto keys with corresponding users 108, 110, and 112, and further, may be configured to store the master key in a data structure within data repository 144 that is inaccessible to users 108, 110, and/or 112 (and other users). Further, in some aspects, data repository 144 may be configured to store the rules engine and/or event triggers list in raw, unencrypted form. In other aspects, in accordance with various embodiments, data repository 144 may be configured to store the rules engine and/or event triggers in encrypted form (e.g., using the stored master key), and/or store a hashed representation of the rules engine and/or the event triggers list.

[0058] Exemplary Communications Networks

[0059] Communications network 120 may include one or more communication networks or media of digital data communication. Examples of communication network 120 include a local area network (“LAN”), a wireless LAN, a RF network, a Near Field Communication (NFC) network, (e.g., a “WiFi” network), a wireless Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) connecting multiple wireless LANs, NFC communication link(s), and a wide area network (“WAN”), e.g., the Internet. In accordance with various embodiments of the present disclosure, communications network 120 may include the Internet and any publicly accessible network or networks interconnected via one or more communication protocols, including, but not limited to, hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) and transmission control protocol/internet protocol (TCP/IP). Communications protocols in accordance with various embodiments also include protocols facilitating data transfer using radio frequency identification (RFID) communications and/or NFC. Moreover, communications network 120 may also include one or more mobile device networks, such as a GSM network or a PCS network, allowing client device 104 to send and receive data via applicable communications protocols, including those described herein.

[0060] Exemplary Peer Systems

[0061] Referring back to FIG. 1, peer systems 160 may include one or more computing systems configured to execute software instructions to perform one or more operations in accordance with various embodiments. In some aspects, peer systems 160 may include computing components configured to store, maintain, and generate data and software instructions. For example, each of peer systems 160 may include one or more computing devices (e.g., a server, network computer, or mainframe computer) having one or more processors that may be selectively activated or reconfigured by executable instructions (e.g., computer programs) stored in one or more tangible, non-transitory computer-readable storage devices.

[0062] In an embodiment, one or more of peer systems 160 may be configured to receive, from client device 104 across network 120, information associated with a transaction or other action associated with one or more tracked document images in accordance with various embodiments. For example, the received information may include, but is not limited to, a document image, data identifying a current owner of the document (e.g., user 110) (or a obfuscated owner identifier), and further, encrypted copies of and/or hash values representative of the rules engine and event triggers list.

[0063] In some aspects, one or more of peer systems 160 are configured (e.g., by the executed software programs) to

validate the received information and to generate a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger that includes the received information, either alone (e.g., using a “one transaction, one block” paradigm) or in combination with information identifying additional distributions, transactions, or other actions associated with one or more tracked assets (e.g., as a multiple-transaction block). The one or more peer systems **160** may be further configured to generate one or more hashes representative of the new block, which may be appended to a prior version of the hybrid private-public ledger along with the newly generated block. In some aspects, the one or more peer systems **160** may maintain the updated versions of the hybrid private-public ledger (i.e., the latest, longest hybrid private-public ledger), and may provide the updated version of the hybrid private-public ledger to client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106** (or other client devices associated with other users) upon receipt of a request across network **120** and/or at regular or predetermined intervals.

[0064] In certain instances, and in addition to a connection with network **120**, peer systems **160** may be interconnected across a peer-to-peer network (not depicted in FIG. **1**) using any of the wired or wireless communications protocols outlined above. Further, in some instances, one or more of peer systems **160** may function as a “miner,” where any miner may be compensated in units of a virtual currency (e.g., Bitcoin™) for validating the received data and for generating updated versions of the hybrid distributed ledger.

[0065] Exemplary Processes for Tracking Assets Using Hybrid Private-Public Ledgers

[0066] In some embodiments, client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106** may execute one or more stored applications that enable corresponding users to track, in conjunction with peer systems **150** and other components of computing environment **100**, a disposition and distribution of one or more assets using conventional, publicly available and transparent distributed ledgers. In some aspects, the use of public distributed ledgers to track ownership, disposition, and distribution of actual and/or virtual assets (e.g., unit of virtual currencies, such as Bitcoin™, unit of other financial instruments and securities, physical documents, physical contracts, etc.) may present advantages over existing centralized server systems, such as those provided by financial institutions that leverage private ledgers.

[0067] Exemplary Hybrid Public-Private Distributed Ledger Architectures

[0068] Various embodiments address problems associated with conventional block-ledger architectures in a technical manner, by providing computer-implemented systems and methods that augment a conventional distributed ledger with a private-master encryption key architecture that, in conjunction with an owner’s pair of public and private keys, selectively encrypt ledger data to protect both the privacy of owners of tracked assets and the confidentiality of existing instruction sets maintained within the distributed ledger.

[0069] By incorporating an encrypted rules engine and corresponding list of triggering events (e.g., an event triggers list) into each block of the conventional distributed ledger architecture (and thus generating a hybrid, public-private distributed architecture), computer-implemented systems and methods in accordance with various embodiments may perform operations that provide owners or holders tracked assets with recovery options in an event of fraud

or malicious activity, while maintaining the public availability and verification characteristic of conventional distributed ledgers.

[0070] Discrete data blocks of the conventional distributed ledgers (e.g., as outlined above in reference to FIG. **2**) and of the hybrid distributed ledgers (e.g., as described in reference to FIG. **3**) may include common elements of data that may specify transactions that verify, update, and/or otherwise act upon tracked documents images. For example, these common data elements may include, but are not limited to, input data that references one or more prior versions (e.g., a cryptographic hash of the one or more prior versions of a document), output data that includes instructions for transferring the tracked document image to one or more additional owners, and a digital signature applied to the input and/or output data using a corresponding private key of a current owner of the tracked document image. Various embodiments are, however, not limited to the exemplary transactions described above, and in further embodiments, discrete blocks of the hybrid distributed ledgers may represent any other transaction and/or data appropriate to the tracked document images and to the transaction, such as registration and tracking of documents, for example, contracts, deeds, wills, insurance policies, and/or other documents.

[0071] In contrast to conventional distributed ledgers, various embodiments may establish a “centralized authority” capable of vetting real-time transactions (e.g., verifications, transfers, and/or other actions) involving tracked document images within the exemplary hybrid distributed ledger architectures described herein, and capable of establishing and maintaining rules (e.g., through a rules engine and corresponding list of triggering events) that facilitate regulatory-based, policy-based, and customer-specified controls of transactions involving the tracked assets (e.g., units of virtual currency, documents, etc.).

[0072] For example, business entity **150** may represent the centralized authority, and one or more computing components of system **150** may perform operations that establish the rules engine and the list of triggering events, which may be stored within a secure data repository (e.g., data repository **144**). In some aspects, the generated and stored rules engine may identify one or more rules that regulate a verification of the tracked document images, an initiation of one or more transactions involving the tracked document images (e.g., a sale, a use of the tracked assets as collateral in a secured transaction etc.), and further, any other action involving the tracked assets and/or the hybrid public-private ledger. The generated and stored list of triggering events may include information that specifies causal relationships between one or more of the established rules and one or more events that trigger an initiation of one or more corresponding regulated distributions, transactions, and/or actions associated with assets tracked within the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., the triggering events).

[0073] In further contrast to conventional distributed ledgers, one or more computing components of system **140** (e.g., server **142** upon execution of stored instructions) may generate additional cryptographic keys that facilitate the exemplary regulation of transactions (e.g., distributions, transfers, and/or actions) involving assets tracked within the hybrid public-private ledger. By way of example, system **140** may generate a master cryptographic key with which system **140** may encrypt the generated and stored rules

engine. In some aspects, system **140** may store copies of the generated master key in a portion of data repository **144** that is not accessible to user **110** (and any other users), thus maintaining confidence in the generated master key.

[0074] System **140** may also perform operations that encrypt the generated list of triggering events, either alone or in conjunction with metadata identifying the centralized authority and/or information facilitating processing of the transaction blocks throughout the hybrid distributed ledger. System **140** may also perform operations that generate and maintain additional private cryptographic keys (e.g., a private “crypto” key) associated with each owner and associated with the assets tracked within the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., users **108**, **110**, and/or **112**). The private crypto keys enable the owners to decrypt and access the list of triggering events and the metadata identifying the centralized authority. System **140** may store copies of the generated private crypto keys in a portion of data repository **144**. Furthermore, system **140** may also perform operations that provide corresponding ones of the private crypto keys to users **108**, **110**, and/or **112** through secure, inaccessible, and/or out-of-band communications.

[0075] Various embodiments may also be configured to communicate the encrypted and/or hashed rules engine and list of triggering events to owners of, and/or user associated with, the tracked assets through “in-band” communication processes, such as through an incorporation of the encrypted rules engine and list of triggering events into the transaction blocks of the hybrid distributed ledger. For example, system **140** may perform operations that hash the encrypted rules engine and list of triggering events into a genesis block of the hybrid distributed ledger, the contents of which may be incorporated (e.g., by client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106**, peer systems **160**, etc.) into each of the subsequent transaction blocks generated and appended to the hybrid distributed ledger. In some aspects, by incorporating the hashed and encrypted rules engine and list of triggering events into blocks of the hybrid distributed ledger, various embodiments may ensure that the established rules are followed even in an event of actions by malicious parties to disrupt the tracked assets (e.g., instances of Bitcoin™ peeling, etc.)

[0076] The additional private crypto keys held by the owners and/or users (e.g., stored in corresponding ones of client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106** and accessible to executable application programs) may enable the owners and/or users to access the encrypted list of triggering events maintained within the hybrid distributed ledger. The owners and/or user may, through corresponding client devices, view the individual events that, when detected by system **140**, could cause system **140** to perform operations that recover, authorize, audit, and/or verify the transaction and/or ownership data included within the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., associated with corresponding portions of the tracked assets).

[0077] One or more computing components of system **140** may perform operations that modify portions of the stored rules and/or list of triggering events, e.g., in response to changes in regulations and/or policies, in response to additional owner input, etc. In order to access and modify the generated rules engine (and/or the list of triggering events) maintained within the hybrid distributed ledger, system **140** may leverage the stored master cryptographic key to access and modify the hashed and encrypted rules engine. System **140** may encrypt and re-hash the modified rules engine and

submit the encrypted and hashed modified rules engine to one or more of peer systems **160** for inclusion in a block of the hybrid distributed ledger. For example, one or more of peer systems **160** may incorporate the hashed and encrypted modified rules engine into the hybrid distributed ledger as a special transaction (e.g., a “0” value transaction), such that the hybrid distributed ledger tracks each change within the modified rules engine.

[0078] FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram illustrating an exemplary structure **300** of a hybrid, public-private distributed ledger, which may be generated through the interaction of components of computing environment **100** in accordance with various embodiments. For example, as described with reference to FIG. 3, users **108**, **110**, and **112** may be associated with corresponding devices (e.g., client devices **102**, **104**, and **106**), which may be configured to execute one or more stored software applications (e.g., a wallet application) capable of obtaining a current version of a hybrid distributed ledger from one or more networked computer systems (e.g., one of peer systems **160** configured to “mine” broadcast transactions and update ledgers).

[0079] A system associated with a centralized authority (e.g., system **140** associated with business entity **150**) may generate a rules engine that regulates transactions involving the assets tracked by the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., distributions, transfers of ownership, other actions, etc.) and a list of triggering events that, upon detection by system **140**, trigger an initiation of one or more of the distributions, transfers, and/or other actions regulated by the generated rules engine. System **140** may generate a master encryption key (e.g., master key **301** of FIG. 3), which may be maintained in a portion of data repository **144**, and may generate additional private “crypto” keys **302A** and **302B**, which may be associated with corresponding ones of users **108** and **110**. In some aspects, system **140** may maintain private crypto keys **302A**, **302B**, and **302C** in a portion of data repository **144** and provide private crypto keys **302A**, **302B**, and **302C** to users **108**, **110**, and **112** through secure, out-of-band communications. System **140** may encrypt the generated rules engine and the generated list of triggering events, and may perform operations that hash the encrypted rules engine and list of triggering events into a genesis block of the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., genesis block **304**).

[0080] One of the users (e.g., user **108**) may own and/or control a portion of the tracked assets. For example, a device associated with user **108** (e.g., client device **102**) may execute a stored software application (e.g., a wallet application) capable of obtaining a current version of a hybrid distributed ledger, including genesis block **304**, from one or more networked computer systems (e.g., one of peer systems **160** configured to “mine” broadcast transactions and update ledgers). The current version of a hybrid distributed ledger may represent a “longest” distributed ledger that includes a maximum number of discrete “blocks,” which may identify transactions that transfer, distribute, etc., portions of tracked assets among various owners, including user **108**.

[0081] For example, client device **102** may obtain the current hybrid distributed ledger and process the hybrid distributed ledger to determine that a prior owner transferred ownership of a portion of the tracked assets to user **108** in a corresponding transaction (e.g., transaction **306**, schematically illustrated in FIG. 3). One or more of peer systems **160** may have previously verified, processed, and packed data

associated with transaction 306, which may be in a corresponding block of the distributed ledger.

[0082] As illustrated in FIG. 3, data specifying transaction 306 may include input data that references one or more prior transactions (e.g., transactions that transferred ownership of the tracked asset portion to the prior owner), and further, output data that includes instructions for transferring the tracked asset portion to user 108. For example, input data in accordance with various embodiments may include a cryptographic hash of the one or more prior transactions (e.g., hash 306A), and output data in accordance with various embodiments may include a quantity or number of units of the tracked asset portion that are subject to transfer in transaction 302 and a public key 306B of user 108 (i.e., the recipient of the tracked asset portion transferred in transaction 306). Further, in some aspects, the transaction data may include a digital signature 306C of the prior owner, which may be applied to hash 306A and public key 306B using a private key of the prior owner through any of a number of techniques apparent to one of skill in the art and appropriate to the distributed ledger architecture.

[0083] Further, and in contrast to the conventional distributed ledger architectures described above, transaction 306 may also include encrypted and/or hashed copies of rules engine 320 and trigger event list 322. A device of the prior owner (e.g., which may execute one or more software applications) may access genesis block 304 (e.g., from the current version of the hybrid distributed ledger obtained from one or more of peer systems 160), may parse genesis block 304, and may extract copies of the encrypted and/or hashed rules engine 324 and trigger event list 322. The prior owner's device may transmit to one or more of peer systems 160 the hash 306A, public key 306B, and digital signature 306C for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger. In an embodiment, user 108 may elect to further transfer that tracked asset portion to an additional user (e.g., user 110). For example, the one or more software applications executed by client device 102 may cause client device 102 to perform operations that generate input and output data specifying a new transaction (e.g., transaction 308 of FIG. 3) that transfers ownership of the tracked asset portion from user 108 to user 110, and further, that transmit the generated data to one or more of peer systems 160 for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger.

[0084] For example, data specifying transaction 308 may include a cryptographic hash 308A of prior transaction 306, a quantity or number of units of the tracked asset portion that are subject to transfer in transaction 308, and a public key of the recipient (e.g., public key 308B of user 110). The data specifying transaction 308 may include a digital signature 308C of the user 108, which may be applied to hash 308A and public key 308B using a private key 308D of user 108. The presence of user 108's public key within transaction data included within the conventional distributed ledger may enable various devices and systems (e.g., client devices 102, 104, and/or 106, peer systems 160, etc.) to verify user 108's digital signature 308C, as applied to data specifying transaction 308.

[0085] Client device 102 may also parse data specifying prior transaction 306 (e.g., as obtained from the current version of the hybrid distributed ledger) and extract

encrypted and/or hashed copies of rules engine 324 and trigger event list 322. Client device 102 may append the encrypted and/or hashed copies of rules engine 324 and trigger event list 322 to the data specifying transaction 308 (e.g., cryptographic hash 308A, public key 308B, and digital signature 308C), and transmit the data specifying transaction 308B to one or more of peer systems 160 for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger.

[0086] Private crypto key 302A may enable client device 102 (e.g., associated with user 108) to access encrypted event trigger list 322 upon extraction from the hybrid distributed ledger. In some embodiments, private crypto key 302A provides client device 102 with read-only access to the encrypted event trigger list 322. Client device 102 may obtain private crypto key 302A from system 140 using secured out-of-band communications or as input provided by user 108 through a web page or other graphical user interface (GUI) presented by client device 104.

[0087] Ownership of the tracked asset portion may be transferred from user 108 to user 110 upon verification and publication of the data specifying transaction 308 within a corresponding block of the hybrid distributed ledger by peer systems 160. User 110 may elect to further transfer that tracked asset portion to yet another user (e.g., user 112). For example, the one or more software applications executed by client device 104 may cause client device 104 to perform operations that generate input and output data specifying a new transaction (e.g., transaction 310 of FIG. 3) that transfers ownership of the tracked asset portion from user 110 to user 112, and that transmit the generated data to one or more of peer systems 160 for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger.

[0088] Data specifying transaction 310 may include a cryptographic hash 310A of prior transaction 308, a quantity or number of units of the tracked asset portion that are subject to transfer in transaction 310, and a public key 310B of user 112. The data specifying transaction 310 may include a digital signature 310C of the user 110, which may be applied to hash 310A and public key 310B using a private key 310D of user 110. The presence of user 110's public key 308B within transaction data included within the hybrid distributed ledger may enable various devices and systems (e.g., client devices 102, 104, and/or 106, peer systems 160, etc.) to verify user 110's digital signature 310C, as applied to data specifying transaction 310.

[0089] Client device 104 may also parse data specifying prior transaction 308 (e.g., as obtained from the current version of the hybrid distributed ledger) and extract encrypted and/or hashed copies of rules engine 324 and trigger event list 322. Client device 104 may append the encrypted and/or hashed copies of rules engine 324 and trigger event list 322 to the data specifying transaction 310 (e.g., cryptographic hash 310A, public key 310B, and digital signature 310C), and transmit the data specifying transaction 310 to one or more of peer systems 160 for verification, processing (e.g., additional cryptographic hashing) and inclusion into a new block of the hybrid distributed ledger. Ownership of the tracked asset portion may be transferred from user 110 to user 112 upon verification and publication of the data specifying transaction 310 within a corresponding block of the hybrid distributed ledger by peer systems 160.

[0090] Private crypto key 302B may enable client device 104 (e.g., associated with user 110) to decrypt event trigger list 322 upon extraction from the hybrid distributed ledger. Client device 104 may obtain private crypto key 302B from system 140 using secured out-of-band communications, and additionally or alternatively, as input provided by user 110 through a web page or other graphical user interface (GUI) presented by client device 104. Client device 104 may identify and extract private crypto key 302B from a portion of the hybrid distributed ledger obtained from peer systems 160 (e.g., as a secure in-band communication).

[0091] In the embodiments described above, system 140 may establish and maintain rules (e.g., through a rules engine and corresponding list of triggering events) that facilitate regulatory-based, policy-based, and/or customer-specified controls of transactions involving assets tracked within a hybrid distributed ledger. For example, client devices 102, 104, and/or 106 may generate transaction data that includes a rules engine and list of triggering events, and one or more of peer systems 160 may embed the generated transaction data into blocks of the hybrid distributed ledger for reference in subsequent transactions. System 140 may be configured to detect an occurrence of an event (e.g., based on data received from client devices 102, 104, and/or 106, etc.), may determine whether the list of triggering events includes the detected event, and when triggering event list includes the detected event, perform one or more operations consistent with an established rule that references the detected event, as described below with reference to FIG. 4.

[0092] FIG. 4 is a flowchart of a process 400 for automatically performing event-based operations on assets tracked within a hybrid distributed ledger in accordance with some embodiments. In an embodiment, a centralized authority may be assigned to establish regulatory-based, policy-based, and/or customer-specified control over assets tracked within the hybrid distributed ledger. In some aspects, tracked assets in accordance with various embodiments may include units of a virtual currency or a crypto-currency, units of financial instruments held by one or more owners, physical assets utilized by one or more individuals and/or entities, and/or documents maintained by one or more individuals and/or entities. In some aspects, a computer system associated with the centralized authority (e.g., system 140 associated with business entity 150) may execute one or more stored application programs to cause system 140 to recover, authorize, audit, and/or verify an ownership of at least a portion of the tracked assets and/or transactions involving the tracked assets based on established and maintained rules.

[0093] One or more computing components of system 140 may generate cryptographic keys that facilitate the exemplary regulation of transactions (e.g., distributions, transfers, and/or actions) involving assets tracked within the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., in step 404). For example, in step 402, system 140 generates a master cryptographic key with which system 140 may encrypt the generated and stored rules engine. In some aspects, certain aspects, system 140 may store copies of the generated master key in a portion of data repository 144 that is not accessible to user 110 (and any other users), thus maintaining confidence in the generated master key.

[0094] In step 402, system 140 may also perform operations that generate and maintain additional private cryptographic keys (e.g., private “crypto” keys) associated with each user who may be an owner of the assets tracked within

the hybrid distributed ledger. The generated private crypto keys may enable a device of each user to decrypt and access the list of triggering events and additionally or alternatively, metadata identifying the centralized authority. System 140 may store copies of the generated private crypto keys in a portion of data repository 144. Furthermore, system 140 may also perform operations that provide corresponding ones of the private crypto keys to users 108, 110, and/or 112 through secure, non-accessible and/or out-of-band communications.

[0095] One or more computing components of system 140 may generate a rules engine and a list of triggering events, which may be stored within a portion of data repository 144 (e.g., in step 404). For example, the generated and stored rules engine may identify or more rules that regulate a distribution of the tracked assets, an initiation of one or more transactions involving the tracked assets (e.g., a sale, a use of the tracked assets as collateral in a secured transaction etc.), and further, any additional or alternate action involving the tracked assets and/or the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., processes that generate additional cryptographic key sets for user 110, processes that recover assets tracked in the hybrid public-private ledger, etc.). The generated and stored list of triggering events may include information that specifies causal relationships between one or more of the established rules and one or more events that trigger an initiation of one or more corresponding regulated distributions, transfers, and/or actions involving assets tracked within the hybrid public-private ledger (e.g., the triggering events).

[0096] System 140 may establish, in step 404, one or more of the rules and/or triggering events to reflect regulations and/or policies promulgated by governmental entity, a financial regulator, and/or the centralized authority. For example, system 140 may establish a loss of a private key by user 110 as a “triggering event” that would cause system 140 to perform operations that generate a new pair of public and private keys for user 110 in response to a verification of particular authentication credentials. System 140 may deem a documented theft of a portion of the tracked assets a “triggering event” that would cause system 140 to perform operations to recover the stolen portion of the tracked assets and generate a new pair of public and private keys for user 110.

[0097] System 140 may establish, in step 404, one or more of the rules and/or triggering events based on information received from user 110 (e.g., as input provided to a web page or other graphical user interface (GUI) presented by client device 104 and provided to system 140). For example, user 110 may specify a particular distribution of tracked assets (e.g., recurring bill payments, etc.) in response to an accident that may occur in the future involving user 110 and/or user 110’s death (e.g., triggering events). Various embodiments are, however, not limited to these exemplary triggering events and corresponding rules, and in further embodiments, system 140 may establish any additional or alternate rules and/or triggering events appropriate to the tracked assets, to business entity 150, and further, to users 108, 110, and 112.

[0098] In step 406, system 140 may perform operations that encrypt the generated and stored rules engine (e.g., using the master encryption key) and further, that encrypt the generated and stored list of triggering events (e.g., using any technique that facilitates decryption using the private crypto keys). For example, system 140 may perform operations in step 406 that hash the encrypted rules engine and list of

triggering events into a genesis block of the hybrid distributed ledger, the contents of which may be incorporated (e.g., by client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106**, peer systems **160**, etc.) into each of the subsequent transaction blocks generated and appended to the hybrid distributed ledger. By incorporating the hashed and encrypted rules engine and list of triggering events into the blocks of the hybrid distributed ledger, various embodiments may ensure that the established rules are followed even in an event of actions by malicious parties that disrupt the tracked assets (e.g., instances of Bitcoin™ peeling, etc.).

[0099] In some embodiments, one or more computing components of system **140** may detect an occurrence of an event involving a portion of the tracked assets, an owner of a portion of the tracked assets, and/or a transaction involving a portion of the detected assets (e.g., in step **408**). For example, system **140** may receive data from client device **104** that indicates user **110** lost a corresponding private key associated with a portion of the tracked assets. In other instances, system **140** may detect an event in step **140** based on data received across network **120** from one or more systems associated with local, state, and/or federal governmental entities (e.g., data from a law enforcement system notifying business entity **150** of a theft of a portion of the tracked assets, data from a local government confirming a death of an owner of a portion of the tracked assets, etc.). In additional instances, system **140** may detect an occurrence of an event based on one or more sensors and devices communicatively connected to network **120** and capable of transmitting data to system **140**. Various embodiments are, however, not limited to these exemplary events, and in further embodiments, system **140** may be configured to detect any additional or alternate event appropriate to the tracked assets and to the components of computing environment **100**.

[0100] System **140** may also be configured to access the stored list of triggering events (e.g., within database **144**), and may determine whether the list of triggering events includes the detected event (e.g., in step **410**). If system **140** identifies the detected event as being within the list of triggering events (e.g., step **410**; YES), system **140** may establish the detected event as a triggering event, and may access the encrypted rules engine using the master encryption key (e.g., in step **412**). System **140** may further identify, within the accessed rules engine, one or more of the established rules that are causally related to the detected triggering event (e.g., in step **414**). Further, system **140** may be configured to perform one or more operations, either individually or in sequence, that are consistent with the identified rules (e.g., in step **416**). For example, the accessed rules engine may include information identifying the one or more operations associated with the identified rules. In other instances, at least one of the performed operations may represent a default operation associated with the identified rules (e.g., a specific type of authentication required before performing the one or more operations on behalf of user **110**).

[0101] In one embodiment, one or more computing components of system **140** may also determine whether to update portions of the generated rules engine and/or list of triggering events (e.g., in step **418**). For example, system **140** may identify an update or modification to one or more regulations and/or policies promulgated by governmental entity, a financial regulator, and/or the centralized authority.

In other instances, system **140** may obtain, from client device **104**, information updating a rule and/or triggering event previously established by system **140** based on input received from user **110** (e.g., through a web page and/or GUI presented by client device **104**).

[0102] If system **140** determines to update portions of the generated rules engine and/or list of triggering events (e.g., step **418**; YES), system **140** may access appropriate portions of the rules engine and/or list of triggering events in step **420** (e.g., using the master encryption key), and may modify the appropriate portions of the rules engine and/or list of triggering events to reflect the updated regulations, policies, user-specified rules, and/or user-specified events (e.g., in step **422**). In some instances, system **140** may modify the accessed rules engine by adding a new rule, deleting an existing rule, modifying one or more parameters of an existing rule, and/or modifying one or more operations associated with an existing rule. In other instances, system **140** may modify the accessed list of event triggers to add a new triggering event, delete an existing triggering event, and/or add or modify parameters associated with an existing triggering event.

[0103] System **140** may encrypt and re-hash the modified rules engine and/or list of triggering events, and may submit the encrypted and hashed modified rules engine and/or list of triggering events to one or more of peer systems **160** for inclusion in a block of the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., in step **424**). For example, one or more of peer systems **160** may incorporate the hashed and encrypted modified rules engine and/or list of triggering events into the hybrid distributed ledger as a special transaction (e.g., a “0” value transaction), such that the hybrid distributed ledger tracks each change within the modified rules engine and/or list of triggering events. Exemplary process **400** is then complete in step **426**.

[0104] Referring back to step **418**, if system **140** determines that no modification to the rules engine and/or the list of triggering events is warranted (e.g., step **418**; NO), exemplary process **400** may proceed to step **426**, and exemplary process **400** is complete. Further, and in reference to step **410**, if system **140** determines that the list of triggering events does not include the detected event (e.g., step **410**; NO), exemplary process **400** may proceed to step **418**, and system **140** may determine whether to update portions of the rules engine and/or list of triggering events using any of the exemplary processes described above.

[0105] In the embodiments described above, and through the generation of the master cryptographic key and management of the generated rules engine and corresponding list of triggering events, system **140** may perform operations that recover, authorize, audit, and/or verify an ownership of at least a portion of the tracked assets and/or transactions involving the tracked assets. The operations performed by system **140**, which utilize hybrid distributed ledgers in accordance with various embodiments, would not be possible using the conventional distributed ledgers described above.

[0106] For example, user **110** may be a user of a document distributed ledger (e.g., Bitcoin™) and may store a private key (e.g., private key **310D**) on a laptop computer (e.g., client device **104**) to generate and confirm document transactions. In one instance, user **110** may unfortunately drop the laptop into a swimming pool while confirming a document transaction with private key **310D**, and upon retrieval from

the swimming pool, user 110 may establish that the laptop no longer functions and that data on the laptop is not recoverable.

[0107] Traditionally, through a device in communication with network 120 (e.g., user 110's smartphone), user 110 may access a conventional distributed ledger, such as those conventional architectures outlined above, and determine that the document transaction was incomplete when user 110 dropped the laptop into the swimming pool. Further, user 110 may determine that the document transaction represents an orphaned block within the conventional distributed ledger, and the documents associated with the orphaned block are unrecoverable and permanently lost.

[0108] In some embodiments, user 110 may access a hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., as described with reference to FIG. 3), and may determine that the document transaction was incomplete when user 110 dropped the laptop into the swimming pool. In some embodiments, however, user 110 may provide input to the smartphone identifying the unrecoverable private key, which the smartphone may transmit to system 140 across network 120. In some aspects, system 140 may receive the transmitted message (e.g., in step 408), may determine that user 110's loss of private key 310D represents a triggering event (e.g., step 410; YES), and may perform operations that authenticate user 110's identity and that regenerate a pair of private and public keys for user 110, which system 140 may transmit to user 110 through any of the secure non-accessible processes outlined above (e.g., in steps 412, 414, and 416). Upon receipt of the newly generated private key, user 110 may access the hybrid distributed ledger (e.g., through the smartphone) and confirm the document transaction to recover the document.

[0109] Further, and by way of example, user 110 may access a wallet application executed by client device 104, and further, may determine that the mobile wallet is missing a number Bitcoins™. User 110 may suspect that the loss of the Bitcoins™ represents a theft by a malicious entity, and through a complex search of a corresponding distributed ledger (e.g., conventional distributed ledgers described above, and/or hybrid distributed ledgers in accordance with various embodiments), user 110 may trace the theft of the Bitcoins™ to a single transaction within a corresponding block. User 110 may contact the police and report the theft, and the police may confirm the accuracy of user 110's allegations regarding the theft.

[0110] User 110 may, in some instances, be capable of processing the conventional distributed ledgers described above to determine an address of the malicious entity responsible for the theft. The decentralized and anonymous nature of conventional distributed ledgers may, however, prevent user 110 from identifying the malicious entity, and the stolen Bitcoins™ may remain permanently unrecoverable.

[0111] Various embodiments may, however, address the deficiencies of conventional distributed ledgers and provide user 110 with recourse to recover the stolen Bitcoins™. For example, the police may notify the centralized authority of the theft of user 110's Bitcoins™ and provide a destination address associated with the malicious entity (e.g., through a message transmitted to system 140 and received, e.g., in step 408). System 140 may determine that the theft of the Bitcoins™ represents a triggering event included within the generated list (e.g., step 410; YES), and may perform operations that automatically create a request for a new

transaction that returns the stolen Bitcoins™ to user 110 using any of the exemplary techniques described above (e.g., in steps 412, 414, and 416). System 140 may also perform operations that regenerate a pair of private and public keys for user 110, which system 140 may transmit to user 110 through any of the secure non-accessible processes outlined above (e.g., in steps 412, 414, and 416).

[0112] The hybrid distributed ledger architectures described above may add a level of sophistication to conventional mechanisms for trustless communication by allowing transactions involving tracked assets to occur according to common transaction rules. Further, the hybrid distributed ledger architectures in accordance with various embodiments may allow owners of the tracked assets to project authority over the tracked assets by establishing customized rules for transaction authorization. Furthermore, and in contrast to conventional techniques described above, the hybrid distributed ledger architecture may enable a centralized authority (e.g., business entity 150 associated with system 140) to recover, authorize, audit, and/or verify an ownership of at least a portion of the tracked assets and/or transactions involving the tracked assets based on established and maintained rules.

[0113] In various embodiments, through the generation of a master cryptographic key and management of a generated rules engine and corresponding list of triggering events, system 140, acting as a centralized authority, may perform operations that recover, authorize, audit, and/or verify an ownership of at least a portion of the tracked assets and/or transactions involving the tracked assets. In some aspects, and as outlined above, tracked assets in accordance with various embodiments may include units of a virtual currency or a crypto-currency, units of financial instruments held by one or more owners, physical assets utilized by one or more individuals and/or entities, and/or documents such as contracts, deeds, wills, insurance policies, and/or other documents.

[0114] In additional aspects, the exemplary hybrid distributed algorithms described above may track a location, performance, usage, and/or status of one or more additional client devices (referred to as "connected devices") disposed within computing environment 100 (not shown in FIG. 1), which may be configured to establish communications with client devices 102, 104, and 106, and further, with system 140, using any of the communications protocols outlined above. For example, client devices 102, 104, and 106, system 140, and the connected devices may be uniquely identifiable and addressable within communications network 120, and may be capable of transmitting and/or receiving data across the established communications sessions. System 140 may be configured to establish the communications sessions with one or more of the connected devices, and to exchange data with the connected devices autonomously and without input or intervention from a user of client device 104 (e.g., user 110).

[0115] In some aspects, the connected devices may be implemented as a processor-based and or computer-based device that includes one or more processors and tangible, computer-readable memories. For example, connected devices in accordance with various embodiments may include mobile communications devices (e.g., mobile telephones, smart phones, tablet computers, etc.) and other devices capable of communicating with client device 104

(e.g., internet-ready televisions, internet-ready appliances and lighting fixtures, computing devices disposed within motor vehicles, etc.).

[0116] The connected devices may include sensor devices in communication with the one or more processors and the memories. The sensor devices may be configured to monitor the usage, location, status, etc., of corresponding ones of the connected devices, and may be configured to provide sensor data to corresponding ones of the processors. In some aspects, the sensor data may include data identifying a current state, data specifying intended and/or unintended interaction with one or more of users **108**, **110**, and/or **112** (e.g., through client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106**), inadvertent interactions (e.g., drops, other accidental interactions, etc.), and data describing any additional or alternate characteristics of the connected devices capable of being monitored and quantified by the sensor devices.

[0117] Computing environment **100** may include one or more additional computing systems in communication with the connected devices using any of the communications protocols outlined above. In some embodiments, the additional computing system include one or more sensor devices capable of monitoring a location, performance, usage, and/or status of the connected devices, which may establish a “sensor network” capable of monitoring the connected devices. These additional computing systems may provide the additional sensor data to the connected devices using any of the communications protocols outlined above, either a regular intervals or in response to requests from the connected devices. In some instances, the additional computing systems may be implemented as processor-based and/or computer-based systems consistent with the exemplary systems described above.

[0118] The connected devices may be configured to transmit portions of the sensor data (e.g., as detected by on-board sensor devices and/or received from the sensor network) to client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106** and additionally or alternatively, to system **140**, using any of the communications protocols outlined above. For example, the sensor data may characterize an interaction between the connected devices and users **108**, **110**, and **112** (e.g., the monitored data may represent usage data indicative of a consumption of one or more services provided by the connected devices), and the connected devices may transmit the usage data for users **108**, **110**, and/or **112** to corresponding ones of client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **106**, which may store the received usage data in a corresponding data repository. The connected devices may also transmit the usage data to system **140**, along with information linking specific elements of the usage data to corresponding users and/or client devices (e.g., user **110**'s usage data may be linked to an identifier of user **110** and/or of client device **104**). As described below in reference to FIGS. **4** and **5**, client devices **102**, **104**, and/or **108** may also incorporate corresponding portions of the monitored data, e.g., as received from the connected devices, into hybrid distributed ledgers in accordance with various embodiments in order to record, track, and publicly monitor the location, performance, usage, and/or status of the connected devices.

[0119] Document Tracking Using Hybrid Distributed Ledgers

[0120] Processes that maintain deeds and other important documents are crucial for proper record keeping and accessibility. Records are maintained in a secure, accessible repository and available to prove ownership or an occur-

rence of an event in a case of conflicting documentation. For example, a document may be hashed into a hybrid distributed ledger using a secure, known technique. In some embodiments, an image (e.g., from a camera, a scanner, a digital generated image, and/or any other source) of the document is hashed. The hashed document may also be used in the case of transactions, and an ownership chain may be maintained. Using hybrid distributed ledgers may enable financial institutions and other entities that provide loans secured against any of these deeds to automatically execute liens in the case of default on the loan. Further, the use of secured images may also provide further security, especially in a case of conflicting documentation.

[0121] FIG. **6** illustrates one embodiment of a method **700** for adding a document image to a distributed ledger-based tracking system, such as a hybrid distributed ledger. At step **702** an image of the document is obtained by a client device **102**, **104**, **106**. The one or more client devices **102**, **104**, **106** can be associated with a user **108**, **110**, **112**. In some embodiments, the user **108**, **110**, **112** can be associated with the document, such as, for example, an executor of the document, a benefactor of the document, a signatory of the document, and/or any other relation to the document. In other embodiments, the user **108**, **110**, **112** is an employee of entity entrusted with tracking and/or verification of the document, such as a bank, escrow agent, and/or any other suitable entity. The client device **102**, **104**, **106** can obtain the document image by generating the image through one or more input means (such as a camera, scanner, etc.) formed integrally with the client device **102**, **104**, **106**, by using a peripheral device (e.g., camera, scanner, etc.) attached to the client device **102**, **104**, **106**, by retrieving a document image from a storage device, and/or can receive a document image from one or more remote systems. The document image obtained by the client device **102**, **104**, **106** is referred to herein as an original document. It will be appreciated that the original document can be any suitable format including human and/or machine-readable formats. At an optional step **704**, the original document is transmitted to the system **140**. Although the additional steps are discussed as being performed by the system **140**, it will be appreciated that any of the steps in the method **700** can be performed by one or more of the client devices **102**, **104**, **106**, the system **140**, the peers **160**, a remote system (not shown), and/or any combination thereof, and are within the scope of this disclosure.

[0122] At step **706**, a unique identifier is appended to the original document to generate a modified document. The unique identifier can be generated by any suitable method, such as, for example, a randomly generated unique identifier, a system-generated unique identifier, and/or any other suitable method. In some embodiments, the unique identifier is generated as a document authentication identifier (DAI) according to one or more known methods. The DAI can be generated by a central authority **150**, the owner/generator of the document, and/or any other suitable entity. In some embodiments, the unique identifier can be added to the document image by directly injecting additional code into the document image file. For example, in some embodiments, the document image file includes a header having a field configured to receive a unique identifier therein. In other embodiments, the unique identifier is appended to the end of the document image file. The unique identifier can have a fixed and/or a variable length.

[0123] In some embodiments, the document image can be further processed at step 706. In some embodiments, the system 140 modifies the original document and/or the modified document according to one or more known image verification functions. For example, in some embodiments, a watermark, coloration, and/or other alteration to the document image is performed. In other embodiments, the document image file is modified according to one or more known image verification functions. For example, in various embodiments, one or more image modification functions and/or image transforms can include a Hough transform, a Radon transform, a discrete transform, a discrete cosine transform, a discrete Fourier transform, a wavelet transform, any combination thereof, and/or any other suitable known image transform and/or image modification function.

[0124] At step 708, a hash of the modified document is generated. The hash can be generated by providing the modified document to any suitable hashing function, such as, for example, a hash function associated with the hybrid distributed ledger, a hash function selected by an owner/issuer of the document, and/or any other suitable hash function. The hash function generates a unique (or semi-unique) hash value based on the modified document. For example, in some embodiments, the hash value generated for the modified document is different than a hash value that would be generated for the original document by the same hash function (due to the addition of the unique identifier). In some embodiments, the hash value of the modified document is passed through one or more additional hash functions to further hash/encrypt the document image.

[0125] In some embodiments, the hash function utilizes at least one of a public key and/or a private key associated with one or more clients 102, 104, 106 and/or a central authority 150. For example, in some embodiments, the hash function includes a digital signature 202 of a client 102, 104, 106. In some embodiments, the hash function includes a public and/or private key of one or more clients associated with the original and/or modified document, such as, for example, a public key of a signatory to the document, a private key an issuing entity of the document, a public key of a guarantor of the document, and/or any other suitable public or private key. The public and/or private key included in the hash function can be a key issued by a central authority 150 that maintains/manages the distributed ledger. For example, in some embodiments, the central authority 150 generates a unique public/private key combination for each entity that utilizes a hybrid distributed ledger to track document images. In other embodiments, the public/private cryptographic key is selected by a user 108, 110, 112.

[0126] At step 710, the hash value of the modified document is transmitted to one or more peers 160 for inclusion in a distributed ledger, such as, for example, a hybrid distributed ledger as described above. In some embodiments, the hash value is incorporated into the electronic distributed ledger as an additional block appended to the existing block chain. The hash value of the modified document may be incorporated with additional information regarding the document, such as, for example, data identifying signatory parties, issuing parties, guarantors of the document, ownership interest in the document, parties deriving a benefit from the document, parties having an obligation imposed in the document, and/or any other suitable information regarding the document. In some embodiments, the document image itself is stored on the distributed ledger as

part of the generated block. In other embodiments, multiple hash values of related and/or unrelated documents can be stored in each block of the distributed ledger. One or more trusted peers 160 can generate additional blocks when a certain number of new document images and/or transactions related to the document images (as discussed below) are ready for processing.

[0127] After adding the document image to the distributed ledger, a user 108, 110, 112 can track the document image and utilize the original document image for verification of document copies presented by one or more third parties (as described in more detail below). In some embodiments, the distributed ledger can further track one or more aspects of the document/document image, through one or more transactions recorded in the distributed ledger. For example, in some embodiments, the distributed ledger can track one or more aspects of a document such as ownership interest, a controlling entity identifier, a security interest in the document, rights and responsibilities under the document, execution/expiration dates of the document, and/or any other suitable aspects of the document.

[0128] In some embodiments, one or more updates to the original document can be tracked by the distributed ledger. For example, in some embodiments, one or more documents, such as a contract, loan agreement, memorandum of understanding, deal document, etc., can have one or more terms updated due to change in status of the parties, government regulation, renegotiation, etc. In some embodiments, the updated document is processed and added to the distributed ledger according to the method 700 illustrated in FIG. 7. In some embodiments, the unique identifier appended to the updated document is the hash value of the original document and/or the modified document. In other embodiments, the changes to the document are recorded as transactions on the distributed ledger. For example, in some embodiments, updates to one or more terms of the original document can be recorded as transactions, as described above with respect to the hybrid distributed ledger.

[0129] In some embodiments, one or more copies of the original document can be verified by the system 140. FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a method 800 of document version tracking and verification in a distributed ledger. At step 802, an original document is added to the distributed ledger according to the method 700 discussed in conjunction with FIG. 6. At step 804, an unverified copy of the original document is provided by a user 108, 110, 112 for verification. For example, in some embodiments, the document is a financial document provided to a financial institution for satisfaction. The financial institution can verify the authenticity of the document prior to execution thereof. As another example, the document is a will or other document that is executed by an event. An entity charged with execution of the document, such as an executor, can verify the authenticity of a document prior to execution thereof. Although specific embodiments are provided herein, it will be appreciated that any suitable document can be tracked and verified according to the method 800 and is within the scope of this disclosure.

[0130] At step 806, a verifying entity, such as, for example, a financial institution, escrow entity, executor, attorney, etc., obtains a document image of the unverified copy, referred to herein as the unverified document image. The unverified document image can be generated through one or more input means (such as a camera, scanner, etc.)

formed integrally with the client device **102, 104, 106**, by using a peripheral device (e.g., camera, scanner, etc.) attached to the client device **102, 104, 106**, by retrieving a document image from a storage device, and/or can receive a document image from one or more remote systems.

[0131] At step **808**, the system **140** receives the unverified document image. The unverified document image can be provided from a client device **102, 104, 106** associated with the verifying party. In some embodiments, the unverified document image can be encrypted and/or otherwise processed prior to transmission to the system **140**. For example, in some embodiments, the unverified document image is provided via a secure, encrypted connection to prevent tampering with and/or alteration of the unverified document image during transmission from the verifying party to the central authority **150**.

[0132] At step **810**, the system **140** generates a hash value of the unverified document image. The hash value of the unverified document image is generated using the same unique identifier and hash function(s) used to generate the hash value of the original document. For example, in some embodiments, if the unique identifier for the original document was assigned by a central authority **150** and/or third party, the same unique identifier is appended to the unverified document image prior to hashing. In other embodiments, if the unique identifier is generated according to one or more functions, the same functions can be used to generate a unique identifier for the unverified document image. The unique identifier is appended to the unauthenticated document and a hash of the unauthenticated document is generated using the same hash function(s) used to generate the hash of the original document.

[0133] At step **812**, the system **140** retrieves the hash value of the original document from the distributed ledger. In some embodiments, the system **140** retrieves the hash value by obtaining a current copy of the distributed ledger and traversing the ledger until the block containing the hash value of the original document is found. The system **140** unpacks the hash value from the block. In other embodiments, the system **140** can maintain a searchable database of document images and/or hashes stored on the distributed ledger and can retrieve the document hash value from the searchable database. The searchable database can be maintained by the central authority **150** and/or a third-party.

[0134] At step **814**, the system **140** compares the hash value of the original document retrieved from the distributed ledger with the hash value generated for the unverified document image. If the hash values match, the unverified document image is a true and correct copy of the original document and can be authenticated as a genuine copy of the original document. If the hash values do not match, the unauthenticated document includes one or more discrepancies with respect to the original document and is not verified as a genuine copy. For example, in various embodiments, failure to match the hash functions may indicate that one or more terms in the unverified document image do not match one or more terms in the original document, the signatures in the unverified document image may not match the signatures in the original document, and/or one or more other discrepancies between the unverified document image and the original document.

[0135] If the hash values match and the unauthenticated document is authenticated, at step **816**, the system **140** generates an authentication message that is transmitted to

the verifying party **108, 110, 112**. The authentication message verifies the authenticity of the unverified document image. In some embodiments, the authentication message can include additional information regarding the original document, such as, for example, ownership interests in the document, parties to the document, etc. Authentication of the unverified document allows a verifying party to execute the document, provide a security interest in the document, and/or otherwise utilize the unverified document with confidence that the unverified document is a true representation of the original document.

[0136] If the hash values do not match, at step **818**, the system **140** generates a not-authenticated message that is transmitted to the verifying party **108, 110, 112**. The not-authenticated message indicates that the unverified document image could not be authenticated due to one or more issues. In some embodiments, the not-authenticated message may include additional information regarding the issues and/or discrepancies in the unverified document image. The verifying party **108, 110, 112** that generated the authentication request can perform one or more additional authentication attempts if they believe the not-authentication message to be in error, such as, for example, generating a new unverified document image for authentication, performing a hard-copy authentication, and/or otherwise authenticating the unverified document.

[0137] In some embodiments, the distributed ledger is configured to track one or more changes to the original document. FIG. **8** is a flow chart illustrating one embodiment of a method **900** for tracking changes to the original document. At step **902**, an original document is added to the distributed ledger according to the method **700** discussed in conjunction with FIG. **6**. At step **904**, one or more changes to the document are made. The changes to the document can include updates, substitution, and/or cancellation of one or more terms in the original document, indicators that certain conditions in the original document (such as milestones) have/have not been met, updates to responsible parties, ownership, security interest, and/or any other suitable update to the original document.

[0138] At step **906**, the updates to the document are provided to the system **140**. Although embodiments are discussed herein where the updated document is provided to the system **140** for further processing, it will be appreciated that the additional steps of method **900** can be performed by any suitable element of the system **100**, such as the client devices **102, 104, 106**, the system **140**, the peers **160**, and/or any combination thereof.

[0139] The updates to the original document can be provided as individual transactions and/or as an image of the updated document. For example, in some embodiments, one or more changes are provided to the system **140** as transactions being performed on the tracked document image. The transactions can include a change in ownership (or security interest) that is processed according to transfers of digital assets as discussed above. As another example, in some embodiments, an updated document image is generated including all of the changes to the original document and is added to the distributed ledger, for example, according to the method **700** illustrated in FIG. **5**.

[0140] In some embodiments, a copy of the original document is provided with the updated document image to provide for verification of the original document. For example, in some embodiments, a copy of the original

document is provided to verify the updated document includes only changes made with respect to the original document and/or the last updated version of the document tracked by the distributed ledger. At step 908, the system 140 receives a copy of the original document for authentication. The copy of the original document can be provided with the one or more updates and/or can be provided separately from the one or more updates. In some embodiments, the system 140 authenticates the copy of the original document in accordance with the method 800 discussed in conjunction with FIG. 8.

[0141] If the copy of the original document is authenticated, at step 910, the system 140 appends a unique identifier to the updated document. In some embodiments, the unique identifier is the hash value of the original document. In some embodiments, the hash value of the original document is retrieved from the distributed ledger and appended to the updated document image, as discussed above in accordance with step 706 of method 700. In other embodiments, the hash value of the original document can be generated from the copy of the original document provided simultaneously with the updated document image. The hash value of the original document provides authentication and/or tracking of document versions within the distributed ledger. In some embodiments, the hash value appended to the updated document image is the hash value of the most-recent updated document image associated with the original document stored by the distributed ledger.

[0142] The apparatuses and processes are not limited to the specific embodiments described herein. In addition, components of each apparatus and each process can be practiced independent and separate from other components and processes described herein.

[0143] The previous description of embodiments is provided to enable any person skilled in the art to practice the disclosure. The various modifications to these embodiments will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments without the use of inventive faculty. The present disclosure is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown herein, but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for use in electronic document control, comprising:

- a storage device; and
- a processor coupled to the storage device, the storage device storing software instructions for controlling the processor that when executed by the processor configure the processor to:
 - receive a signal representing data including an original document;
 - append a unique identifier to the original document to generate a modified document;
 - generate a hash value of the modified document; and
 - transmit the hash value corresponding to the modified document to a computer system having stored thereon an electronic distributed ledger.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the hash value is generated by a hash function including at least one of a public key and a private key.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the software instructions further configure the processor to:

- receive a signal representing data including an updated document, wherein the updated document comprises one or more changes to the original document;
- receive a signal representing data including the original document;

- generate a hash value of the original document to verify authenticity of the document;

- append a unique identifier to the updated document to generate a modified updated document;

- generate an updated hash value of the modified updated document; and

- transmit the updated hash value to the computer system having stored thereon the distributed ledger.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the unique identifier appended to the updated document includes the hash value of the original document.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the signal representing data includes information associated with the original document.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the information associated with the original document includes at least one of an ownership interest, a controlling entity, or a security interest.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the original document is pre-processed by the processor prior to generating a hash.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the pre-processing comprises modifying the data representing the original document according to one or more known image verification functions.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the software instructions further configure the processor to:

- receive an unverified document;
- load a portion of the distributed ledger containing the hash value corresponding to the original document;
- generate a hash value of the unverified document; and
- compare the hash value of the unverified document to the hash value of the original document.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the software instructions further configure the processor to:

- extract a prior hash value from the hash value corresponding to the document, wherein the prior hash value corresponds to an earlier version of the document;
- load a portion of the distributed ledger containing the prior hash value; and
- generate the prior document from the hash value.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the prior document is used to verify a change between the prior version of the document to the document.

12. A method of document tracking and verification, comprising:

- receiving, at a processor, a signal representing data including an original document;
- modifying, by the processor, the document to include a unique image verification identifier;
- generating, by the processor, a hash value of the modified document; and
- transmitting the hash value corresponding to the modified document to a computing system having stored thereon an electronic distributed ledger.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the hash value is generated by a hash function including at least one of a public key and a private key.

14. The method of claim **12**, comprising:
receiving, at the processor, a signal representing data including an updated document, wherein the updated document comprises one or more changes to the original document;
receiving, at the processor, a signal representing data including the original document;
generating, by the processor, a hash value of the original document to verify authenticity of the document;
appending a unique identifier to the updated document to generate a modified updated document;
generating, by the processor, an updated hash value of the modified updated document; and
transmitting the updated hash value to the computing system having stored thereon the distributed ledger.

15. The method of claim **14**, wherein the unique identified appended to the updated document includes the hash value of the original document.

16. The method of claim **12**, wherein the signal representing data includes information associated with the original document.

17. The method of claim **12**, wherein the information associated with the original document includes at least one of an ownership interest, a controlling entity, or a security interest.

18. The method of claim **12**, wherein the original document is pre-processed by the processor prior to generating a hash.

19. The method of claim **12**, comprising:
receiving, by the processor an unverified document;
loading, by the processor a portion of the distributed ledger containing the hash value corresponding to the original document;
generating, by the processor, a hash value of the unverified document; and
comparing, by the processor, the hash value of the unverified document to the hash value of the original document.

20. A method of verifying a document, comprising:
receiving, from a third party, an unverified document image;
accessing a distributed ledger maintained by a trusted authority, wherein the distributed ledger comprises one or more blocks each storing at least one verified document image;
generating an hash value of the unverified document image according to one or more rules stored in the distributed ledger;
comparing the hash value of the unverified document to a hash value of the at least one verified document image stored by the distributed ledger;
generating an authentication message if the hash value of the unverified document image and the hash value of the verified document image are the same; and
generating a not-authenticated message if the hash value of the unverified document image and the hash value of the verified document image are different.

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