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1 specific software entities, it is appreciated that the
invention is applicable to any plurality of software
entities required to support a system feature.
Specifically, the invention will be described in terms
5 of OS software and SPP microcode such as a TCU for an
IOM. In the Unisys Corporation A-Series computer systems
the OS is referred to as a Master Control Program (MCP).
The invention may also be applied to the MCP and an IOU
for the IOM.

10 Additionally, the invention may be applied between
OS software and a System Library, between two user
applications or between any independent software entities
capable of exchanging data in the manner to be described
by its best mode embodiments.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention includes an interface and protocol
between first and second software entities of a system
(e.g., OS software and SPP microcode) for the exchange
20 of indications of system features requiring mutual
support. During the exchange process, each software
environment (e.g., OS or SPP) will examine the other
environments supported features to determine which
features are mutually supported and therefore usable.
25 The interface is preferably utilized during system
initialization and prior to use of such features. If
a feature is not mutually supported, appropriate action
is taken. If the non-supported feature is optional,
it will not be enabled. If the feature is required,
30 the system will report the error and/or halt.

The following new enhancements are provided by
the mechanism of the present invention.

1. Optional and required system features may
be developed and released independently by
35 software development groups such as the OS
and SPP development organizations.
2. Support releases, for example, OS or SPP,