Integration of Web and Distributed Objects with Existing Systems

Gomer Thomas and Amjad Umar, Bellcore

In many situations existing information resources and systems, including so-called legacy systems, must be integrated with new information resources and systems developed using the emerging World Wide Web and/or Distributed Object technologies.A plethora of mediation technologies -- object wrappers, screen scrapers, database gateways, Web-object gateways, etc. -- can be employed in a large number of configurations to address this problem. (See figure 1.) Each choice has business trade-offs as well as technical trade-offs.

The basic premise of our presentation is that decisions on how to integrate existing systems with newer technologies such as the World Wide Web and Distributed Objects must be based on a combination of business drivers and technical considerations, rather than on technical considerations alone. For example, the integration approach for a mission-critical, enterprise-wide operation support application may be fundamentally different from that for a departmental decision support application. We will present for discussion a systematic methodology that will show how different integration approaches and concomitant technologies can be chosen based on factors such as:

- Strategic business value of existing information/application (i.e., long range vs. short range)
- Extensibility requirements of system (i.e., stable vs. evolving rapidly)
- Technology status of existing application (e.g., navigational vs. relational vs. object database)
- Application category (e.g., operational support vs. decision support)
- Requirements for integration with other applications (i.e., stand-alone vs. tightly coupled)
- Performance and scalability requirements

We will illustrate this methodology through examples and business scenarios based on our experience in this field. This framework will cast light on requirements for CORBA and Web products.

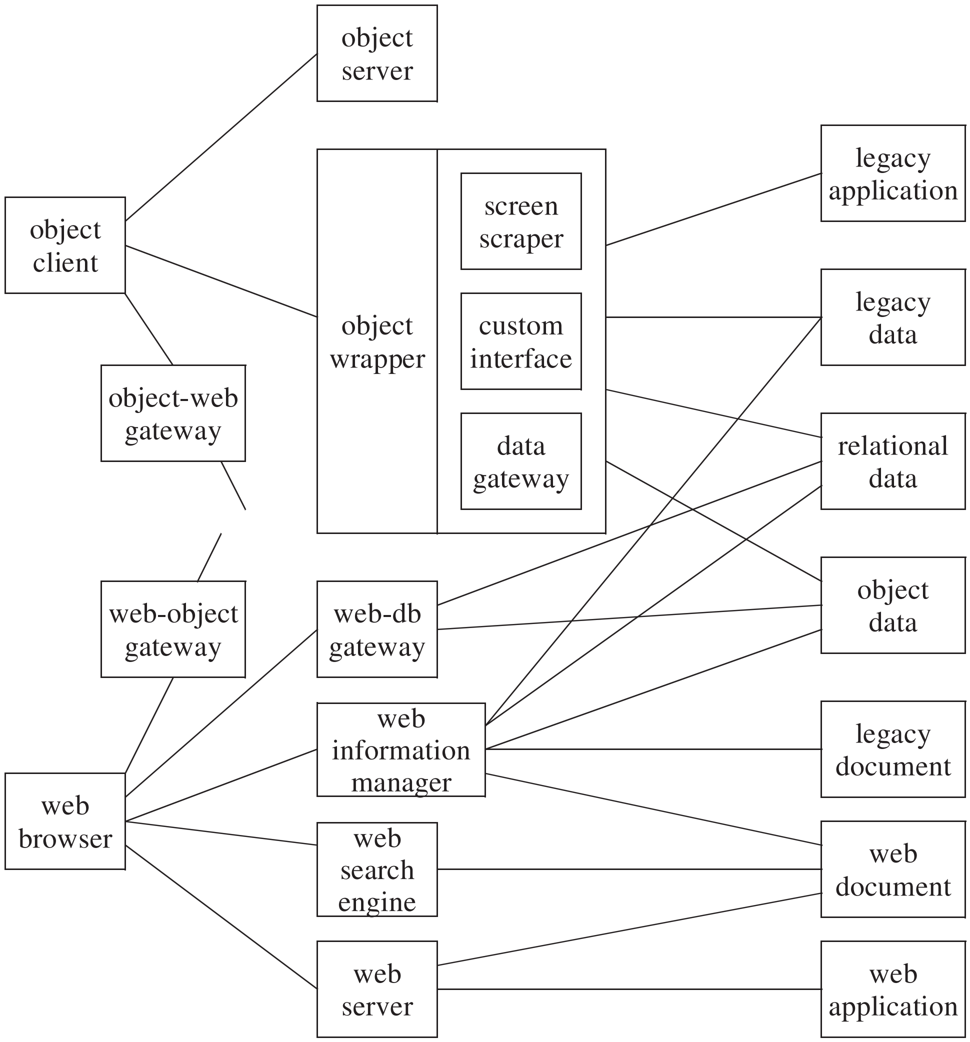

Figure 1. Mediation Technologies