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Harrison, Jr.

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(54) **SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM, METHOD AND DEVICE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06Q 30/02 (2012.01)
G06Q 10/10 (2012.01)
G06Q 10/06 (2012.01)
G06Q 40/02 (2012.01)
G06Q 99/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **705/319; 705/1.1**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

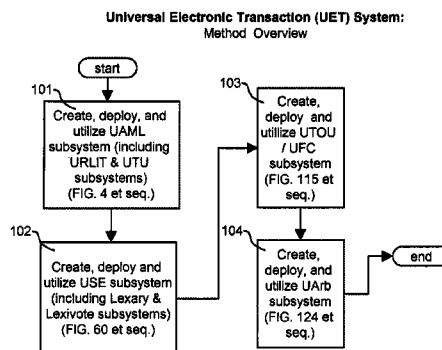
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A social networking system, method and device provides a social network environment in which one user subscribes to a newsfeed or ticker related to another user. Per a disclosed embodiment, users share URLs and post user-generated content, and other users view, comment on, or indicate that they like or dislike such posts; user approval or disapproval of such posts is made visible through, inter alia, a disclosed quantity indicator of popularity. Disclosed embodiments further provide a disclosed mechanism for recommending one user to another, for resolving disputes between users, and for displaying a wish list or an inventory on behalf of a user. Disclosed embodiments further provide for verifying a user and for checking a URL. Disclosed embodiments further provide revenue generation through collecting data pertaining to users, serving advertisements to users, and facilitating transactions between users.

30 Claims, 82 Drawing Sheets



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- Office Action dated Apr. 14, 2011 in U.S. Appl. No. 12/924,688.

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**FIG. 1 Universal Electronic Transaction (UET) System:
Method Overview**

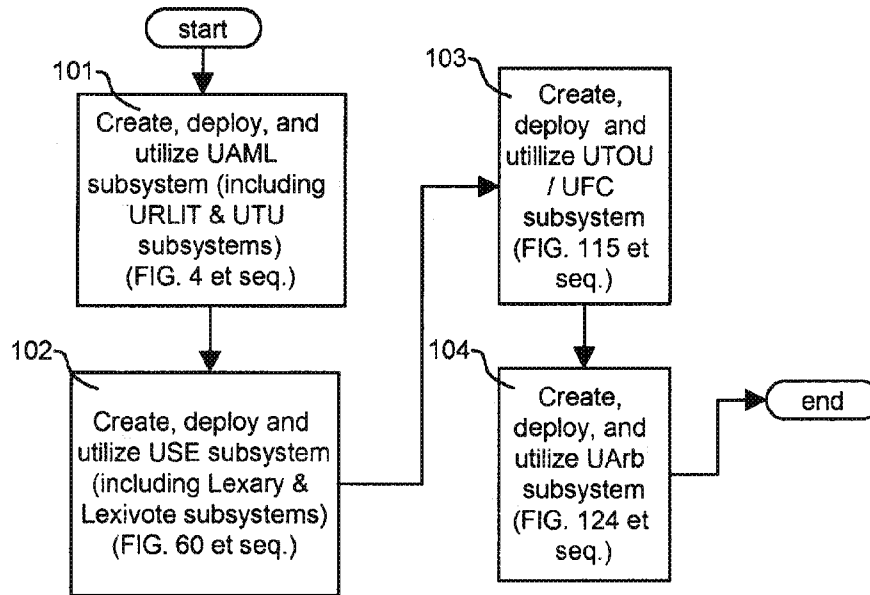


FIG. 2 UET System: System Overview

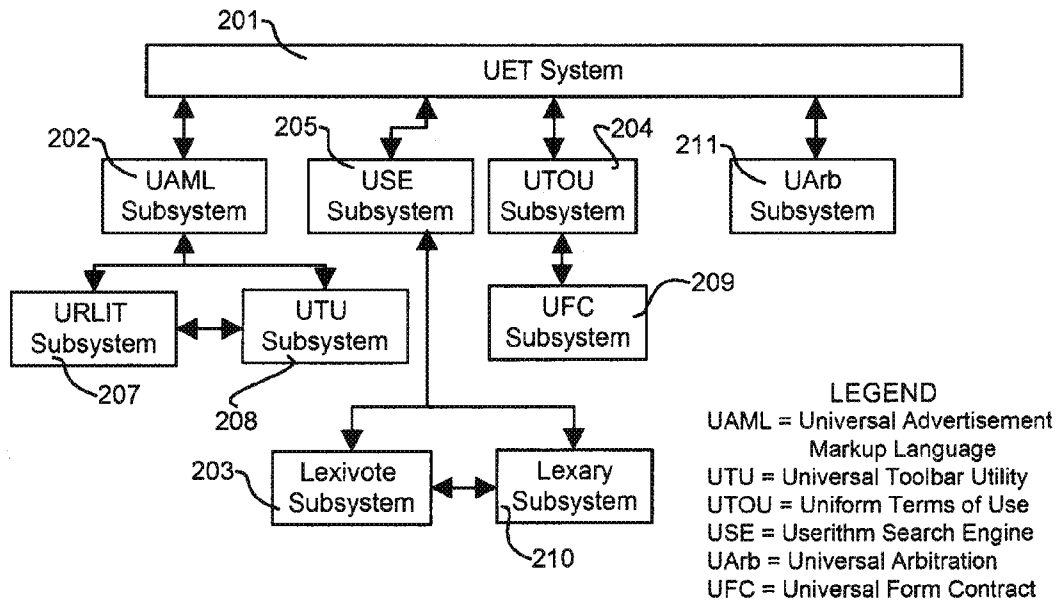


FIG. 3 UET System: Apparatus Overview

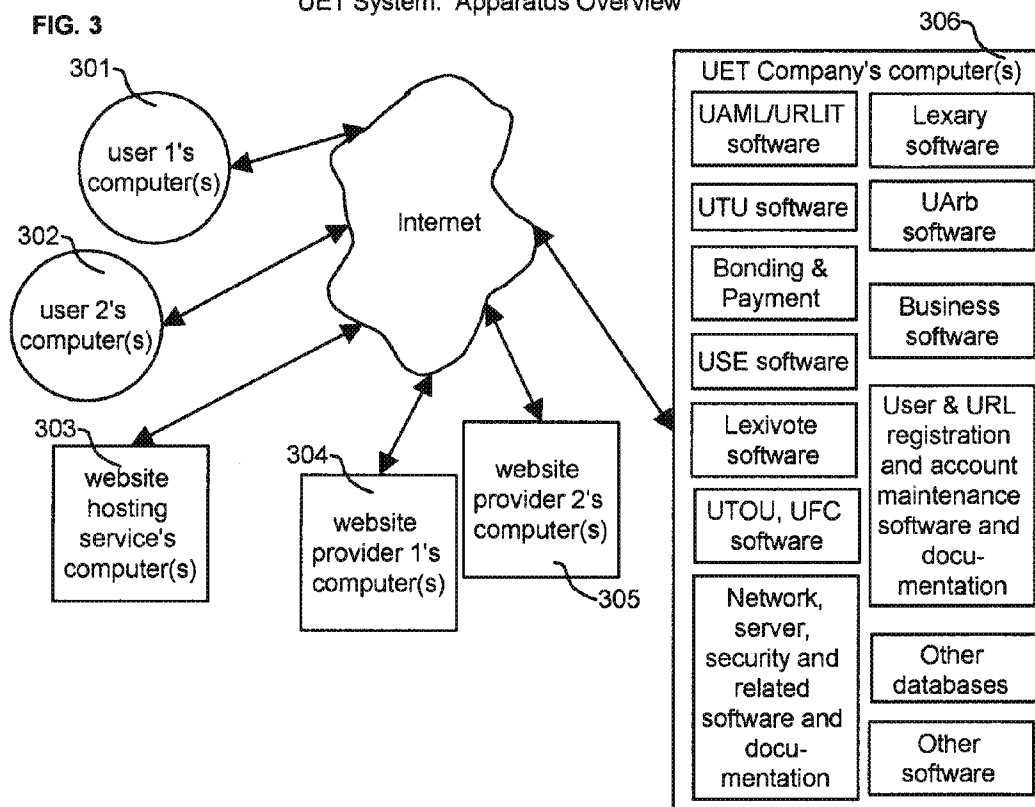


FIG. 4

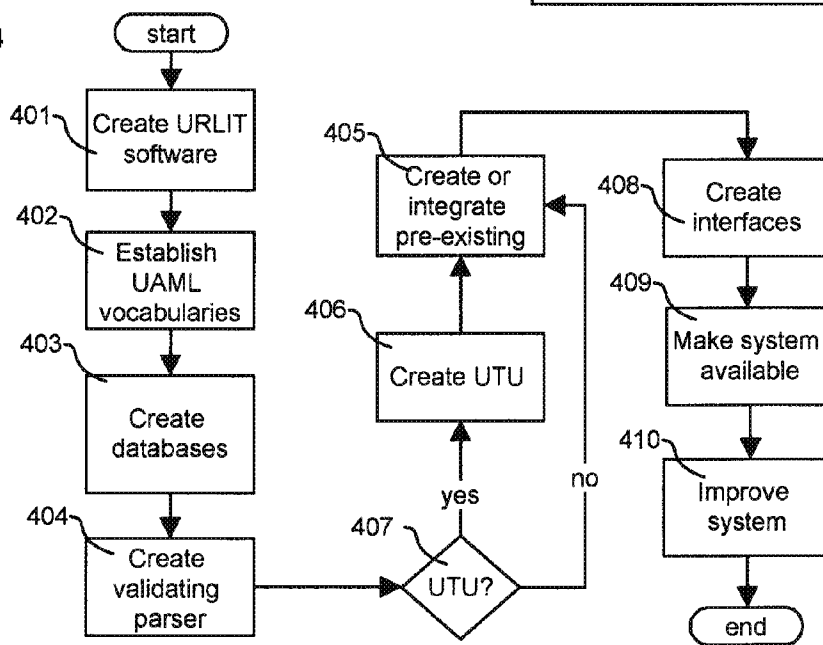


FIG. 5

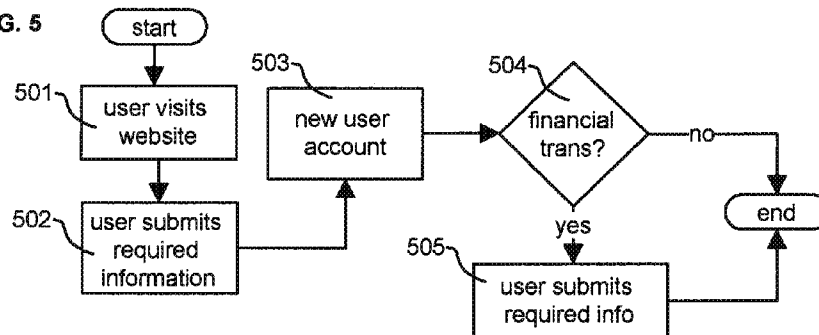


FIG. 6A

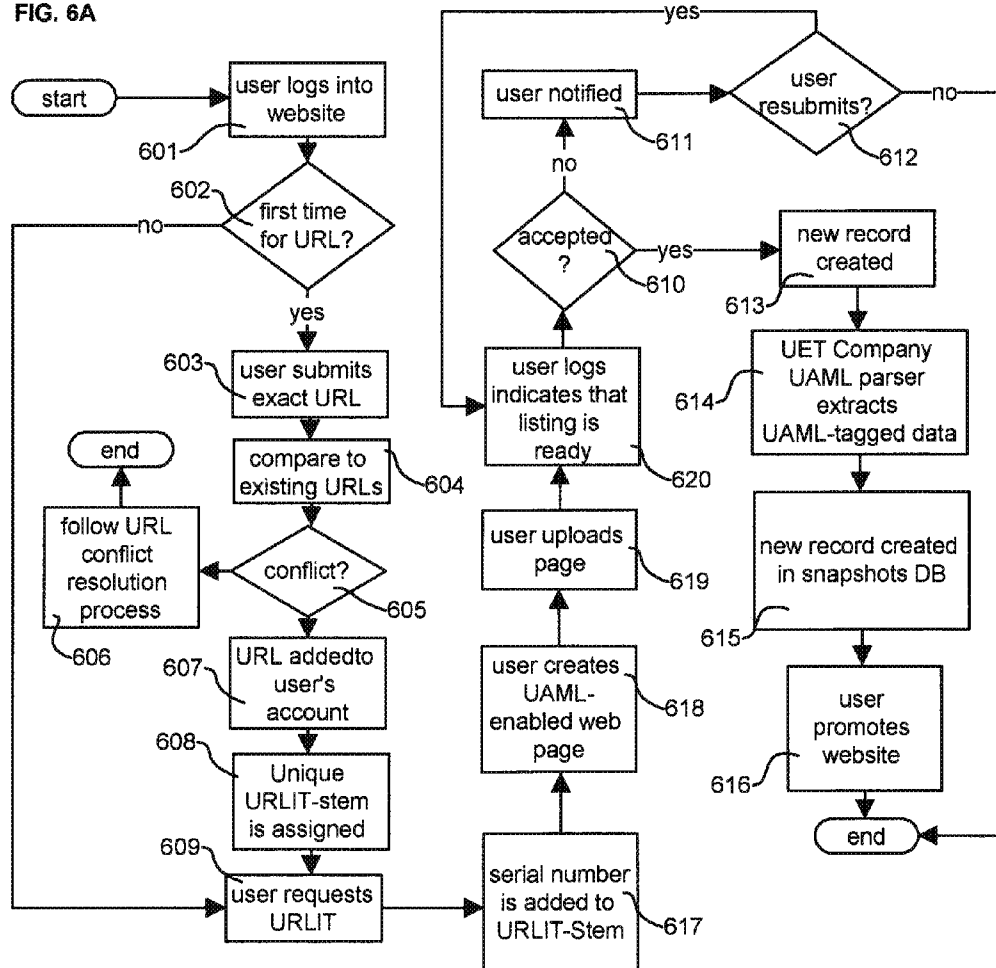


FIG. 6B

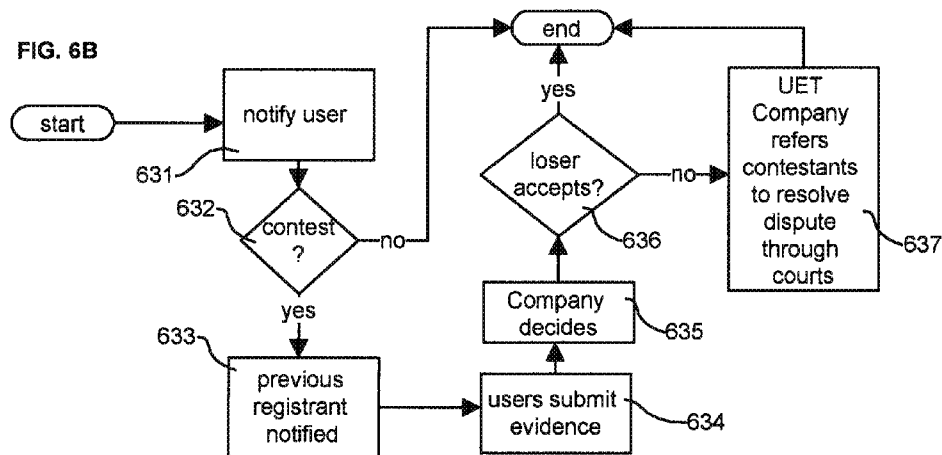


FIG. 7A

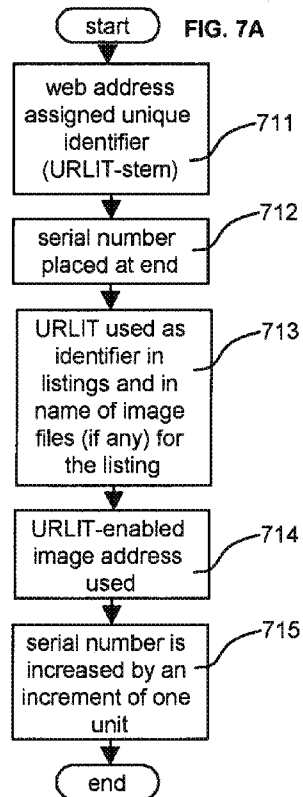
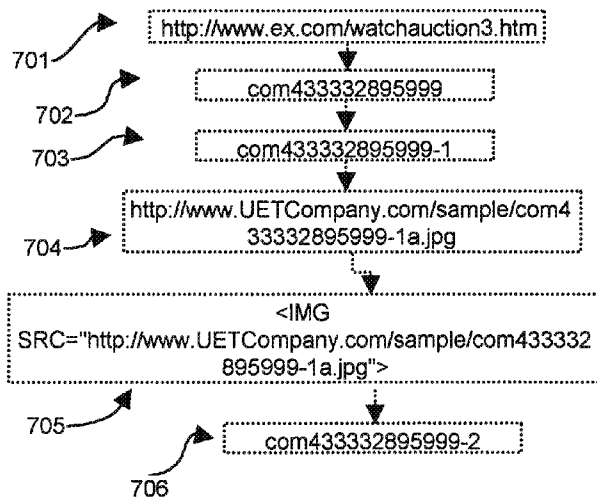


FIG. 7B



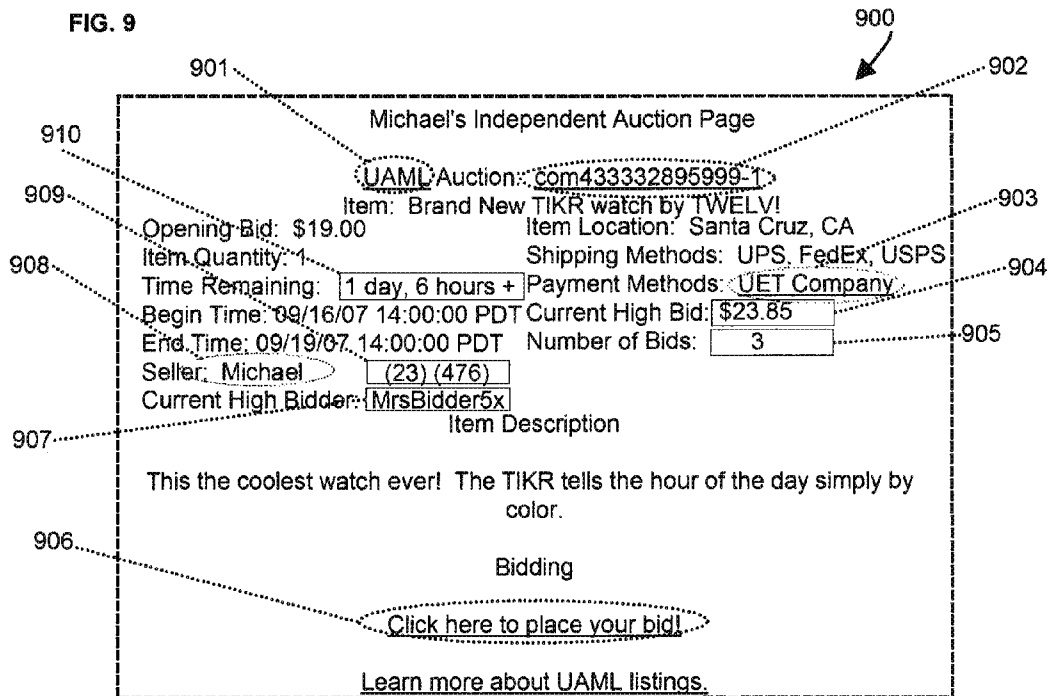
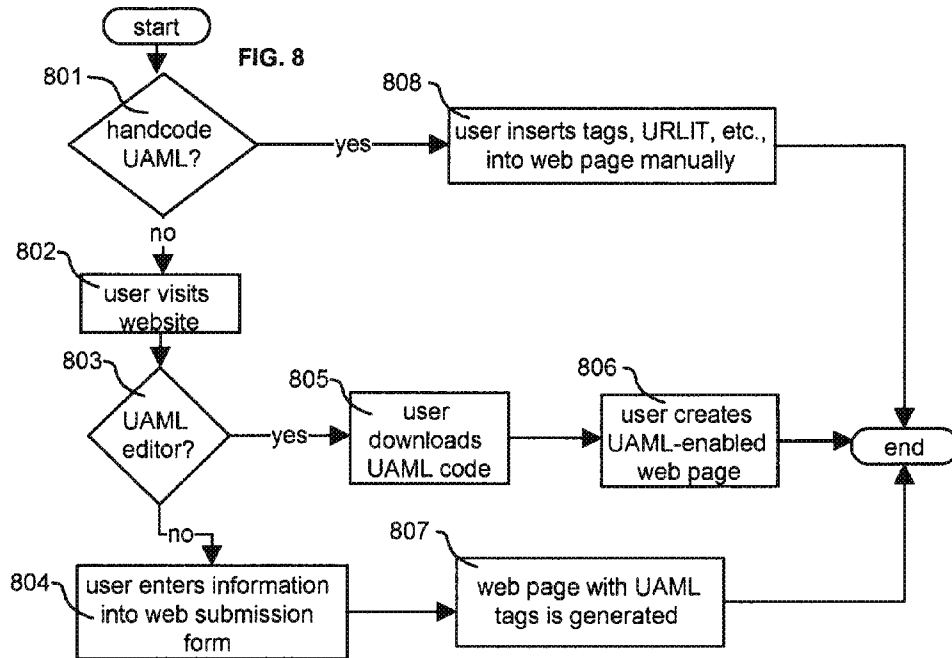


FIG. 10

1001 UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Example User-Accessible Submission Form for Entry of Data and Submission to UAML Code Generator

UAML-Enabled Web Page Generator: Submit Your Auction Info Below	
Enter Your User ID	<input type="text" value="Michael"/>
Enter the Title of Your Auction	<input type="text" value="Brand New TIKR watch by TWELV!"/>
Enter the Opening Bid Amount	<input type="text" value="19.00"/>
[etc.]	

FIG. 11

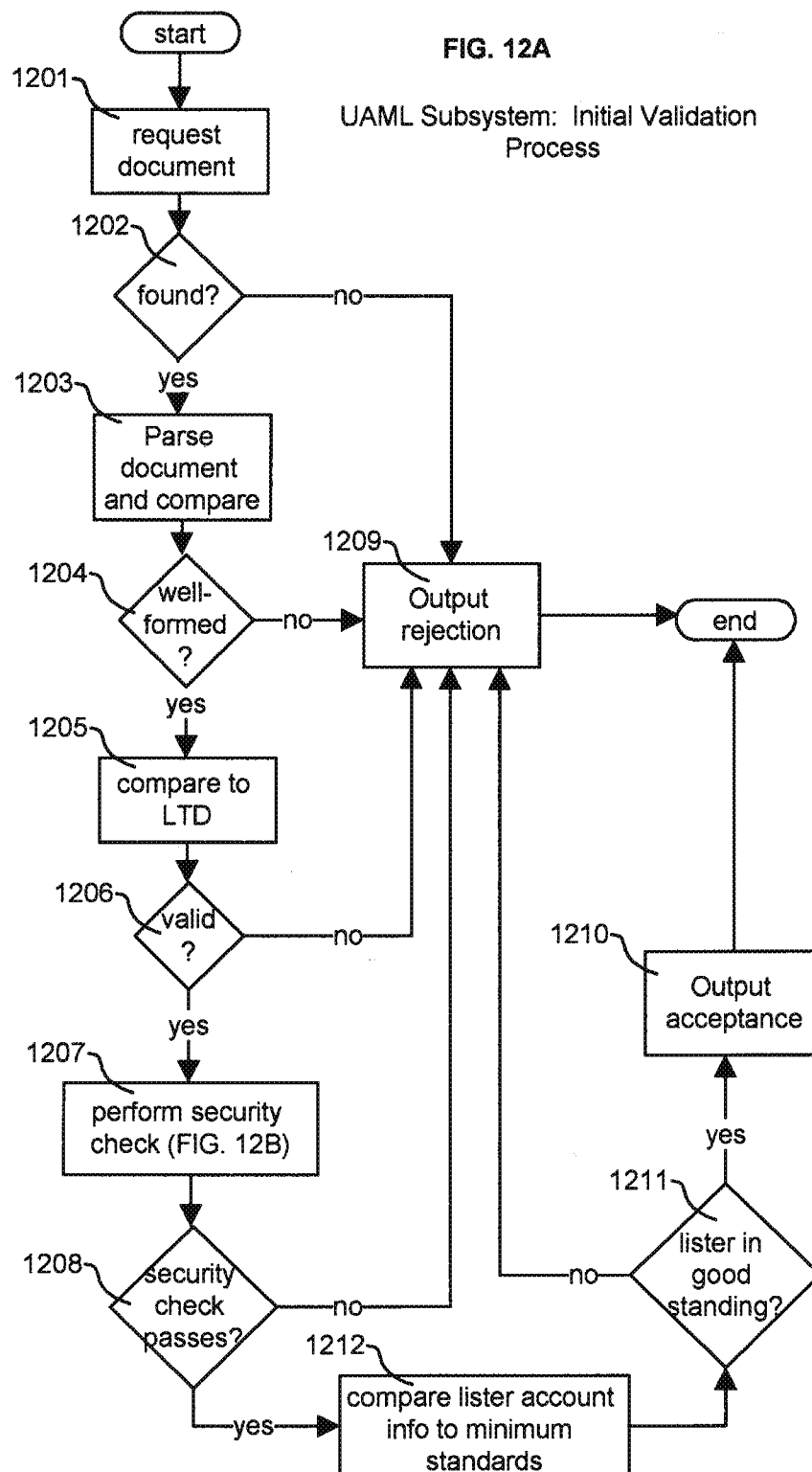
UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Example
UAML-Enabled HTML Document

1101

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.....[cut].....
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</TD></TR> <TR><TD> <P><UAMLAuctQPhrase>Item Quantity:
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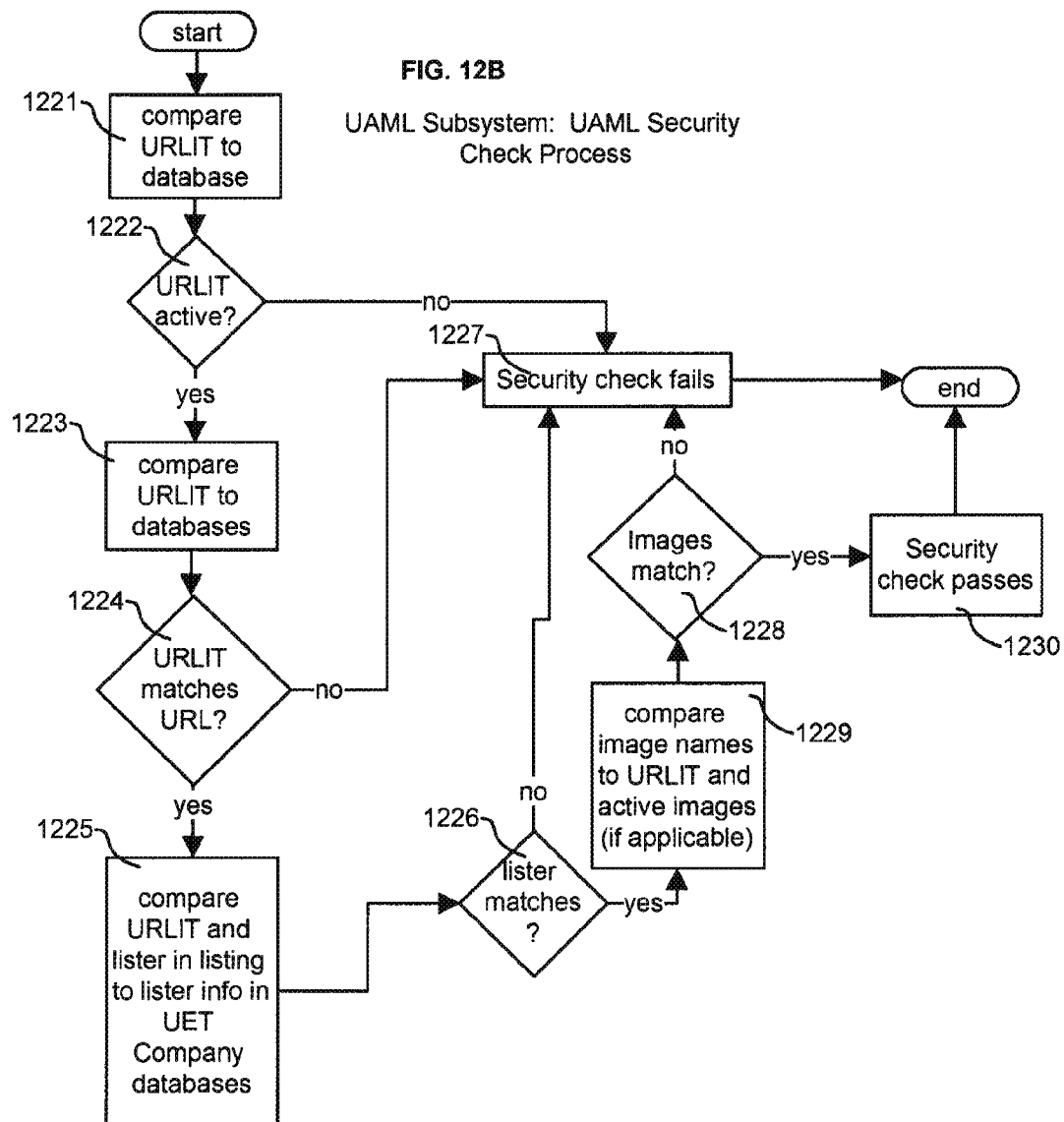


FIG. 13

Auction	ISBN	Listing	Trademark	Comp	HWare	Military
Personal	Review	PRelease	Comp	SWare	Electronics	
RealEstate	Recipe	News	Furnishing	Toy		
LeaseVIN	Resume	Sport	Services	Game		
Job	Parcel	Weather	Rental	Artwork		
Coin	UPC	Restaurant	CaseLaw	Poem		
Stamp	EPC	Film	Statute	Hotel		
Pet	Recipe	Stage	Company	Flight		
Antique	Patent	Music	Nonprofit	Cruise		
	Copyright	Account	Government	Lender		

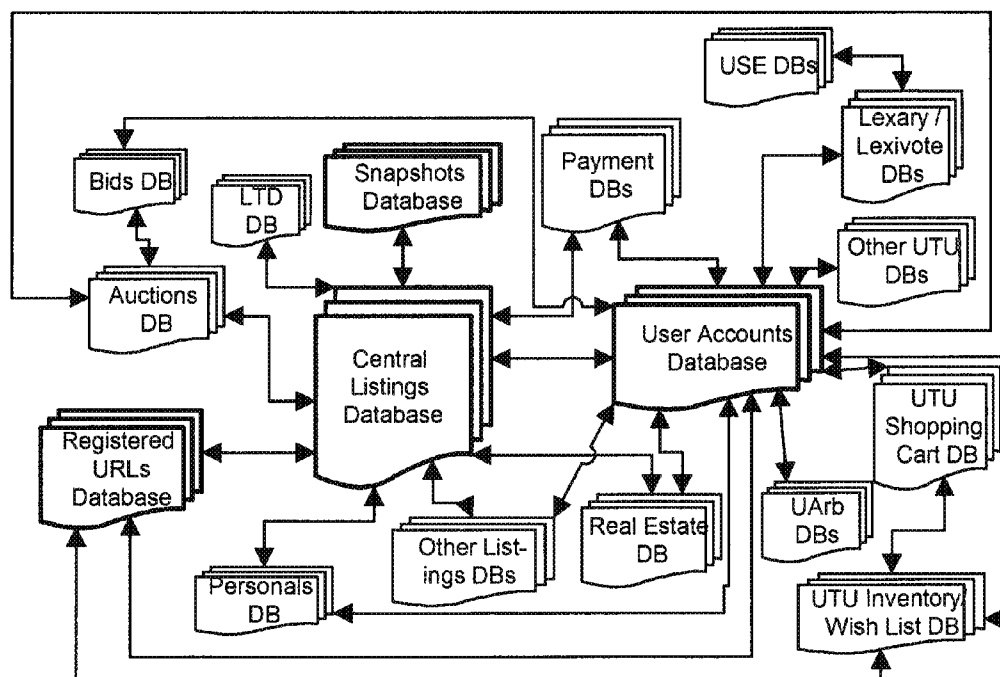
FIG. 14

Field Name	Data
URLIT:	<input type="text"/>
UAMType:	<input type="text"/>
Listing user:	<input type="text"/>
	[etc.]

FIG. 15 UAML Subsystem: Parsing and Mapping of UAML Data in User's Web Page to UET Company Database Record



FIG. 16 UAML Subsystem: Example of UET Company Relational Database Complex with Focus on UAML Listings Core



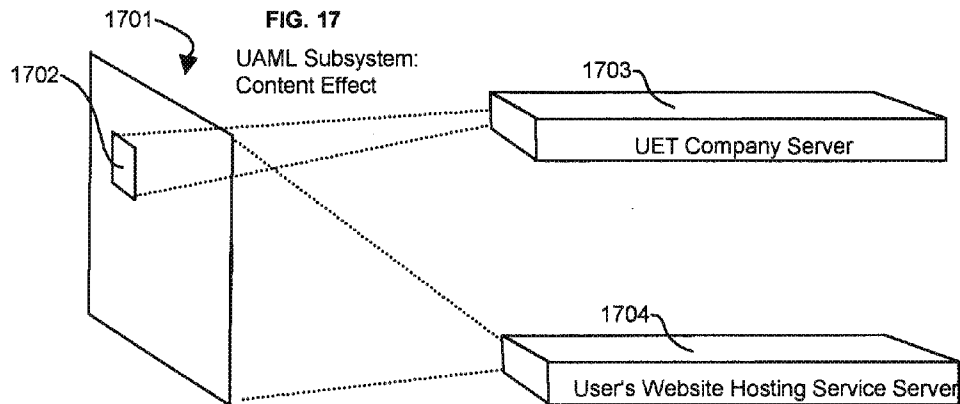


FIG. 18A UAML Subsystem: Process for Dynamically Updating Information Displayed through Static Web Pages

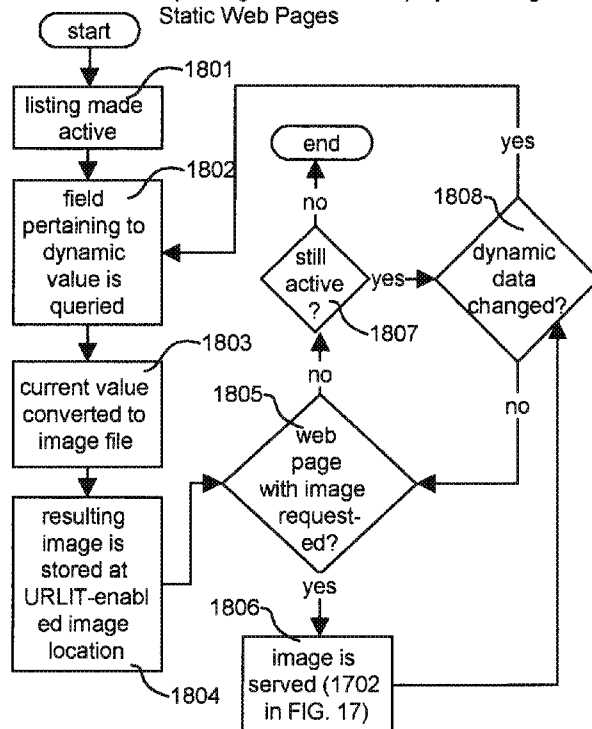


FIG. 18B

UAML Subsystem: Example Progression of Images as Data Changes

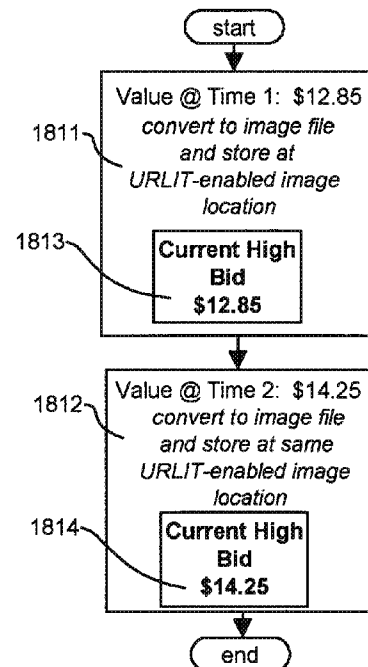
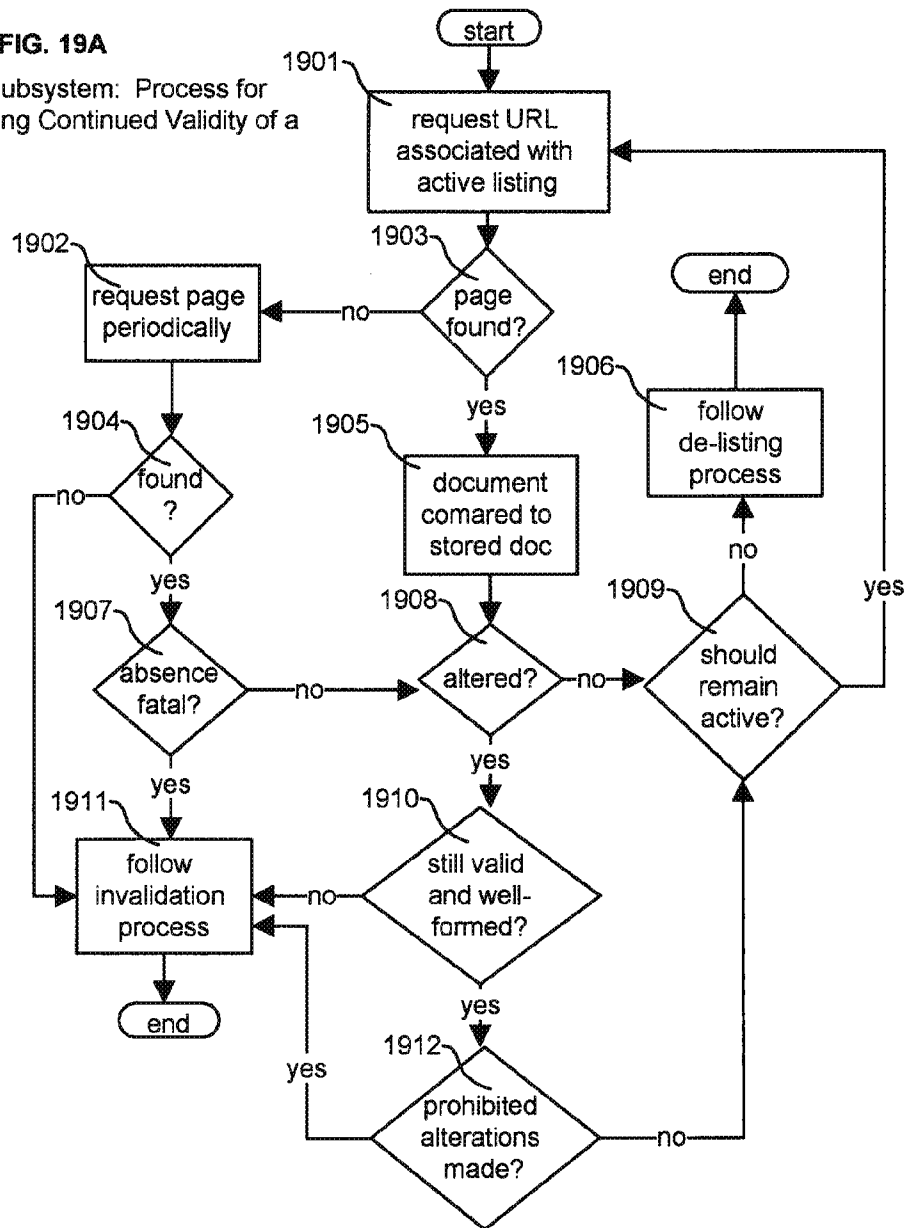


FIG. 19A

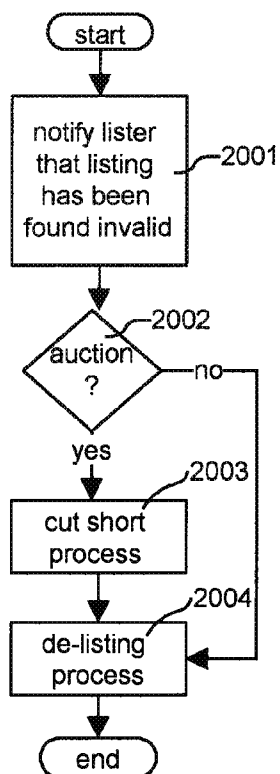
UAML Subsystem: Process for
Confirming Continued Validity of a
Listing

**FIG. 19B**

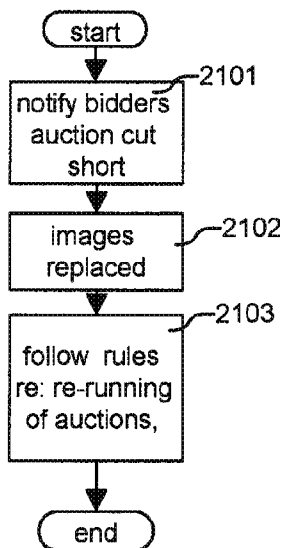
1. Request page on regular schedule (e.g., once every day)
2. Request page every time an image that is hosted by UET Company (and embedded in the page) is requested
3. Whenever a user of UTU visits URL

FIG. 20

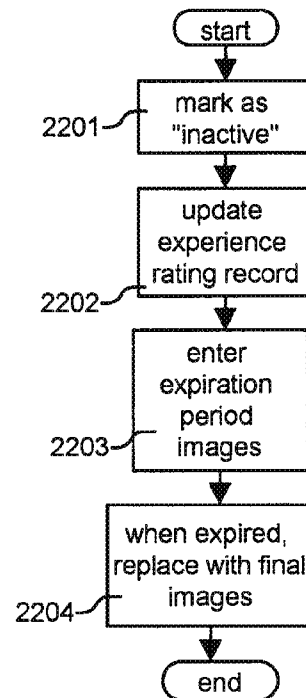
UAML Subsystem:
Invalidate Listing
Process

**FIG. 21**

UAML Subsystem: Auction
Cut-Short Process

**FIG. 22**

UAML Subsystem:
De-Listing Process



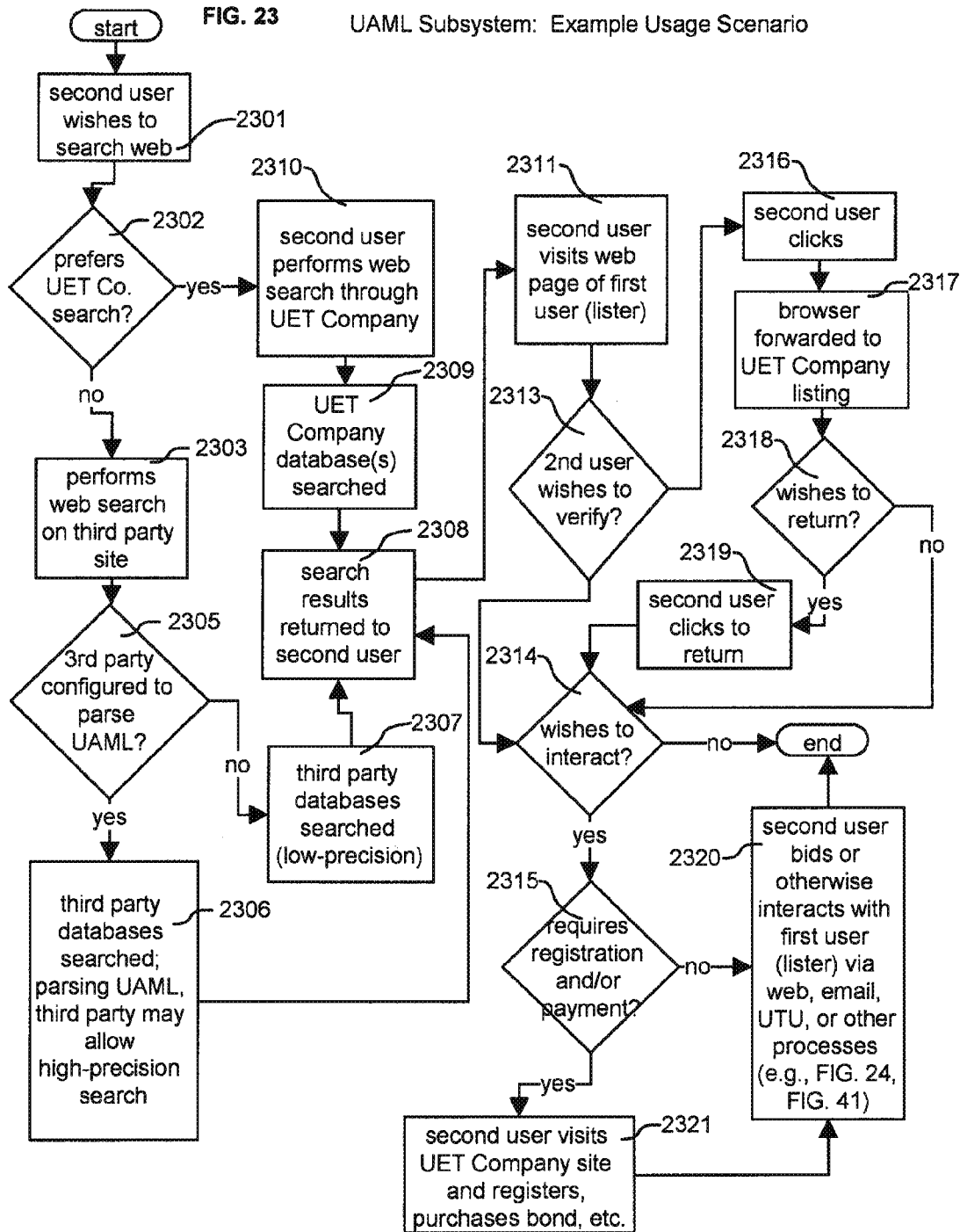


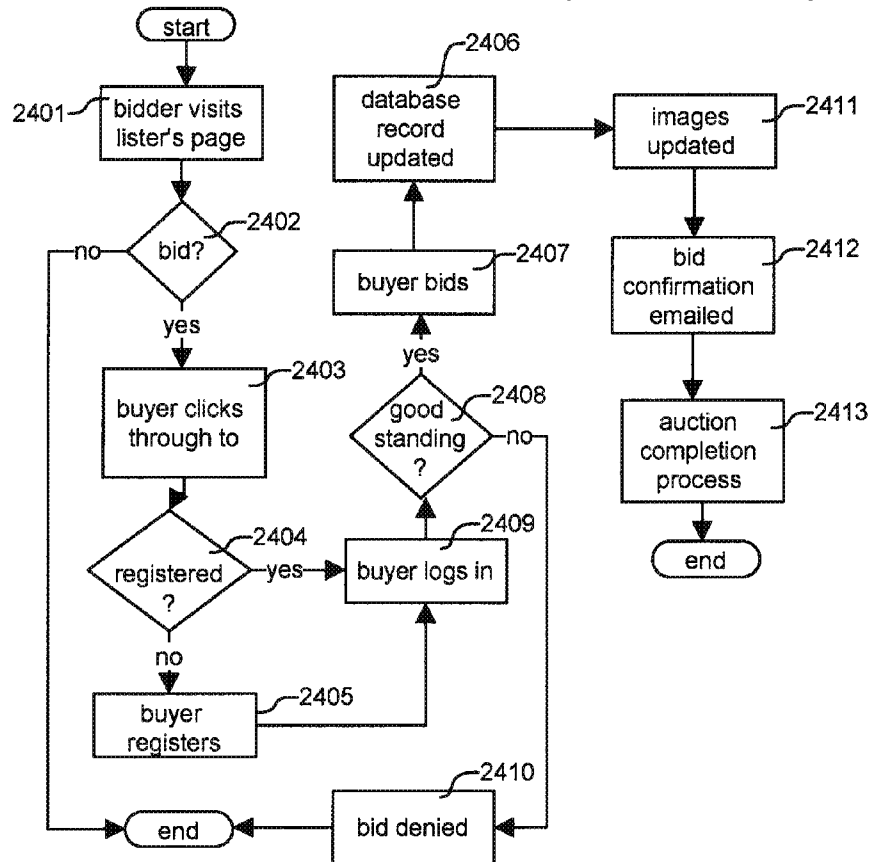
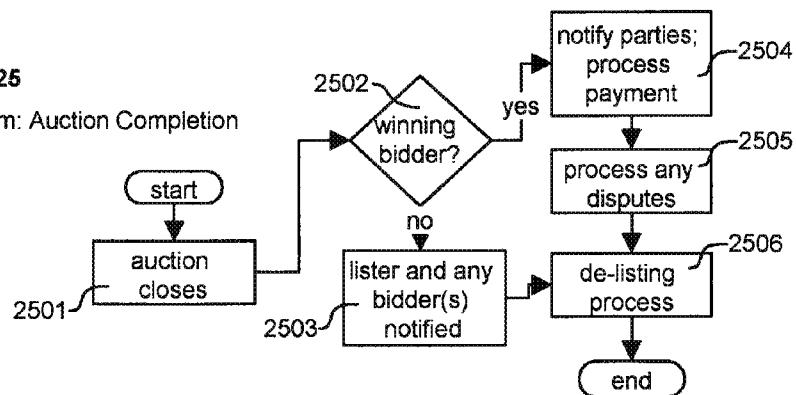
FIG. 24 UAML Subsystem: Auction Bidding Process**FIG. 25**
UAML Subsystem: Auction Completion Process

FIG. 26 UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Sample "My Registered URLs" Page

You are logged in as: Michael

My Registered URLs

URL	URLIT Stem	Active URLIT	UTU Inventory	UTU Wish	UTU Contact	UTU Auction
www.ex.com/book1.htm	com431546621763	request	Inv. 1	Wish. 4	Cont. 1	add
www.ex.com/coin.htm	com431914362708	request	add	Wish. 4	Cont. 1	add
www.ex.com/book.htm	com432489349101	-8	Inv. 1	add	Cont. 1	add
www.ex.com/love.htm	com432919567432	request	Inv. 1	Wish. 2	Cont. 1	add
www.ex.com/watch.htm	com433332895999	-1	Inv. 1	Wish. 1	Cont. 1	add

2601 2602 2603 2604 2605 2606 2607

FIG. 27 UAML Subsystem: Sample Web Page from UET Co. Site Displaying Record from UET Co. Listings Database Pertaining to a Given Auction Listing

You are logged in as: BidBather

URLIT: com433332895999-1
 Lister: [Michael](#)
 Type: Auction
 Item: Brand New TIKR watch by TWELV!
 Opening Bid: \$19.00
 Item Quantity: 1
 Begin Time: 09/16/07 14:00:00 PDT
 End Time: 09/19/07 14:00:00 PDT
 Item Location: Santa Cruz, CA
 Shipping Methods: [UPS](#), [FedEx](#), [USPS](#)
 Payment Methods: [UET Company](#)
 Current High Bidder: [MrsBidder5x](#)
 Current High Bid: \$23.85
 Number of Bids: 3
 Item Description: This is the coolest watch ever! The TIKR tells the hour of the day simply by color.

Enter Your Bid Amount

Enter Your Password

FIG. 28A

UAML Subsystem: Summary View of Interaction between UAML-enabled Pages Published by Users, Third Party Service Providers Tapping UAML-Enabled Pages, and UET Company Dynamically Generated Pages

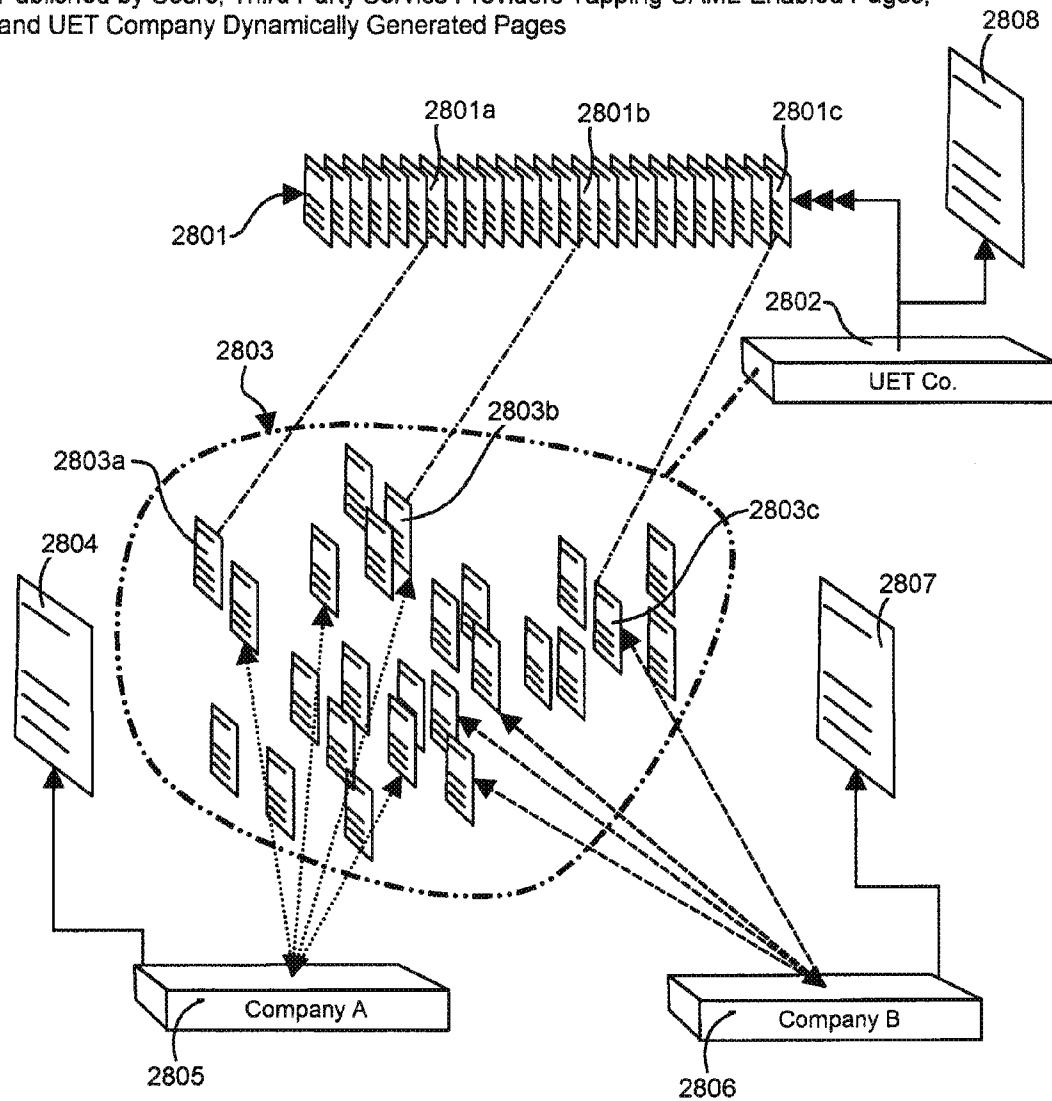


FIG. 28B

UAML Subsystem: Example Data Relationships Indicating Web Pages and Database Records Associated with a Listing

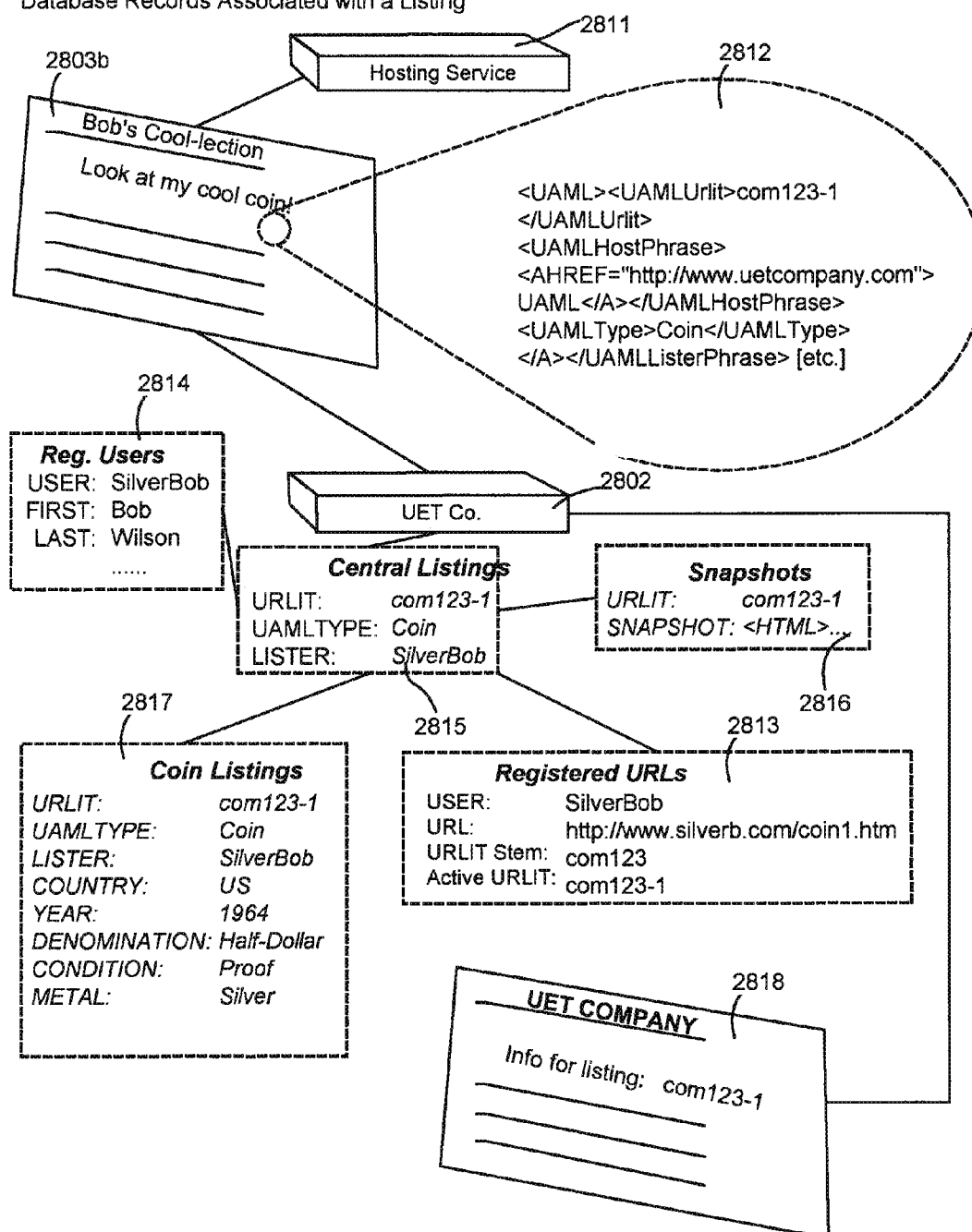


FIG. 28C

UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Sample Web Page by Third Party Website
 Provider Tapping UAML for Directory of Certain Type of Listings

PoetryAnthology.com The Best Poetry on the Web!		
Title	Poet	Year
<u>How Once We Were in Love</u>	<u>Billy Willie</u>	2004
<u>Two Panthers</u>	<u>Doodle McLean</u>	1972
<u>Nights and Wisdom</u>	<u>Studs Walsh</u>	1888
<u>Summer's End</u>	<u>Brucene</u>	1986

FIG. 28D

UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Sample Web Page by Third Party Website
 Provider Tapping UAML for Market Data

Auction Statistics - Week Ending 05/30/04		
Category	Auctions	Avg. Opening Bid
Automobiles	1008	\$1832
Collectibles	7313	\$15
Computer Hardware	941	\$61
Computer Software	1279	\$22

FIG. 28E UAML Subsystem: Excerpt from Sample Web Page by Third Party Website
 Provider Tapping UAML for Independent Search Engine

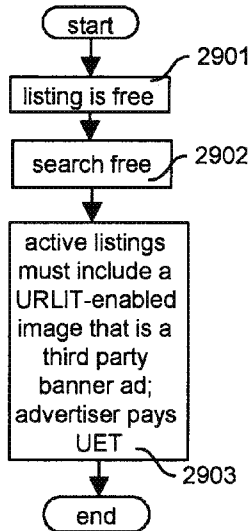
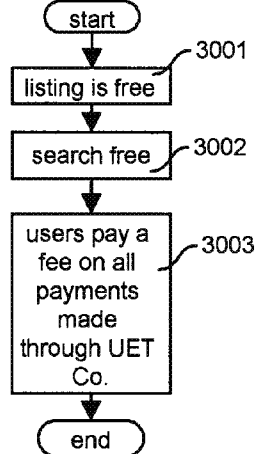
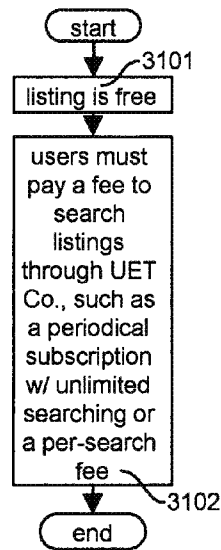
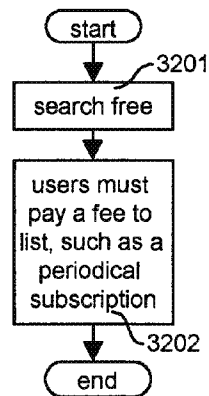
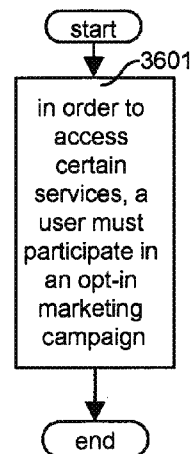
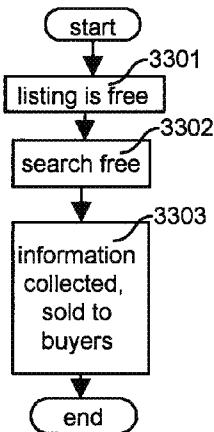
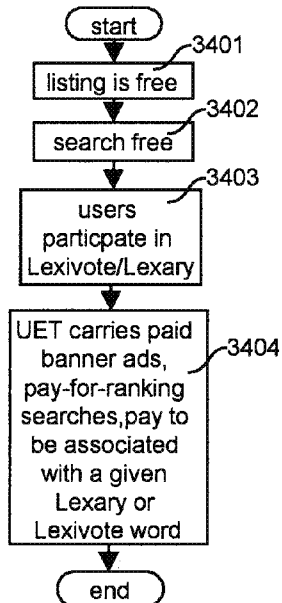
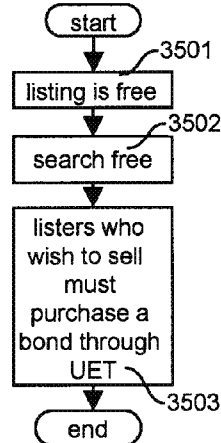
Magic Search
We Do Magic With the Web!

What are you looking for, Merlin?

☒ Job
 ☐ Auction
 ☐ Real Estate
 ☐ Personals
 ☐ Car
 ☐ Flight
 ☐ Movie
 ☐ Stock
 ☐ Book by ISBN
 ☐ Product by UPC/EPC

Enter the term(s) you want to search here

Abracadabra

FIG. 29UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 30**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 31**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 32**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 36**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 33**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 34**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model**FIG. 35**UAML Subsystem:
Revenue Model

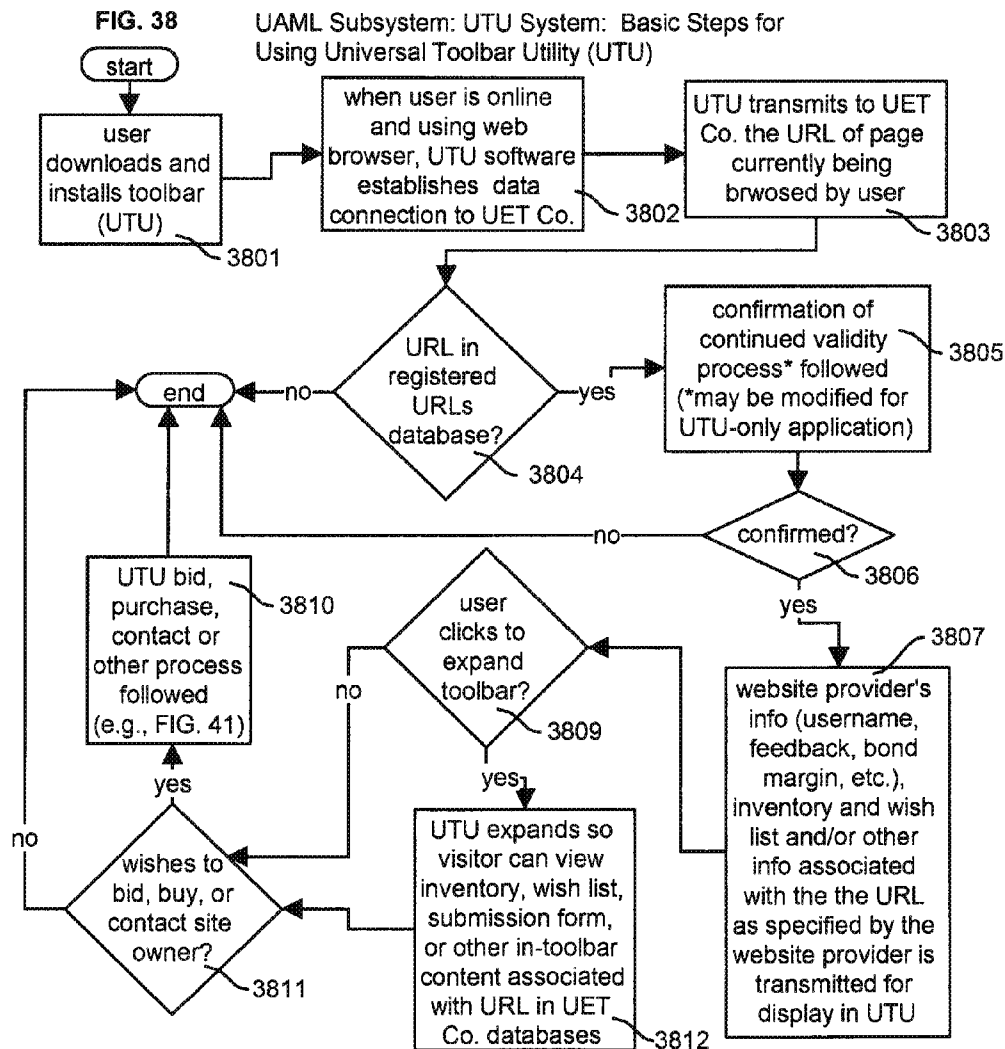
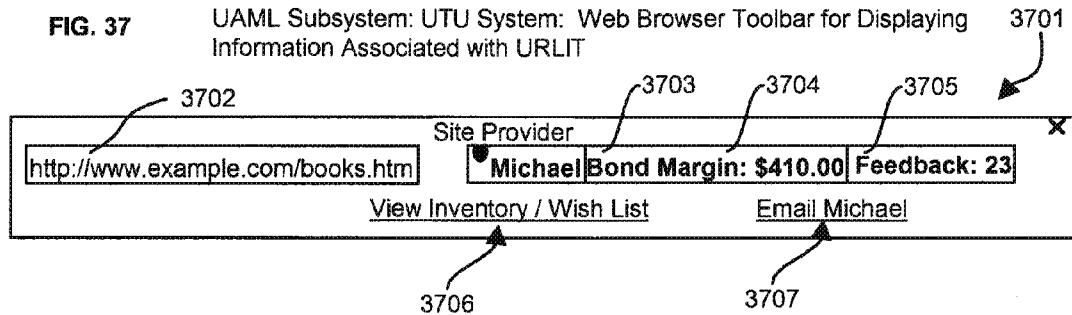


FIG. 39 UAML Subsystem: UTU System: Expanded Toolbar Displaying Inventory List & Wish List Associated with URL

<http://www.example.com/books.htm>

Michael

Bond Margin: \$401.51

Feedback: 23

Inventory for Michael

Email Michael

	Description	Available	Price	Add?
Seven Habits of Highly Effective Inventors	Book	1	4.74	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The Rough Guide to Programming	Book	1	9.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Joy of Hex	CD-ROM	1	19.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Subtotal	4.74
			Shipping	3.75
			Your Total from Michael	\$ 8.49

Add Checked Items to My Cart

Total Value of Items Currently in Your Cart \$ 18.25

Checkout

Wish List for Michael

Old coins -- U.S. only

European postcards!! Email me!

[Offer your item](#)

[Offer your item](#)

[Hide Inventory / Wish List](#)

Michael is currently online!
Instant Message

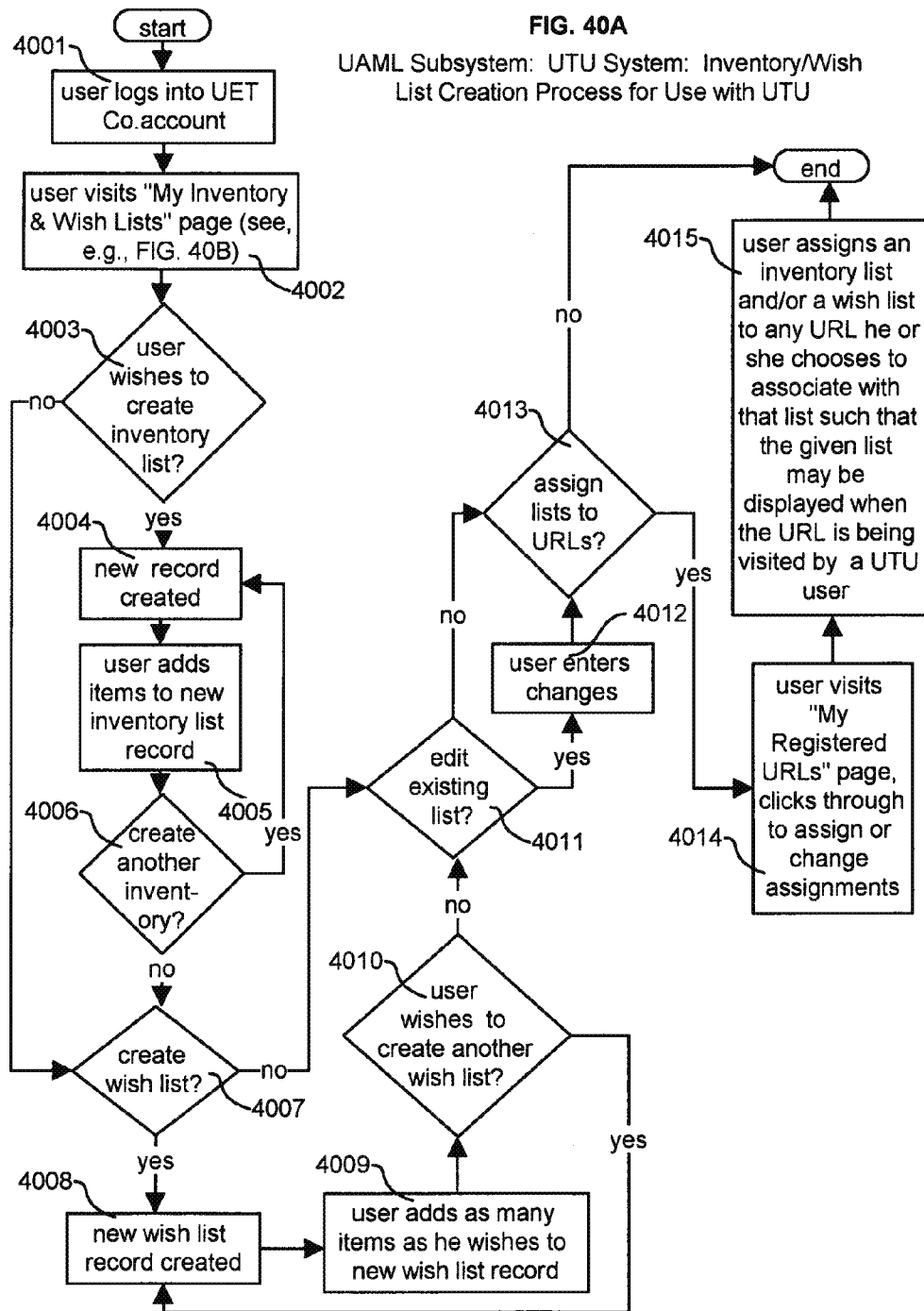


FIG. 40B UAML Subsystem: UTU System: Sample
My Inventory & Wish List Main Page

You Are Logged in as: Michael

My Inventory & Wish Lists

Inventory Lists		Wish Lists	
<u>Name of List</u>	<u>Creation Date</u>	<u>Name of List</u>	<u>Creation Date</u>
<u>Inv. 1</u>	<u>09/04/05</u>	<u>Wish. 1</u>	<u>09/04/05</u>
<u>Inv. 2</u>	<u>11/12/05</u>	<u>Wish. 2</u>	<u>09/04/05</u>
<u>Inv. 3 - Postcards</u>	<u>11/12/05</u>	<u>Wish. 3</u>	<u>09/04/05</u>
		<u>Wish. 4</u>	<u>10/02/05</u>
		<u>Wish. 5</u>	<u>11/12/05</u>
<u>Create New Inventory List</u>		<u>Create New Wish List</u>	

FIG. 40C UAML Subsystem: UTU: Sample Inventory List Creation & Editing Page

You Are Logged in as: Michael

My Inventory & Wish Lists
Modify Inventory List

List Name Created: 09/04/05
Modified: 09/04/05

Existing Inventory

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Item ID</u>
<u>Seven Habits</u>	Book	1	\$4.74	<u>* Reserved *</u>	98236749832761
<u>The Rough Guide</u>	Book	1	\$9.00	For sale	74307078370078
<u>Being Digital</u>	Book	1	\$3.00	<u>Sold</u>	09834790187087

Add New Inventory

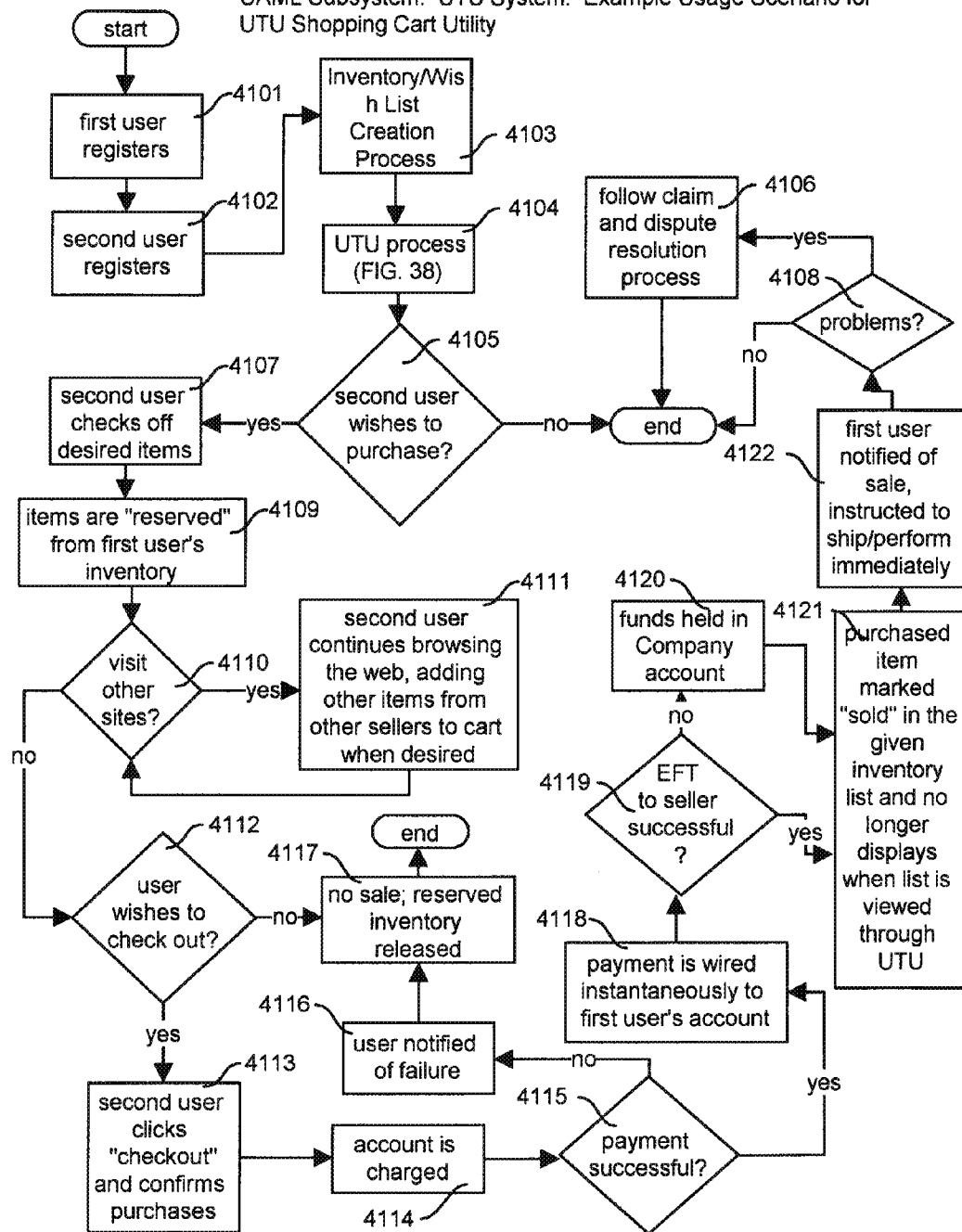
Item

Description

Quantity

Price \$

FIG. 41

UAML Subsystem: UTU System: Example Usage Scenario for
UTU Shopping Cart Utility

UAML Subsystem: UTU: URLIT-to-URL Relationship in UTU Application vs. UAML-Enabled Listing Application

FIG. 42A

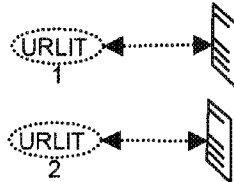


FIG. 42B

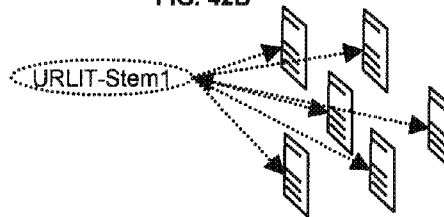


FIG. 43

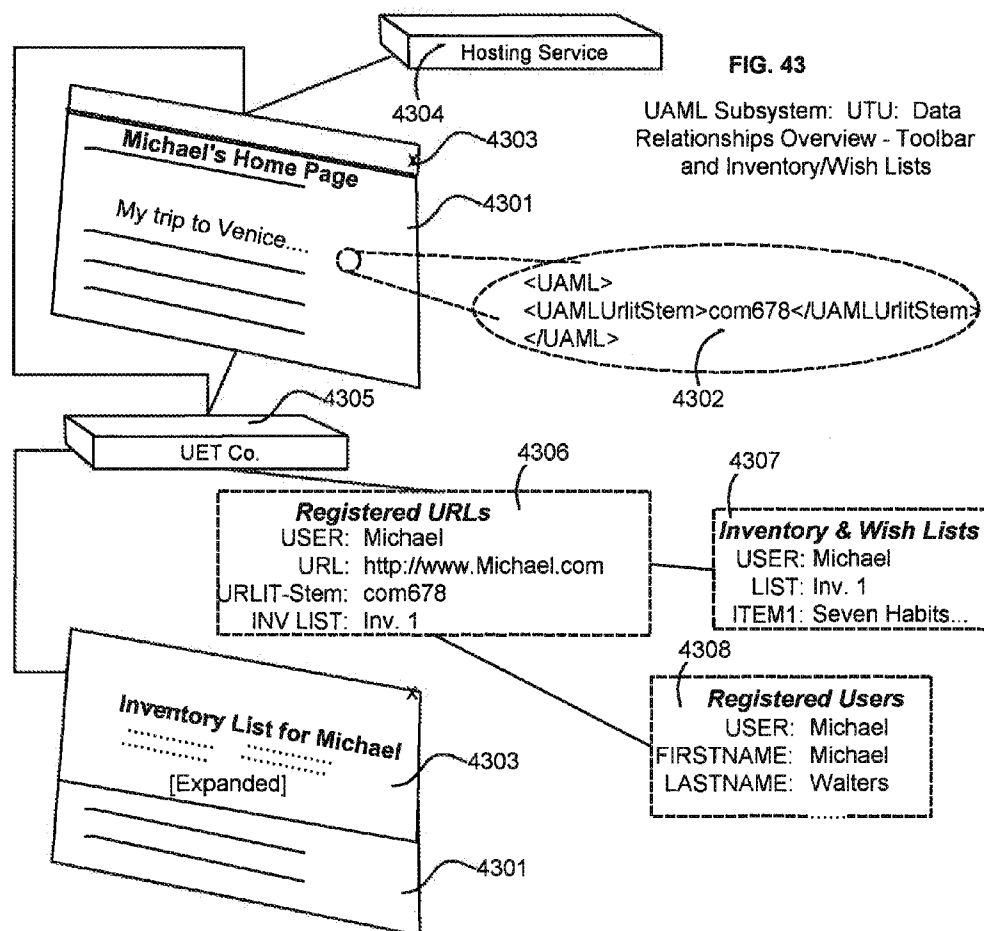


FIG. 44

UAML Subsystem: UTU: Data Relationships Overview - Multiple Inventory Lists and Shopping Cart

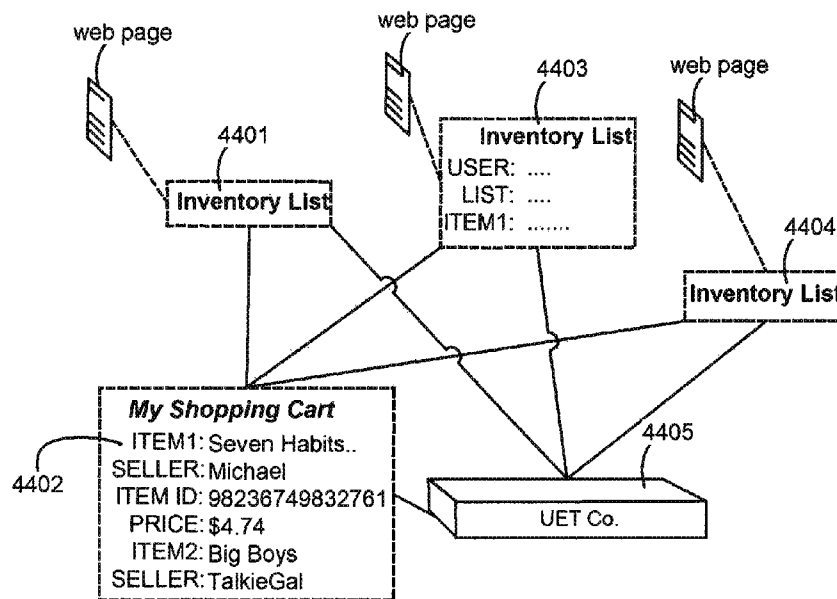


FIG. 45 UAML Subsystem: UTU: Non-Profit Donation UTU Embodiment

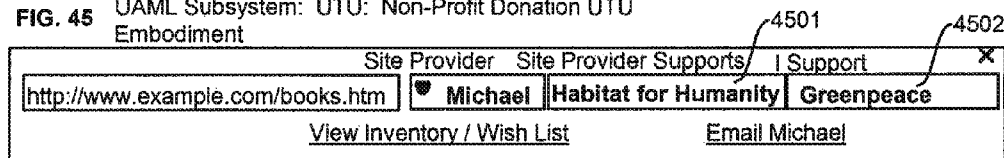
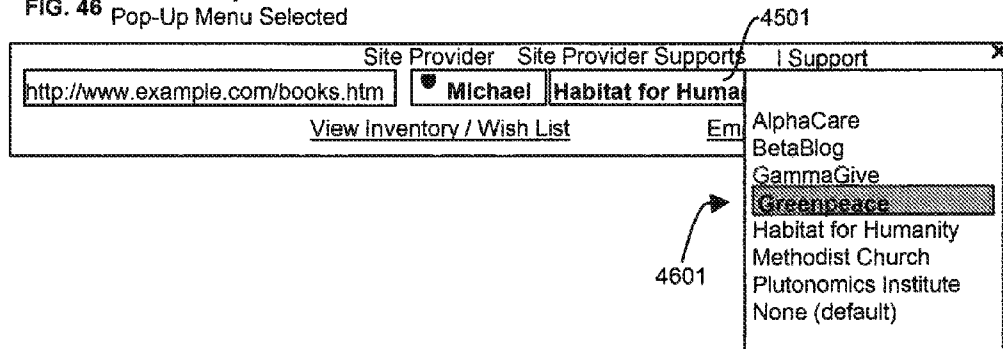


FIG. 46 UAML Subsystem: UTU: Non-Profit Donation UTU Embodiment with Pop-Up Menu Selected



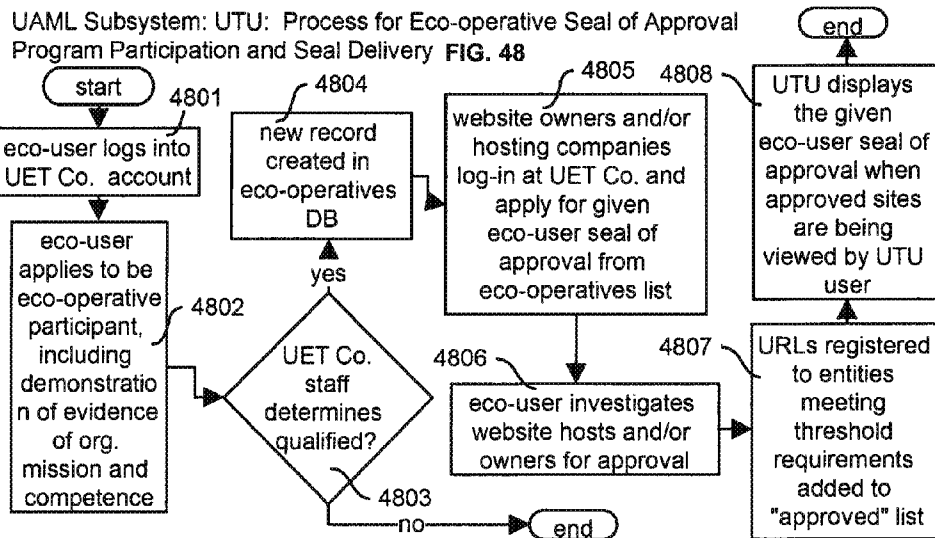
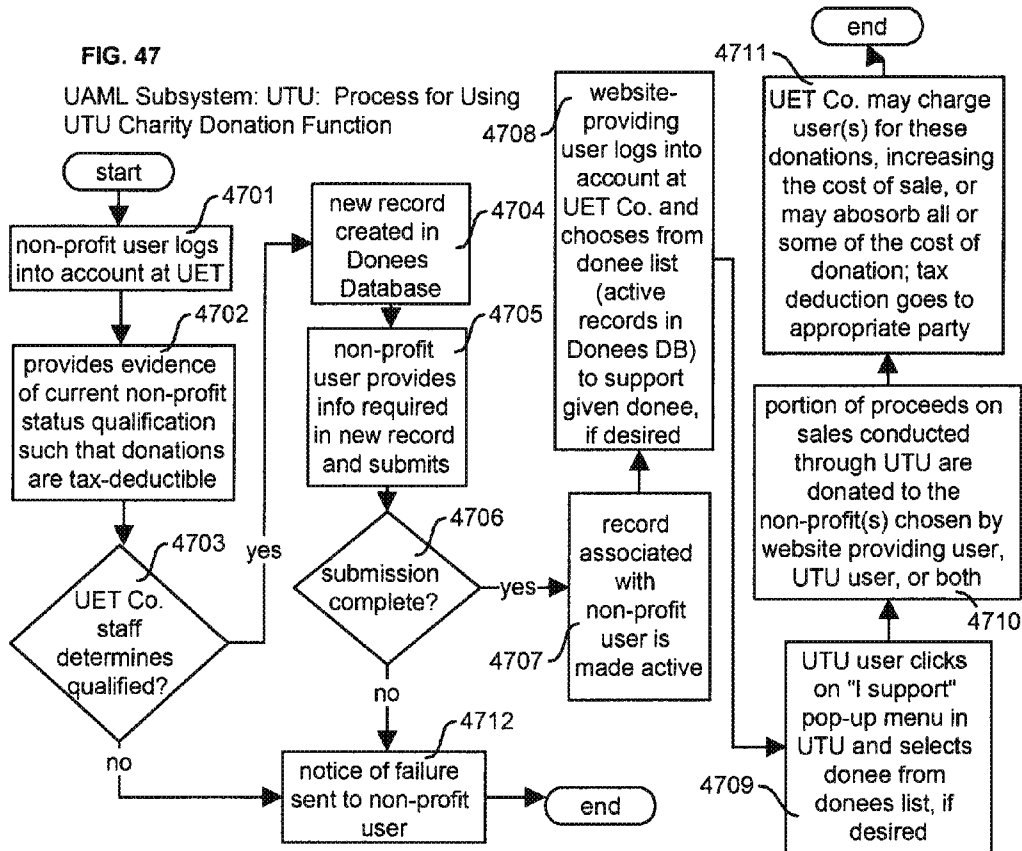


FIG. 49

UAML Subsystem: UTU: Example Eco-Operative Seal of Approval UTU Embodiment in Use and Displaying Seal

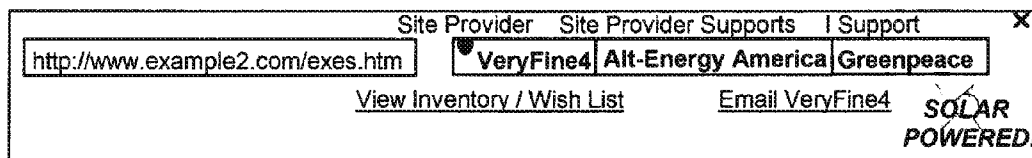


FIG. 50

UAML Subsystem: UTU: Process for Creation of a Submission Form and/or Auction for Display in Toolbar

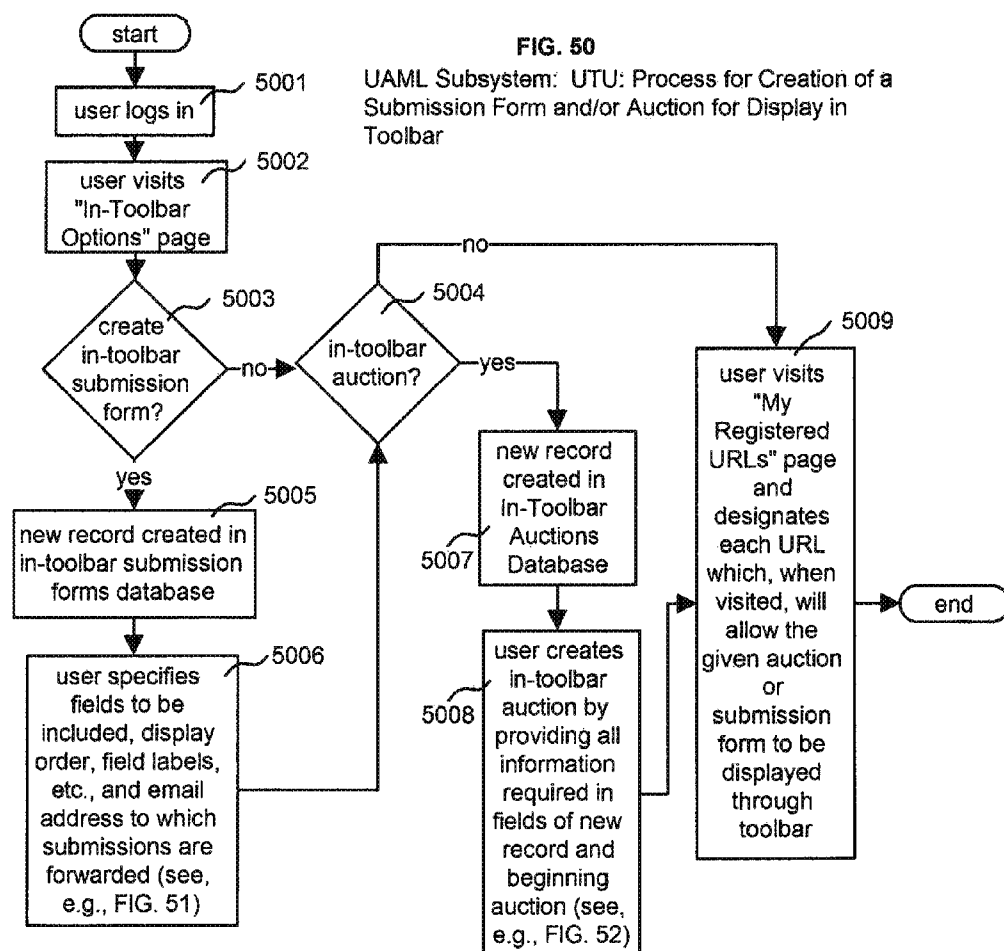


FIG. 51 UAML Subsystem: UTU: Excerpt from Sample Web Submission form for Creation of a Submission Form for Display in Toolbar

Account: Michael

Create Your Own In-Toolbar Submission Form

Check Box	Submit Button	Radio Button	Text Area	Text Field	Hidden Entry	Email Addr.	Pass-word	Field Name
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Email Address
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your Name
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit
[etc.]								

FIG. 52 UAML Subsystem: UTU: Excerpt from Sample Web Submission form for Creation of an Auction for Display in Toolbar

Account: Michael

Create Your Own In-Toolbar Auction

Auction Title

Duration ☐ 3 Days ☐ 5 Days ☐ 7 Days

Enter the Opening Bid Amount

[etc.]

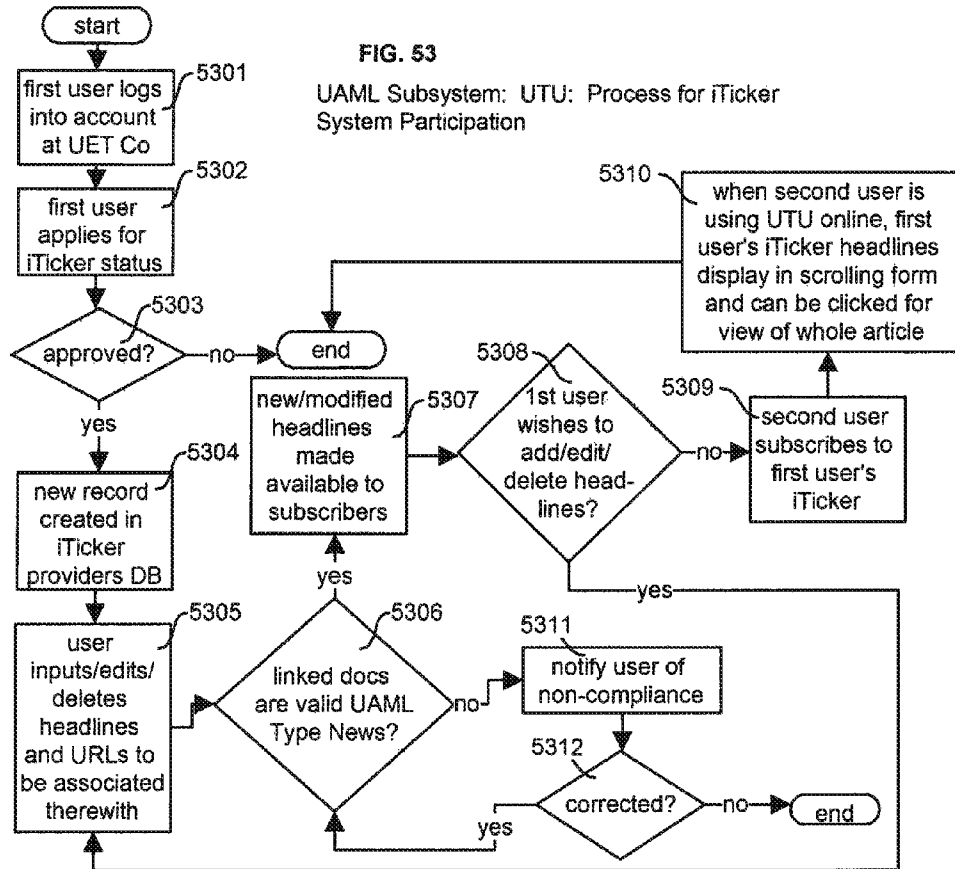
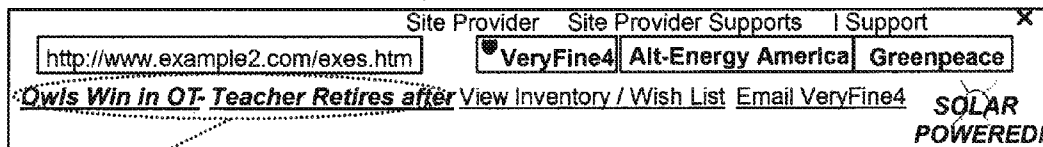


FIG. 54 UAML Subsystem: UTU: Example iTicker UTU Embodiment in Use and Displaying iTicker Newsfeed Headlines



5401

FIG. 55 **UAML Subsystem:** Example Common Tags

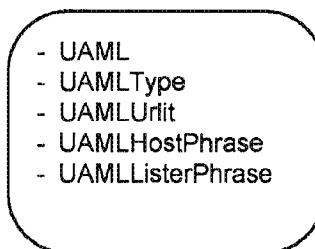


FIG. 56 **UAML Subsystem:** Subject-Specific Tag Nomenclature Template (for this disclosure)

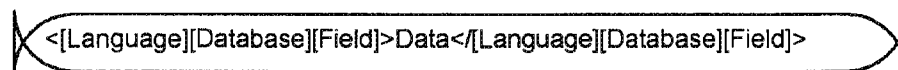


FIG. 57A **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: Collectible Coin Listings

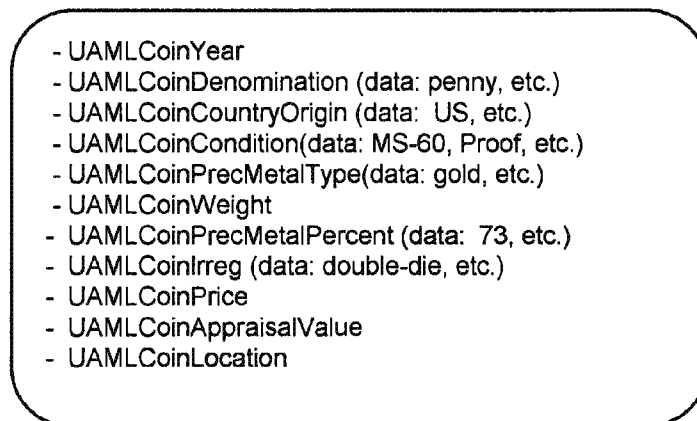


FIG. 57B

- UAMLCarYear	- UAMLCarFrontWDrive
- UAMLCarMake	- UAMLCarHorsePwr
- UAMLCarModel	- UAMLCarFuel (data: gas, diesel, hybrid)
- UAMLCarMpg	- UAMLCarIntCubicFt
- UAMLCarIntColor	- UAMLCarTowCap
- UAMLCarExtColor	- UAMLCarMileage
- UAMLCarNumDoors	- UAMLCarNumOwners
- UAMLCarPowerWin	- UAMLCarBluebook
- UAMLCarPowerLock	- UAMLCarLocation
- UAMLCarSoundSys	- UAMLCarVIN
- UAMLCarFourWDrive	[etc.]

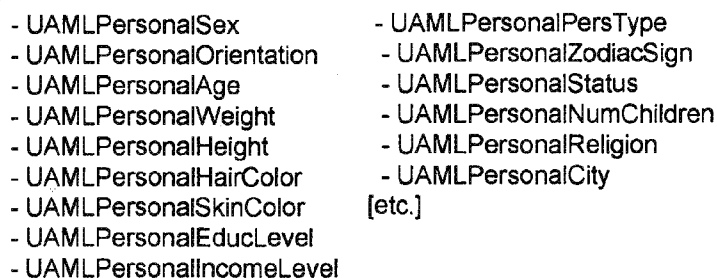
FIG. 57C **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag
Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: Real Estate Listings

- UAMLRELotSqFt
- UAMLREBldgSqFt
- UAMLREZoning
- UAMLREYrBuilt
- UAMLRENumBeds
- UAMLRENumBaths
- UAMLREPrice
- UAMLREPropType (data: condo, SFR, etc.)
- UAMLREPool
- [etc.]

FIG. 57D **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag
Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: Job Listings

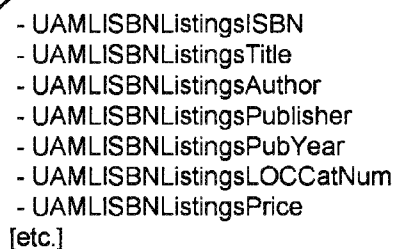
- UAMLJobTitle	- UAMLJobRole
- UAMLJobStatus	- UAMLJobHealthIns
- UAMLJobPayWeek	- UAMLJobDentalIns
- UAMLJobHrsWeek	- UAMLJobTravelPct
- UAMLJobLocation	- UAMLJobRetirePlan
- UAMLJobYrsExpReq	- UAMLJobEmployer
- UAMLJobDegreeReq	- UAMLJobContactName
- UAMLJobTelecommute	- UAMLJobContactNum
- UAMLJobIndustry	- UAMLJobContactEmail
- UAMLJobField	[etc.]

FIG. 57E **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag
Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: Personal Ads



- UAMLPersonalSex
- UAMLPersonalOrientation
- UAMLPersonalAge
- UAMLPersonalWeight
- UAMLPersonalHeight
- UAMLPersonalHairColor
- UAMLPersonalSkinColor
- UAMLPersonalEducLevel
- UAMLPersonalIncomeLevel
- UAMLPersonalPersType
- UAMLPersonalZodiacSign
- UAMLPersonalStatus
- UAMLPersonalNumChildren
- UAMLPersonalReligion
- UAMLPersonalCity
- [etc.]

FIG. 57F **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag
Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: ISBN (Book) Listings



- UAMLISBNListingsISBN
- UAMLISBNListingsTitle
- UAMLISBNListingsAuthor
- UAMLISBNListingsPublisher
- UAMLISBNListingsPubYear
- UAMLISBNListingsLOCCatNum
- UAMLISBNListingsPrice
- [etc.]

FIG. 57G **UAML Subsystem:** Example Subject-Specific Tag
Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: UPC or EPC (Any
Product By UPC or EPC)

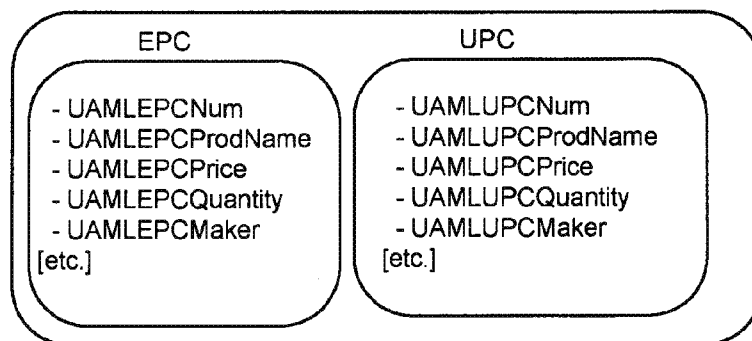


FIG. 57H

UAML Subsystem: Example Subject-Specific Tag Vocabulary/Fields for Database Record: Lending Institution, with Tag for Dynamic Look-Up Field

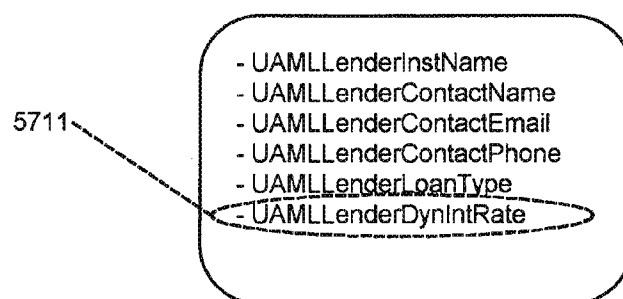


FIG. 58

UAML Subsystem: Process for Usage with Dynamically Generated Pages

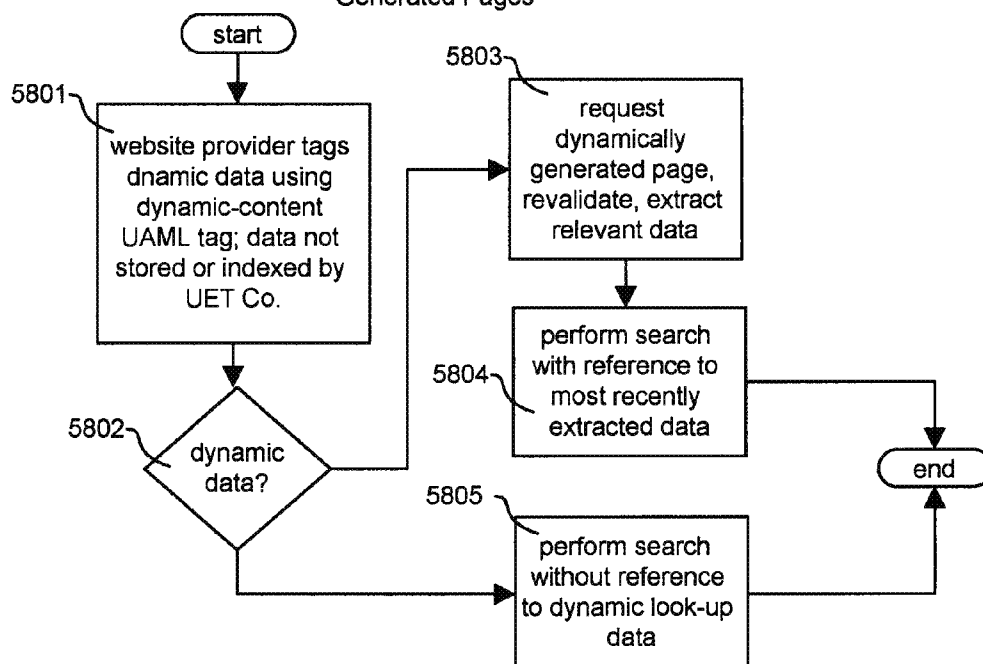


FIG. 59A

UAML Subsystem: Automatic Data Capture Integration Process

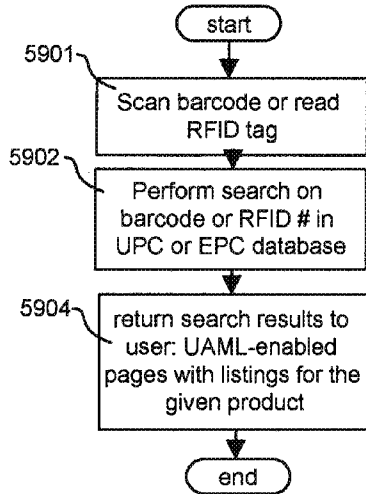


FIG. 59B

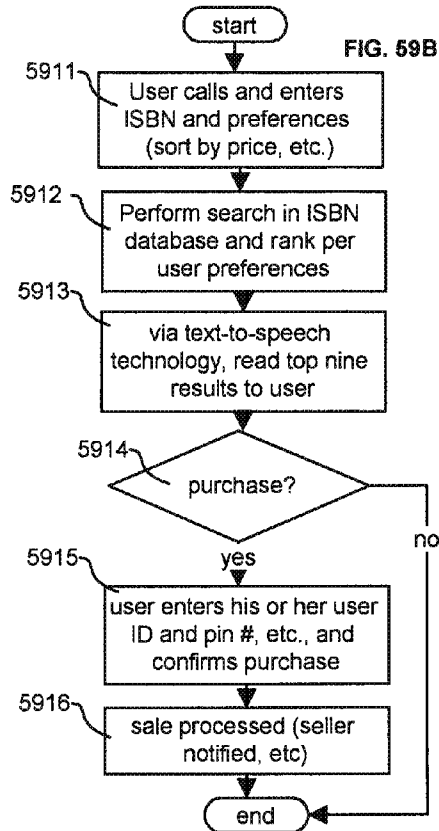
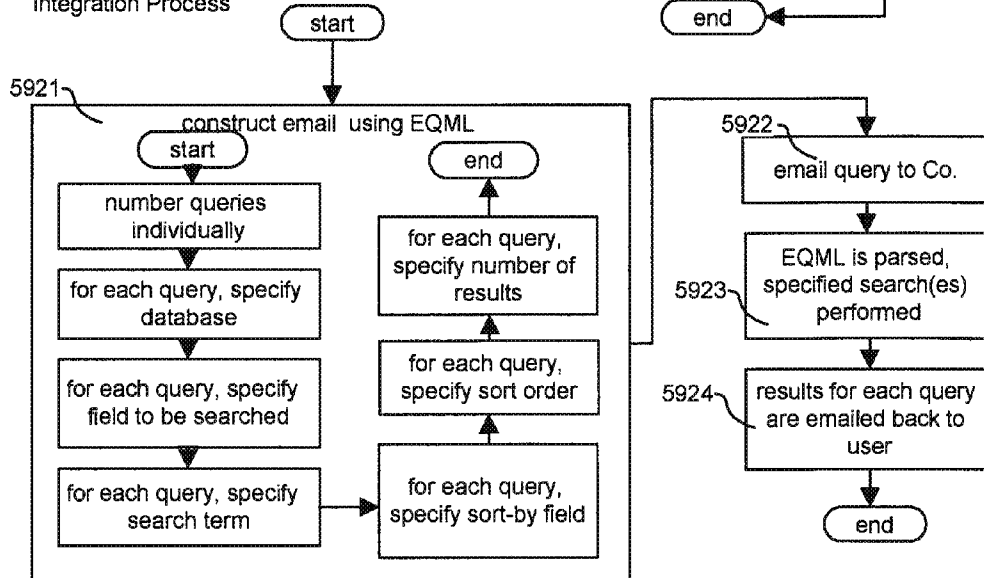


FIG. 59C

UAML Subsystem: Email Integration Process




5931

FIG. 59D

TO: UET Company
FROM: UET User
DATE: June 20, 2007
Subject: Example

```
<EQML>
<EQMLQuery>
  <EQMLQueryID>1</EQMLQueryID>
  <EQMLQueryDB>ISBNListings</EQMLQueryDB>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsISBN>0-395-20360-0</EQMLQueryISBNListingsISBN>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortBy>price</EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortBy>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortOrder>ascending</EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortOrder>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsNumResults>20</EQMLQueryISBNListingsNumResults>
</EQMLQuery>
<EQMLQuery>
  <EQMLQueryID>2</EQMLQueryID>
  <EQMLQueryDB>ISBNListings</EQMLQueryDB>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsISBN>0-395-20359-7</EQMLQueryISBNListingsISBN>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortBy>price</EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortBy>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortOrder>ascending</EQMLQueryISBNListingsSortOrder>
  <EQMLQueryISBNListingsNumResults>20</EQMLQueryISBNListingsNumResults>
</EQMLQuery>
</EQML>
```

FIG. 59E UAML Subsystem: Email Integration Cont'd:
Example of EQML Query Results

5941 

FROM: UET Company
TO: UET User
DATE: June 20, 2007
Subject: Example

Hello,

Thanks for submitting your search queries to the UET Company.

The results of each query are provided below.

Regards,

The UET Team

RESULTS

Query 1:
Database: ISBNListings
SearchTerm: 0-395-20360-0
Results ranked by: Price
Order: Ascending
Top 20 Results:

<http://www.example1.com>

<http://www.example2.com>

[etc.]

FIG. 60

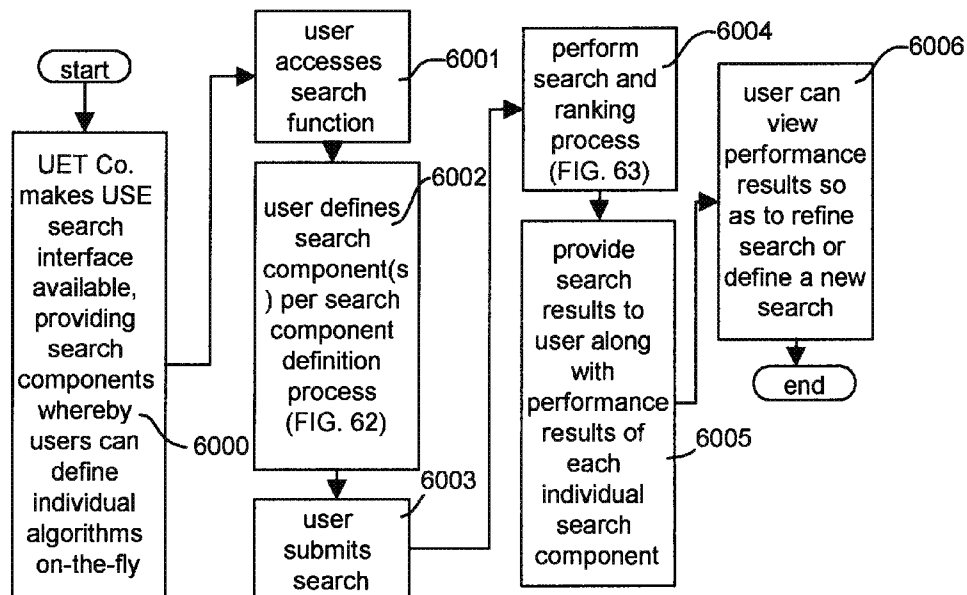


FIG. 61

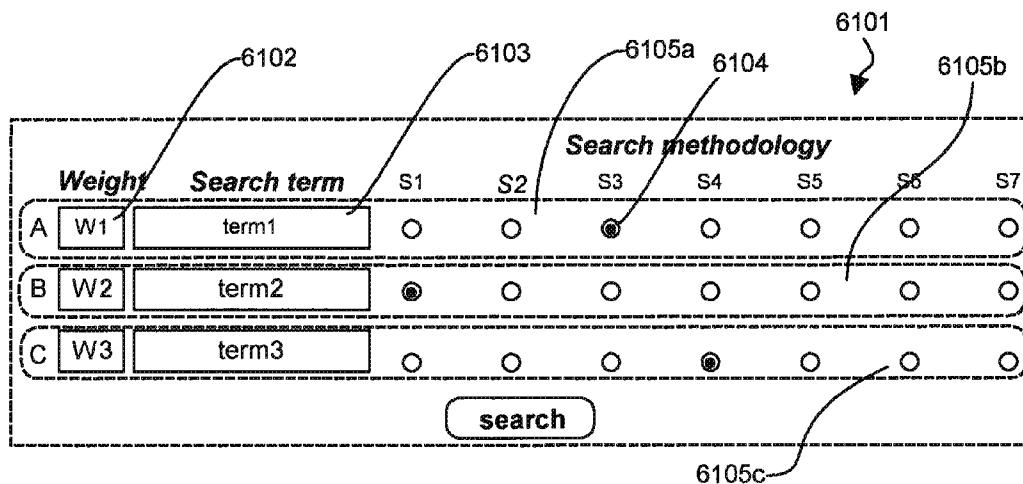


FIG. 62

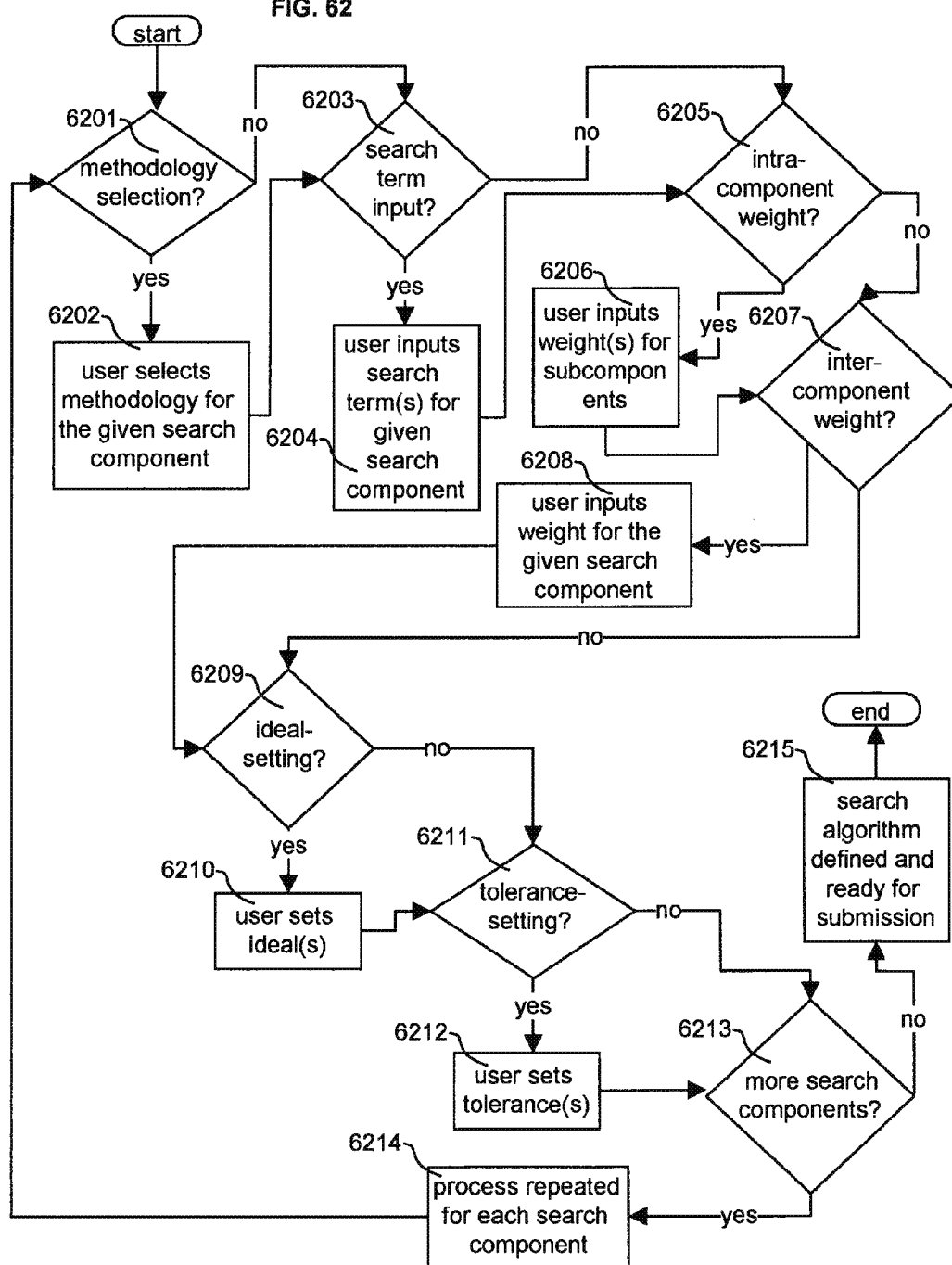


FIG. 63

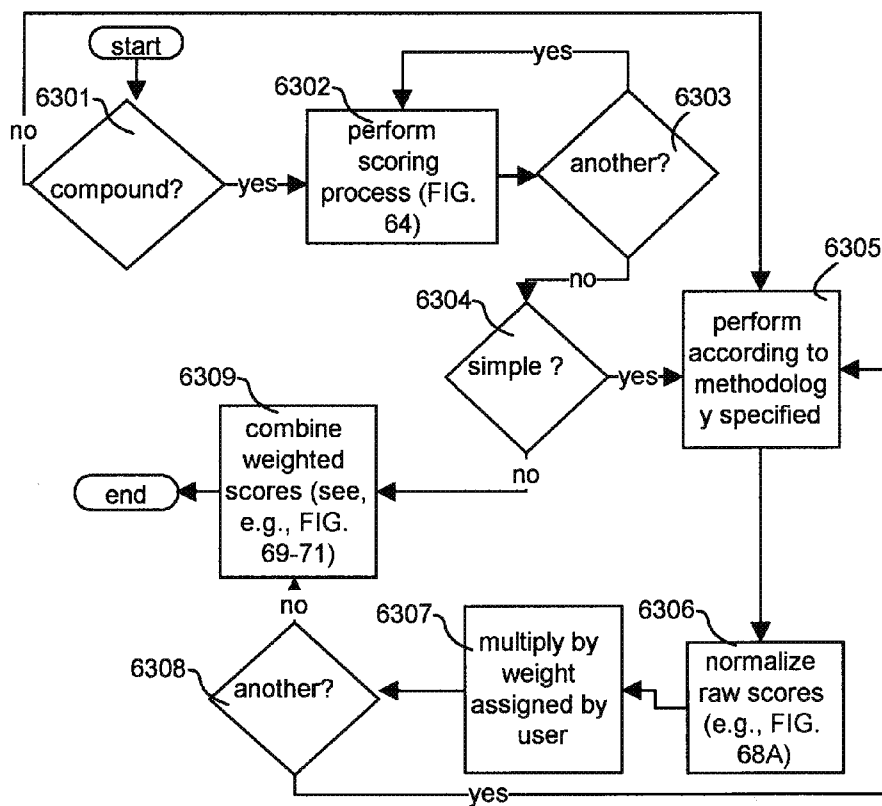


FIG. 64

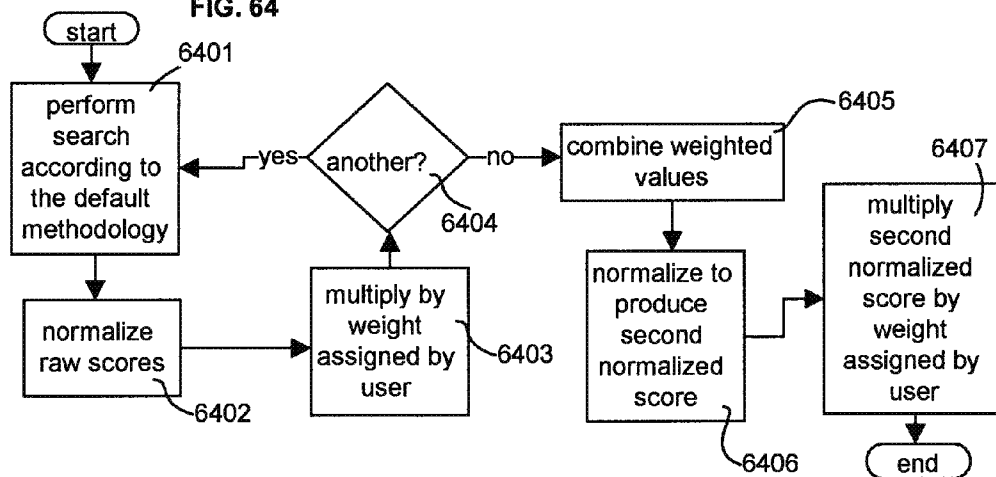


FIG. 65

Weight	Search term	Search methodology						
		<i>links to</i>	<i>links from</i>	<i>pay-for-placement</i>	<i>freshness</i>	<i>title or URL</i>	<i>popular</i>	<i>Lexivote</i>
50	guitar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	guitar	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FIG. 66

Weight	Search string
50	bears BUTNOT chicago
10	grizzly OR kodiac

FIG. 67

Links to

Items ranked according to number of pages containing the search term that link to the given page (see, e.g., US Patent 6285999 to Page)

Links from

Items ranked according to number of pages containing the search term to which the given page links

Meaning

Items ranked with reference to meaning gleaned from words appearing in page related to the meaning of the search term (synonyms, etc.) (see, e.g., www.appliedsemantics.com)

Title/Name/URL

Items ranked according to density of search term itself in title, file name, and/or URL

Density

Items ranked according to density of search term in the given page

Popularity

Items ranked according to usage by previous users (see, e.g., US Patent 6539377 to Cullis)

Hits

Items ranked by a hit counter on the page that contains the search term

Freshness

Items ranked according to the time the document was most recently updated

My visits

Items ranked according to number of pages that the user has visited that link to the given page (with reference to visited URL's history)

Amount bid

Items ranked by bid of the site owner to pay for search ranking (see, e.g., US Patent 6269361 to Davis et al.)

Lexivote

Per the present disclosure, FIG. 93 et seq.

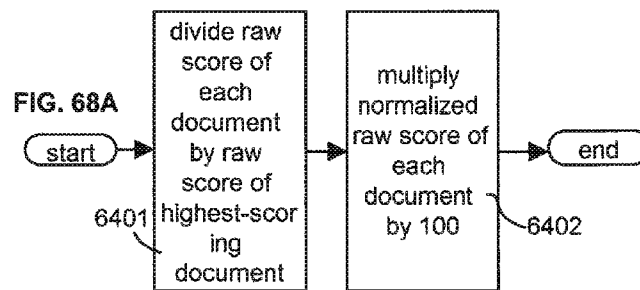


FIG. 68B

$$r_1(A) = w_1(r_2(A)) + \dots + w_{n-1}(r_n(A))$$

FIG. 69

	<i>Normalized Score</i>	<i>Weighted Score</i>
Page P1	100	5000
Page P2	79	3950
Page P3	65	3250
Page P4	55	2750
Page P5	51	2550
Page P6	45	2250
Page P7	33	1650
Page P8	22	1100
Page P9	20	1000
Page P10	11	550

FIG. 70

	<i>Normalized Score</i>	<i>Weighted Score</i>
Page P3	100	1000
Page P6	87	870
Page P11	65	650
Page P4	55	550
Page P1	51	510
Page P5	33	330
Page P2	22	220
Page P8	22	220
Page P7	21	210
Page P10	19	190

FIG. 71

	<i>Rank in Descending Order</i>	<i>Final Overall Score</i>
Page P1	5510	
Page P3	4250	
Page P2	4170	
Page P4	3300	
Page P6	3120	
Page P5	2880	
Page P7	1860	
Page P8	1320	
Page P9	1000	
Page P10	740	

FIG. 72

Site URL	Rank per each search component		
	A	B	C
<u>http://result 1</u>	<u>Rank A1</u>	<u>Rank B1</u>	<u>Rank C1</u>
<u>http://result 2</u>	<u>Rank A2</u>	<u>Rank B2</u>	<u>Rank C2</u>
<u>http://result 3</u>	<u>Rank A3</u>	<u>Rank B3</u>	<u>Rank C3</u>
<u>http://result 4</u>	<u>Rank A4</u>	<u>Rank B4</u>	<u>Rank C4</u>
<u>http://result 5</u>	<u>Rank A5</u>	<u>Rank B5</u>	<u>Rank C5</u>
<u>http://result 6</u>	<u>Rank A6</u>	<u>Rank B6</u>	<u>Rank C6</u>
<u>http://result 7</u>	<u>Rank A7</u>	<u>Rank B7</u>	<u>Rank C7</u>
<u>http://result 8</u>	<u>Rank A8</u>	<u>Rank B8</u>	<u>Rank C8</u>
<u>http://result 9</u>	<u>Rank A9</u>	<u>Rank B9</u>	<u>Rank C9</u>

FIG. 73

Site URL : Performance by Component		
<u>http://www.example1.com</u>	<u>Rank: 1</u>	<u>Comp. A: 3</u> <u>Comp. B</u>
<u>http://example2.com</u>	<u>Rank: 3</u>	<u>Comp. A: 2</u> <u>Comp. B</u>
<u>http://www.example3.com</u>	<u>Rank: 2</u>	<u>Comp. A: 18</u> <u>Comp. B</u>

FIG. 74

Item : Performance by Component		
<u>Item #44908</u>	<u>Rank: 2</u>	<u>Comp. A: 1085</u> <u>Longevity: 103</u> <u>Feedback</u>
<u>Item #47223</u>	<u>Rank: 1</u>	<u>Comp. A: 22079</u> <u>Longevity: 28653</u> <u>Feedback</u>
<u>Item #45705</u>	<u>Rank: 4</u>	<u>Comp. A: 18754</u> <u>Longevity: 16543</u> <u>Feedback</u>

FIG. 75 **USE Subsystem:** Example Advanced USE (Level 1): Simple Components + Compound Component (Example: Auction Search)

		Search methodology							
	Weight	Search term	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
A	50	silver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B	10	dollar	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<div><input type="button" value="search"/></div>									
Seller or item listing attributes									
		bonded	buy now	feed back	feedback ratio	longevity	sales volume	item location	
C	10	Weight	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

7501

7502

7503

FIG. 76

Stock search						
	<i>Book value</i>	<i>P/E ratio</i>	<i>Market cap</i>	<i>Volatility</i>	<i>Dividends/share</i>	<i>Up/downgrade Slope history</i>
Weight	5	10	0	0	9	5
search						

FIG. 77

Bond search		
	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Rate</i>
Weight	6	10
		<i>Mar Cap</i>
		5
search		

FIG. 78

Mutual fund search		
	<i>Performance</i>	
	<i>5 yr</i>	<i>1 yr</i>
Weight	10	5
		<i>3 mo</i>
		1
search		

FIG. 79

Mutual fund search						
	<i>Stocks</i>	<i>Bonds</i>	<i>Gov't</i>	<i>R.E.</i>	<i>Currency</i>	<i>Metals</i>
Weight	10	3	0	0	1	0
search						

FIG. 80

Real estate search					
	<i>Baths</i>	<i>Bedrooms</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Sq. Ft.</i>	<i>Price</i> (thousands)
Ideal	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="\$300"/>
Weight	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>

(10=Mandatory
0-9=Strength of Preference)

FIG. 81

Job search					
	<i>City</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Hours/wk</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Salary</i> (thousands)
Ideal	<input type="text" value="Rome"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="40"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="\$150"/>
Weight	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="10"/>

FIG. 82 **USE Subsystem:** Advanced Level 2 USE: Alternative Application (Example: Car Search)

Car search					
	<i>Year</i>	<i>Price</i> (thousands)	<i>MPG</i>	<i>Doors</i>	<i>Passengers</i>
Ideal	<input type="text" value="2004"/>	<input type="text" value="\$5.5"/>	<input type="text" value="65"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Weight	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>

Send the search results to me by email:

FIG. 83

<i>Personals search</i>		<i>Height</i> (ft)	<i>Hair</i> <i>color</i>	<i>Eye</i> <i>color</i>	<i>Weight</i> (pounds)	<i>Age</i> (years)	
<i>Weight</i> <i>of Physical</i> <i>Traits</i>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<i>Ideal</i>	<input type="text" value="6.0"/>	<input type="text" value="red"/>	<input type="text" value="blue"/>	<input type="text" value="200"/>	<input type="text" value="35"/>
		<i>Weight</i>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>
		<i>Education</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Pro-</i> <i>fession</i>	<i>Myers-</i> <i>Briggs</i>	<i>Income</i> (K)	
<i>Weight</i> <i>of Personal</i> <i>Traits</i>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<i>Ideal</i>	<input type="text" value="MD"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="ESFP"/>	<input type="text" value="\$150"/>
		<i>Weight</i>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>
<input type="button" value="search"/>							

FIG. 84

Article or document search or subscription									
	Weight	Search term	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
A	50	Lincoln	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B	25	emancipation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Article, author, publication attributes					
	Language	Length (words)	Author rating	Publication rating	Freshness (weeks)
Ideal	Eng.	400	5	3	2
Weight	10	5	5	3	10
Tolerance		+50	0	+	

Weight C 50

search

FIG. 85

Travel search

	Airport From	Airport To	City From	City To	Airline	Date Depart	Date Return	Window	Aisle
MUST HAVE	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	SF	Nash	<input type="text"/>	3/23	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
PREFER TO HAVE	Airport From	Airport To	City From	City To	Airline	Date Depart	Time Depart	Window	Aisle
Idea	SFO	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	UTD	<input type="text"/>	11AM	Y	<input type="text"/>
Weight	7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	7	10	<input type="text"/>

FIG. 86 USE Subsystem: Primary USE: Single Input Field Variation

Search string

`finger-picking (25, linksto) instruct! (40, lexivote) guitar (!)`

search

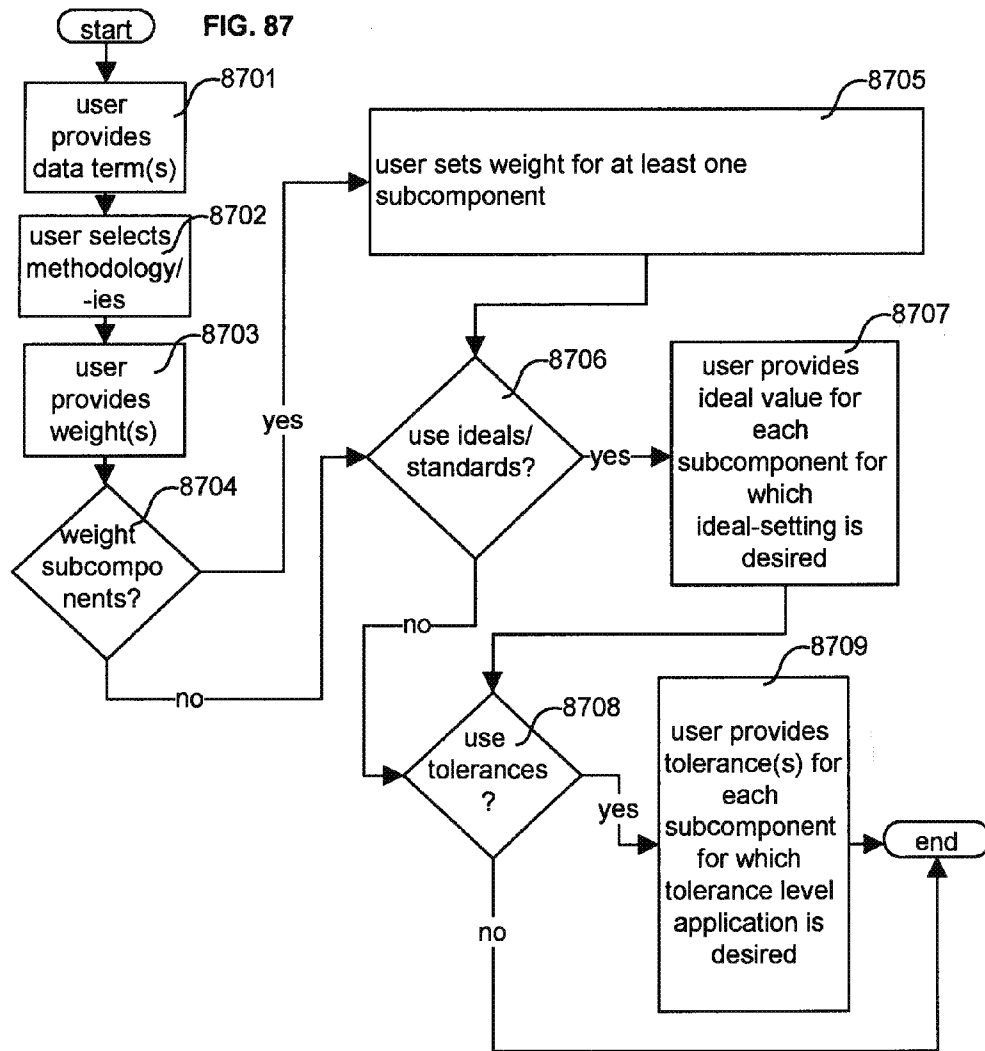



FIG. 88


USE Subsystem: Email Integration:
Example of EQML-Enabled Search Engine
Query via Email

8801 

TO: UET Company
FROM: UET User
DATE: June 20, 2007
Subject: Example EQML Query by Email

```
<EQML>
  <EQMLQuery>
    <EQMLQueryID>1</EQMLQueryID>
    <EQMLQueryDB>WWWeb</EQMLQueryDB>
    <EQMLComponent>
      <EQMLCompID>1</EQMLCompID>
      <EQMLCompMethod>Lexivote</EQMLCompMethod>
      <EQMLCompWeight>50</EQMLCompWeight>
      <EQMLCompTerm>Hogwarts</EQMLCompTerm>
    </EQMLComponent>
    <EQMLComponent>
      <EQMLCompID>2</EQMLCompID>
      <EQMLCompMethod>Lexivote</EQMLCompMethod>
      <EQMLCompWeight>20</EQMLCompWeight>
      <EQMLCompTerm>Map</EQMLCompTerm>
    </EQMLComponent>
  </EQMLQuery>
[etc.]
```

FIG. 89

8901 

FROM: UET Company
TO: UET User
DATE: June 20, 2007
Subject: Re: Example EQML Query by Email

Thanks for submitting your search queries to the
UET Company.

The top ten results from each query are provided
below.

Regards,

The UET Team

RESULTS

Query 1

<http://www.example1.com>
(comp.1: 1) (comp.2: 3)

<http://www.example2.com>
(comp.1: 2) (comp.2: 4)

[etc.]

FIG. 90

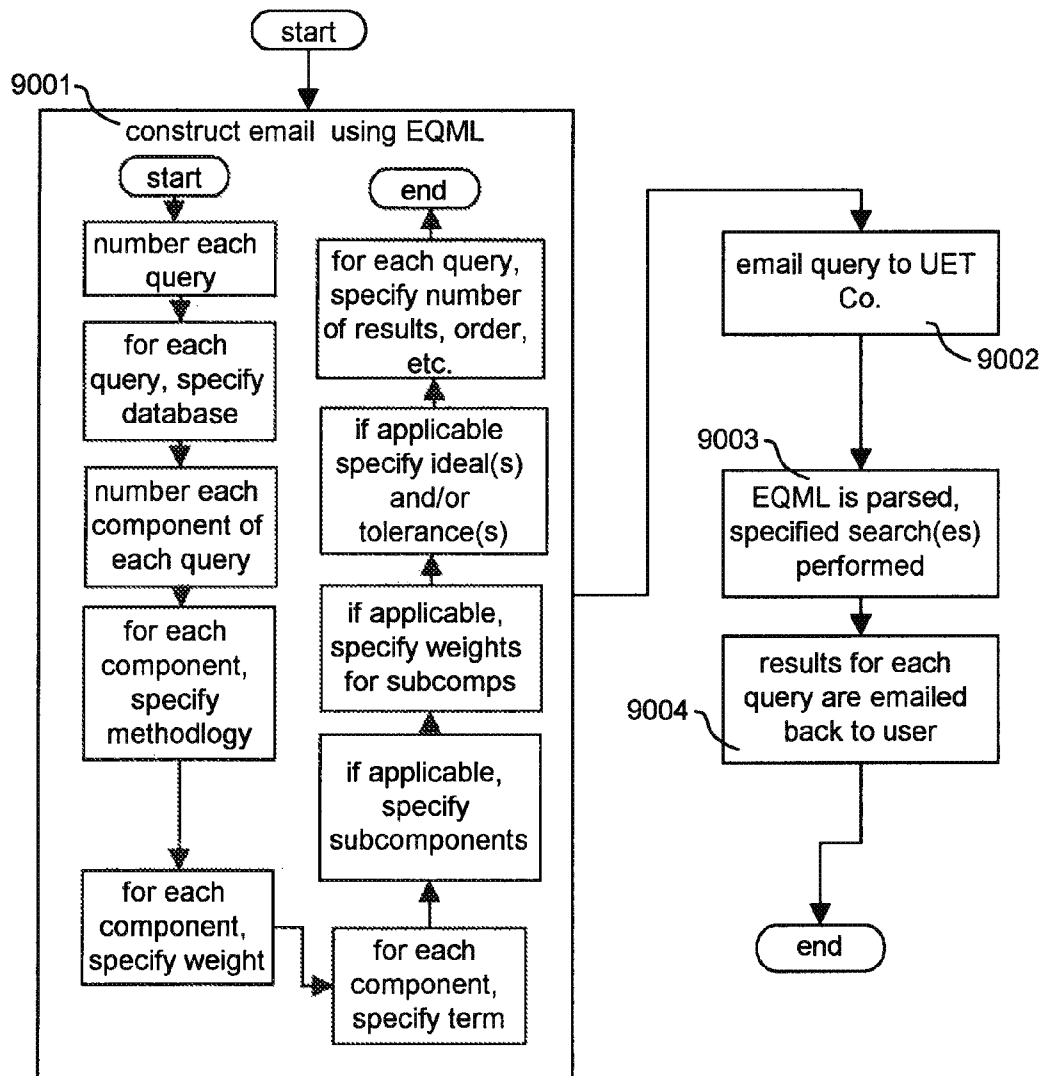


FIG. 91

9101

Account: MyFlowers23 Build Your Own Search Engine!

Which database? auct. cars coinscomp. web [etc.]

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of Simple Search Components Simple Search Component

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of Compound Search Components

Auction-Related	Real Estate-Related
PS1 PS2 PS3 PS4 PS5 PS6	PS7 PS8 PS9 PS10
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Stock-Related	Car-Related
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Allow Inter-Component Weighting? Allow Intra-Component Weighting? Allow user ideal-setting? Allow user tolerance-setting? Display search component performance gauge?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Submit

FIG. 92

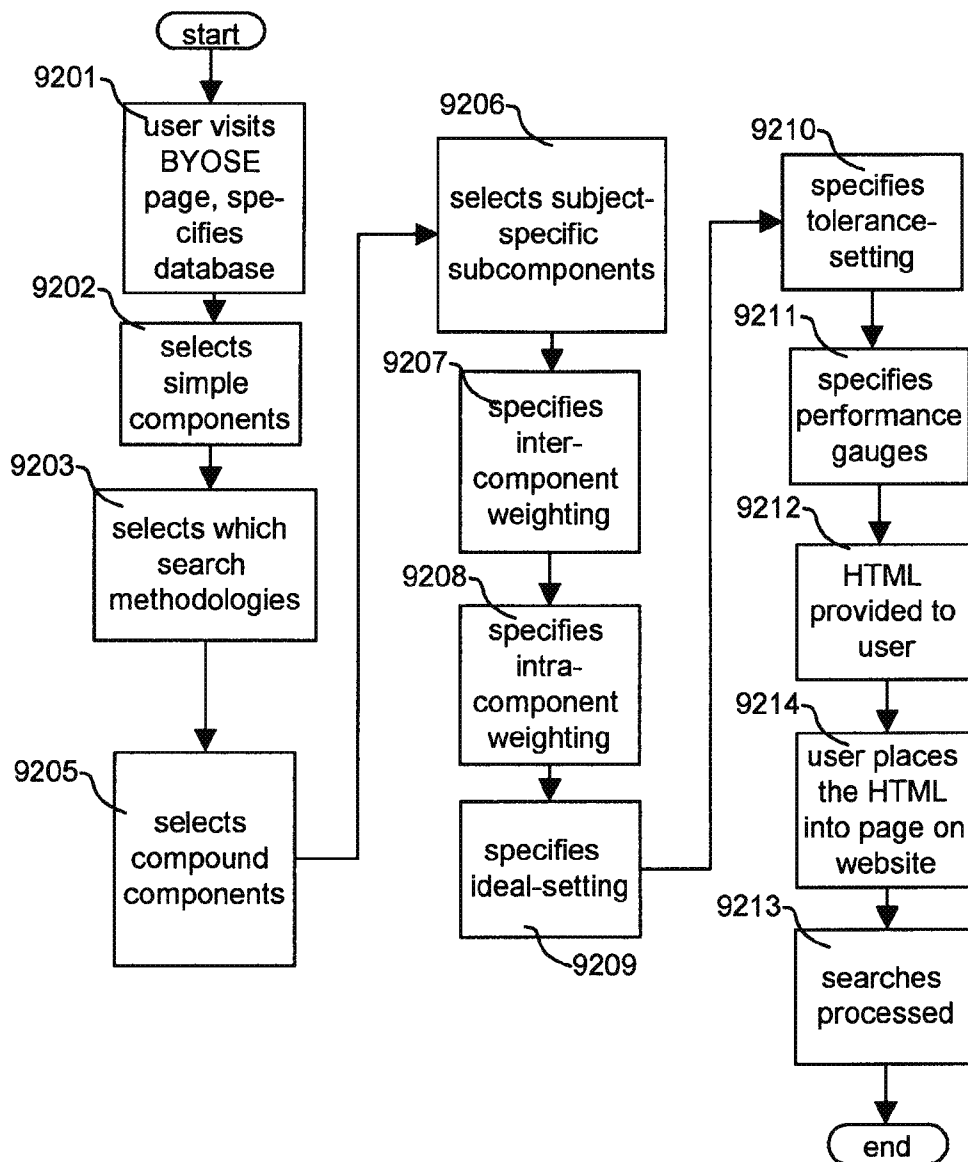


FIG. 93

9301

Search term

university of virginia

Search methodology
S1 S2 S3 S4
☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

Your word
cinderella
9302

Your favorite website(s) related to chosen word
1 www.disney.com
2
3
search

9303a
9303b
9303c

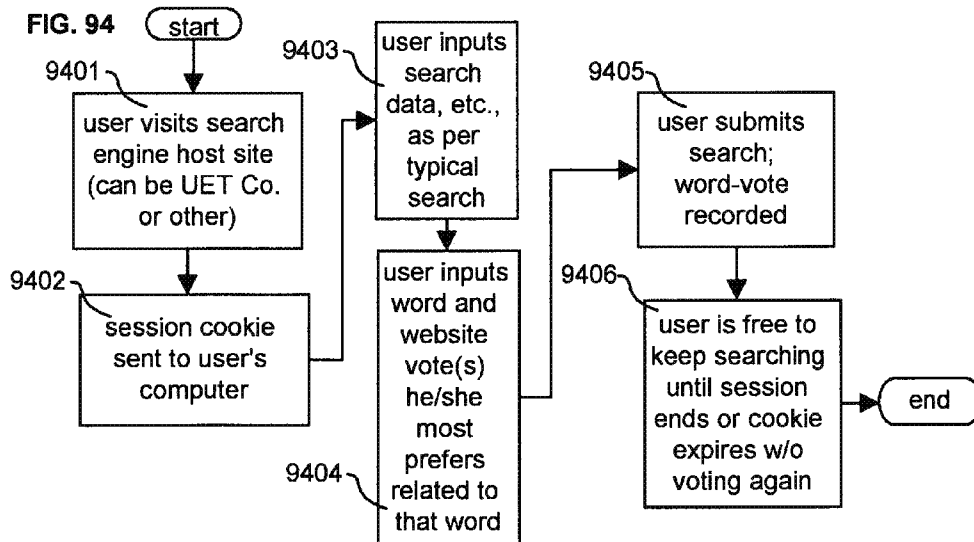


FIG. 95

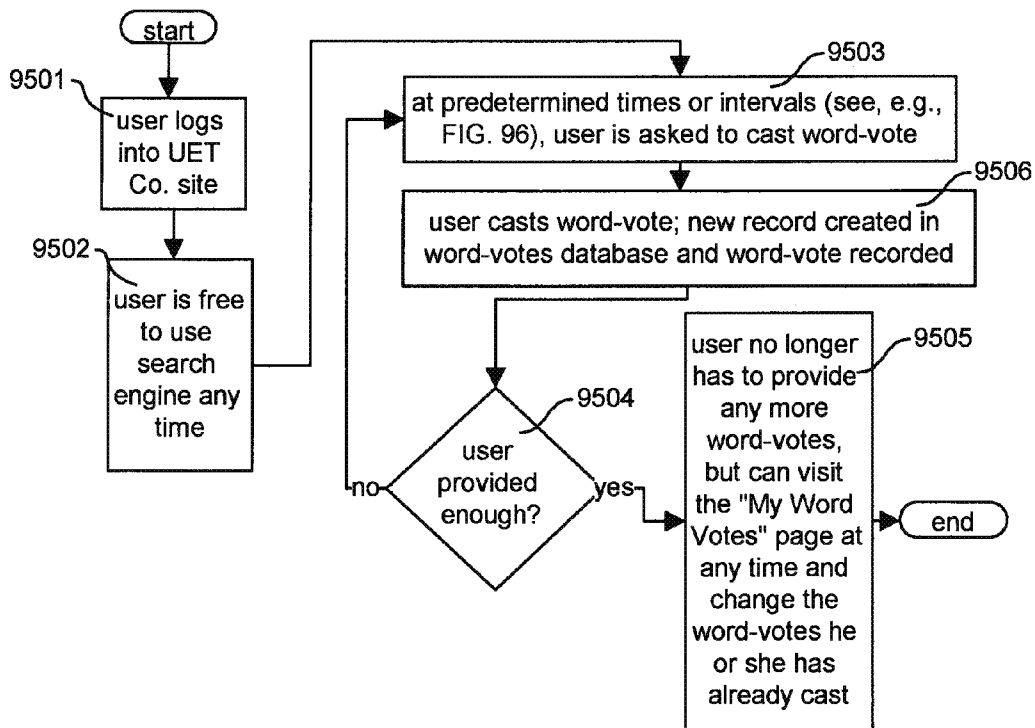


FIG. 96

1. Require user to provide a word-vote every third time he/she logs in until threshold met
2. Require word-vote every fifth search performed until threshold met
3. Require word-vote once per month until threshold met

FIG. 97

First place vote: 5 points
 Second place vote: 3 points
 Third place vote: 2 points

FIG. 98A

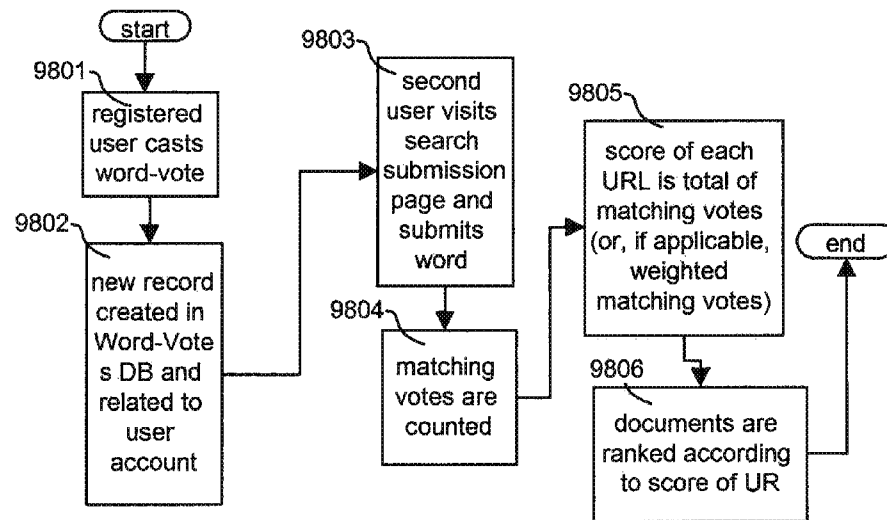



FIG. 98B USE Subsystem: Lexivote: Scoring Equation
when Weighted Word-Votes Are Used

$$r_1(A) = w_1(v_1(A)) + w_2(v_2(A)) + w_3(v_3(A))$$

FIG. 99

9901 

Account: MotorVoter3

My Word-Votes

1. Word

Votes

cinderella

First place

http://www.disney.com

Second place

Third place

2. Word

Votes

stamps

First place

http://www.philatelist.org

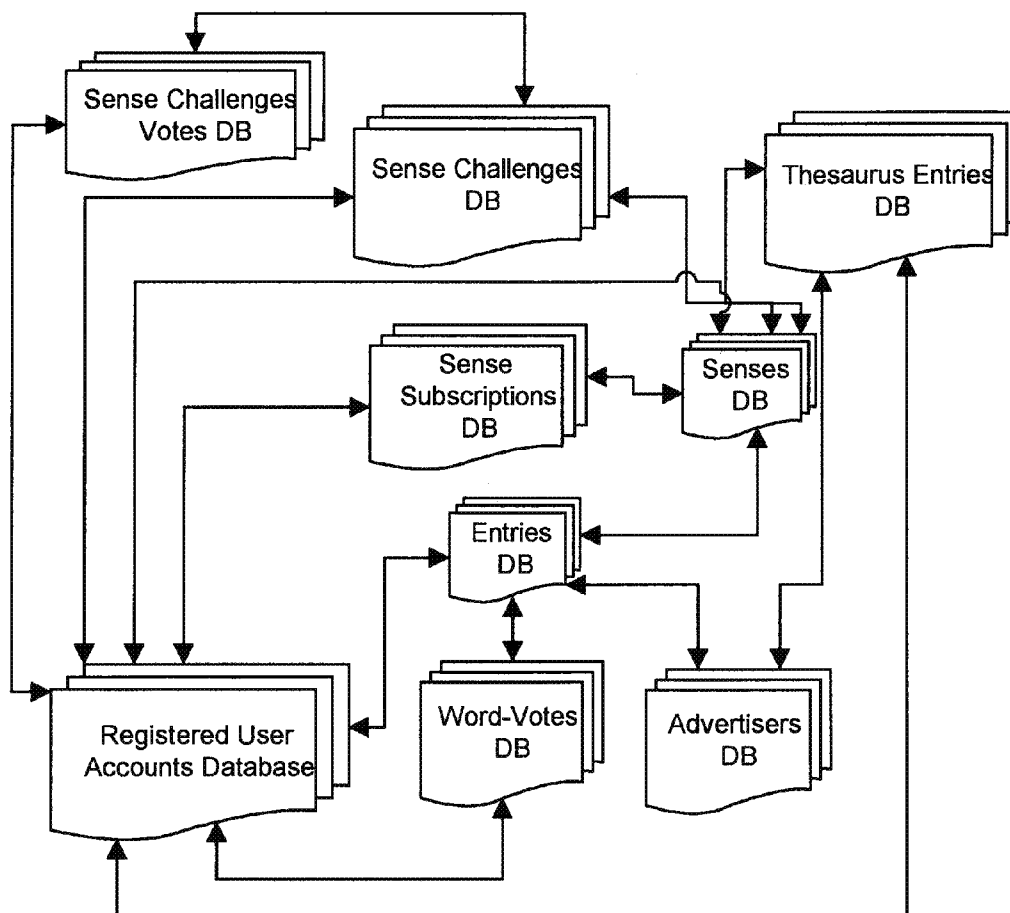
Second place

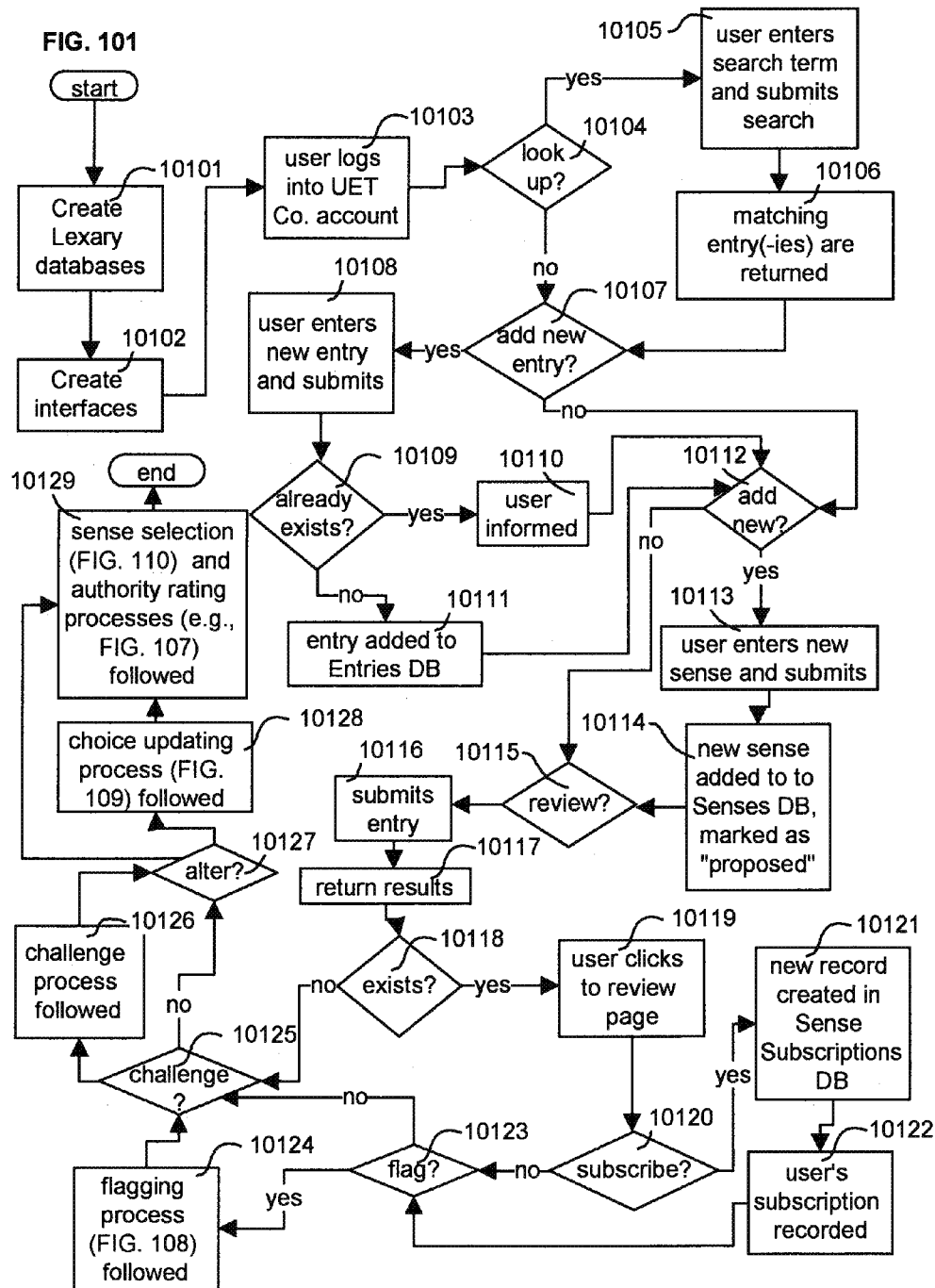
http://www.philatelife.com

Third place

Submit changes

FIG. 100





10201 FIG. 102

epoel Lexary Project

Enter the term for which you would like a definition

run submit

10301 FIG. 103

epoel Lexary Project

Term searched:

run

Results:

3 approved senses

view 2 proposed additional senses

submit new sense

Sense 1 v: (intransitive) to move rapidly (23)
(wordsmith: 198)

Sense 2 n: a point scored in the game of baseball

Sense 3 v. (intransitive): to work properly; to be in a functioning state (11) (dillon: 26)

Running Shoes - \$19.95!

advertisement

FIG. 104

10401

epoet Lexary Project

Term searched: **Submit New Sense**

run **Part of Speech** **Qualifier**

New Proposed Sense

Definition for this sense of the word

Etymology (if known, not required)

Usage notes, including, if possible, usage in a sentence.

FIG. 105

10501

epoet Lexary Project

Term searched: run

Pending Proposed Senses
[return to search page](#)

Proposed Sense 1 n: a sortie; an outing, typically with a particular mission, as in "a bombing run" or a "run to the post office" (11) ([wordsmith](#): 198)

10502 [I subscribe](#) [flag](#)

Proposed Sense 2 n: something we did last night (0) ([eggheadz](#): -1)

[I subscribe](#) [flag](#) 10503

10504

FIG. 106

10601

epoet Lexary Project

Term searched: run

Sense Challenge Page

Sense 1 v: (intransitive) to move rapidly (23) ([wordsmith](#): 198)

Do you wish to enter a challenge of this sense definition? Yes ☐

If so, please enter your reasons below, being as specific as possible:

You must also supply a proposed alternative to the sense definition you are challenging. Your alternative:

[submit](#)

FIG. 107

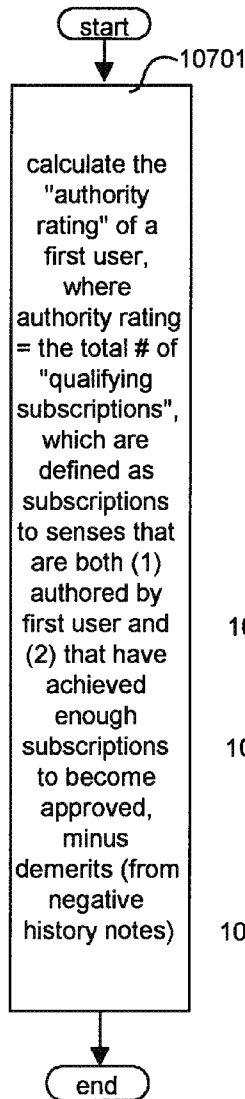


FIG. 108

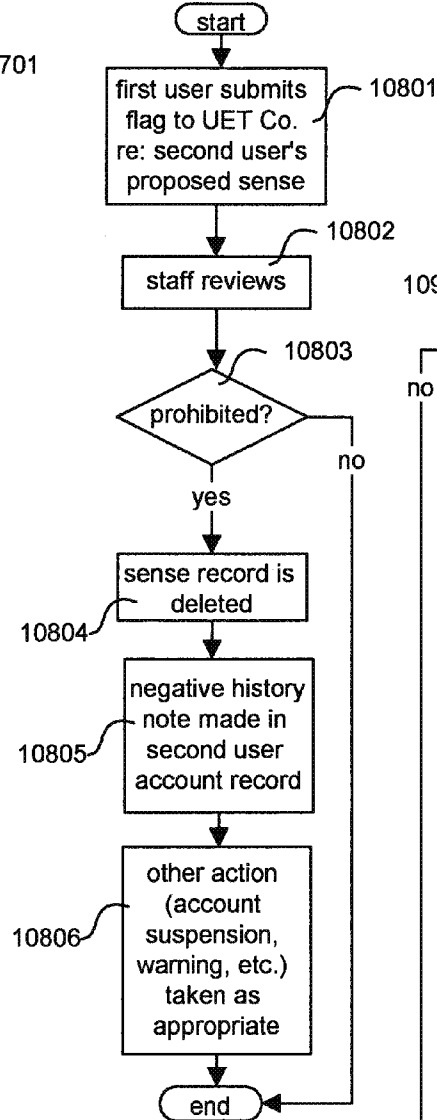
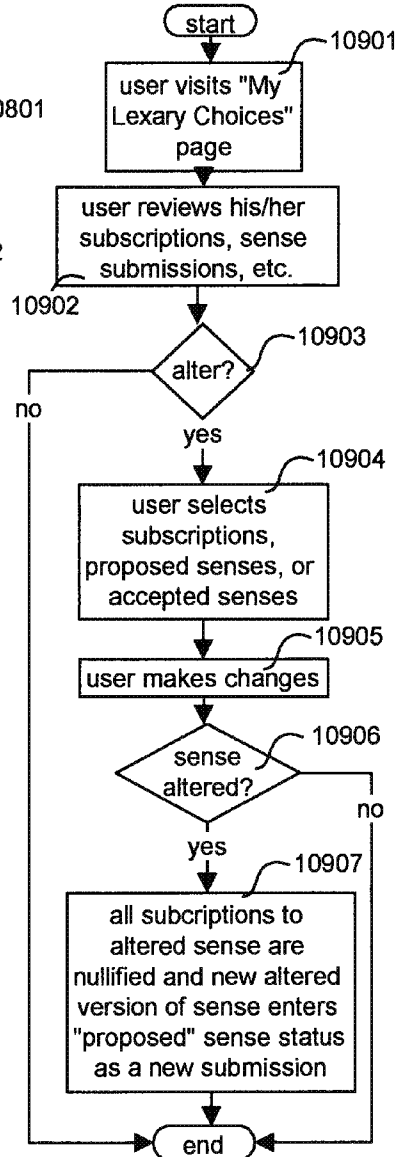


FIG. 109



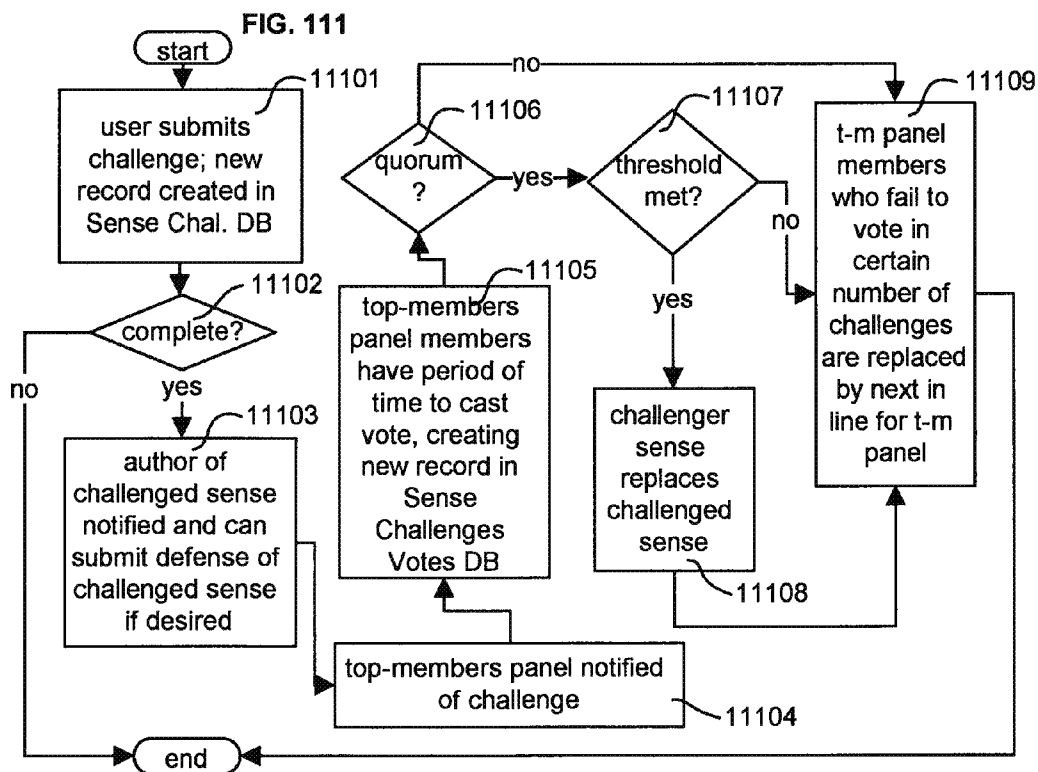
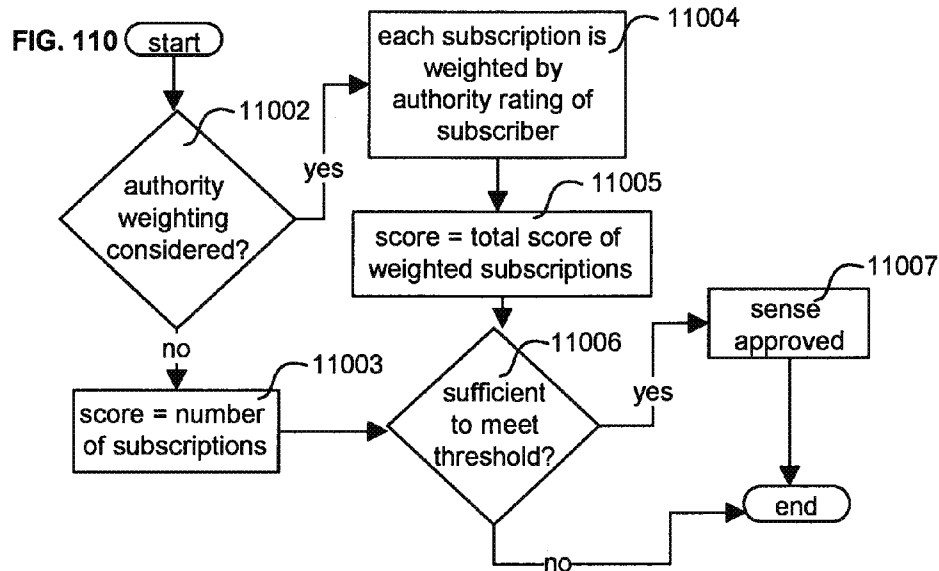


FIG. 112

11201

Weight	Search term	links to	links from	Search methodology				freshness
				pay-per- placement	title or URL	popularity		
50	rubber	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	stamp	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11301

FIG. 113

11302

The search term(s) entered have multiple meanings. Please select the sense in which you mean the word:

rubber

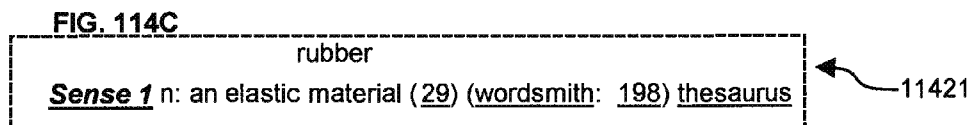
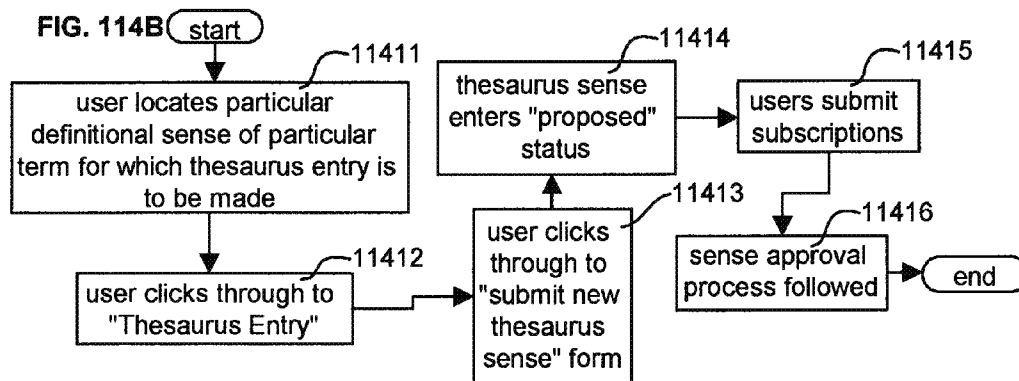
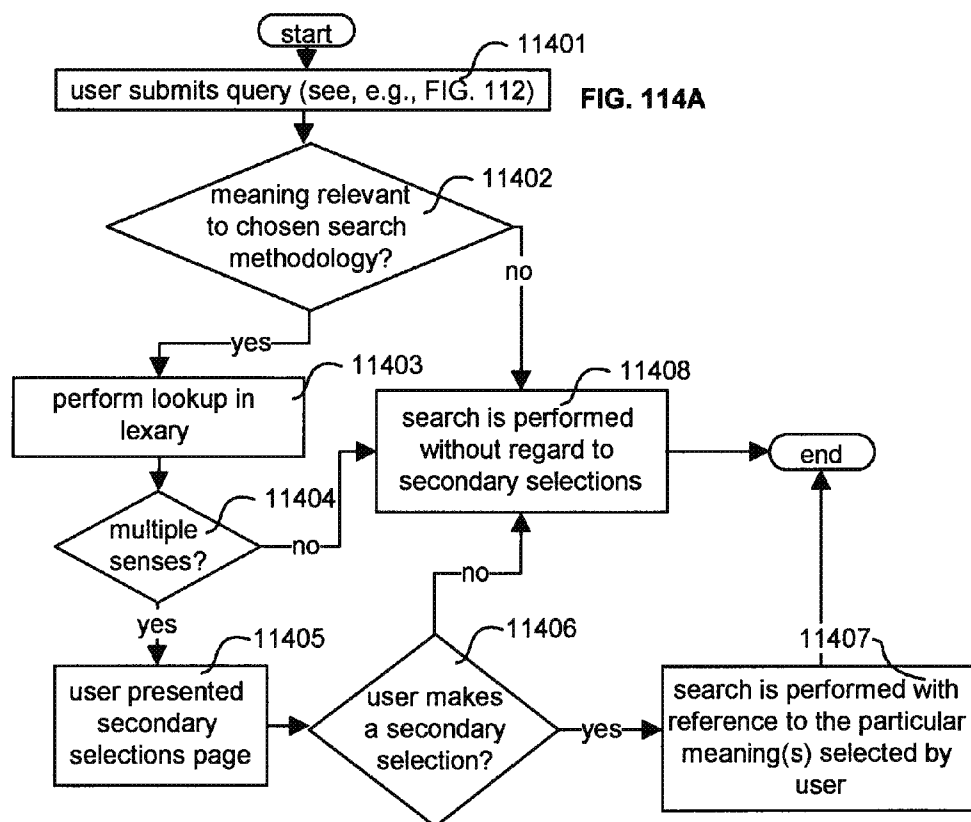
☐ **Sense 1** n: an elastic material (29) (wordsmith: 198)

☐ **Sense 2** n: a device planted into a pitcher's mound in the game of baseball (21) (pitchingBill: 41)

stamp

☐ **Sense 1** v: (transitive) to make an impression upon an object by forceful impact (73) (wordsmith: 198)

☐ **Sense 2** n: a small piece of paper affixed to a piece of mail to indicate that postage has been paid (107) (postboy: 31)



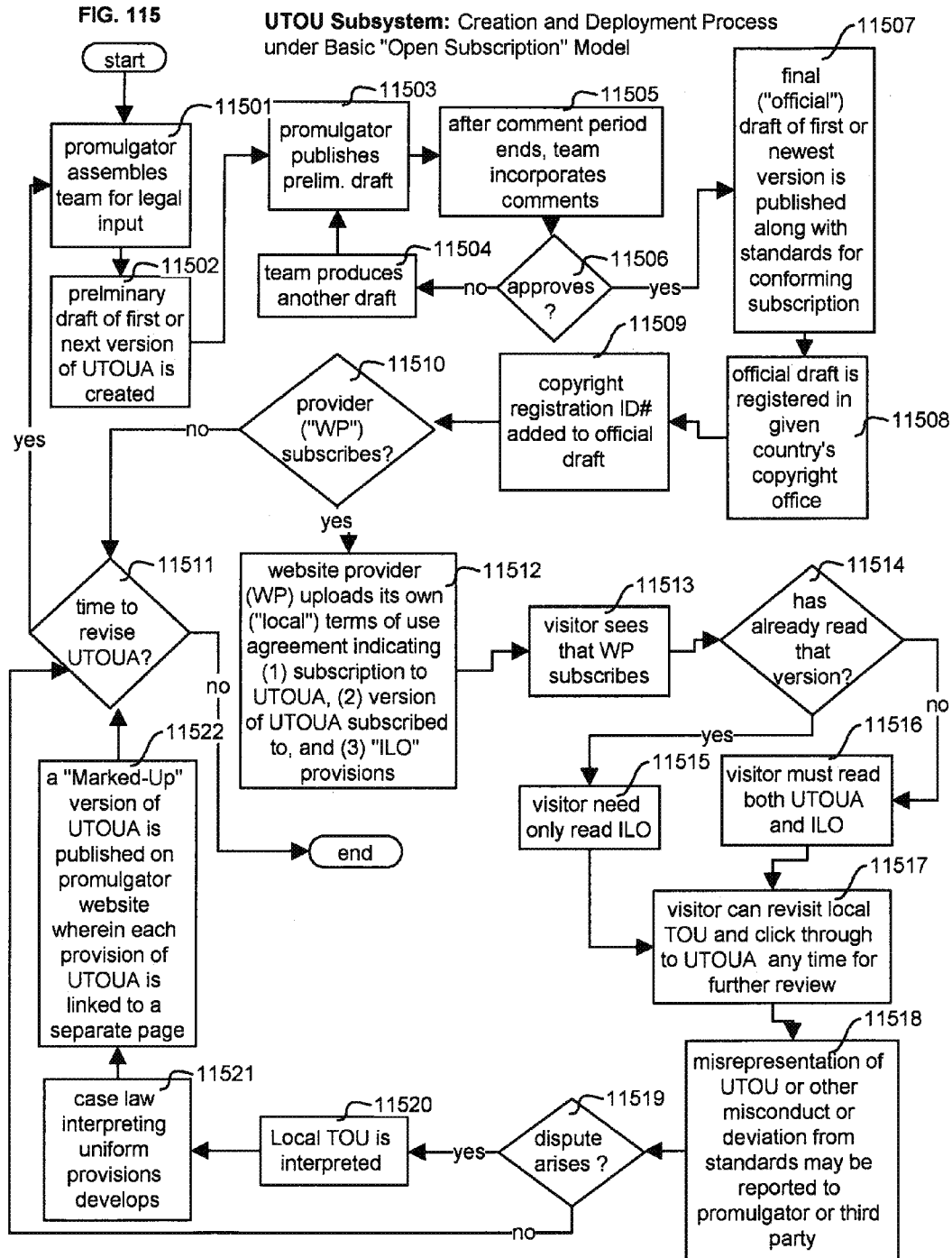



FIG. 116 **UTOU Subsystem:** Excerpt from Example Web Page
Hosted by Promulgator Displaying a Given UTOUA Version


11601 

**UNIFORM TERMS OF USE AGREEMENT
VERSION 1.0**

1. This web page comprises the Official Text of the **Uniform Terms of Use Agreement Version 1.0 (UTOUA-1.0)** The exact text hereof is also recorded in Copyright #XXX-XXX.
2. When properly referenced, all terms of this document may and shall be fully incorporated by reference into the terms of use agreement of a Subscribing Entity so that the terms herein govern in part the use of the Subscribing Entity's website(s) and/or service(s). A Subscribing Entity is one that controls a website in which the terms of use agreement thereof (hereinafter, the "Local TOU") is constructed and displayed in conformance to the standards set forth herein. When so incorporated by reference, this document and the terms hereof shall govern the parties to the Local TOU, **EXCEPT THAT** each such Local TOU shall display a section of text entitled "Identification, Localization and Opt-Out Provisions" (hereinafter, "ILO Section"), the terms of which ILO Section may differ from the terms hereof and shall take precedence over the terms of this document in any conflict between the two. No terms outside of said ILO Section shall take precedence over the terms of this document in the event of a conflict.
3. In order to be considered in conformance with the standards set forth herein, each Local TOU shall be entitled "UTOU-CONFORMING TERMS OF USE AGREEMENT" and provide a hyperlink as described below. The Local TOU shall then comprise the following initial provision: "1. This Terms of Use Agreement governs the use of this Website and all related Services. Visitation or use of Website and/or Services signifies agreement by You, the visitor or user, to this Terms of Use Agreement. Provider subscribes to Uniform Terms of Use Version 1.0, which document is incorporated in its entirety into this Agreement and the terms of which are binding upon You and Provider, except as specified in Section 2, 'Identification, Localization and Opt-Out Provisions,' below." A second hyperlink shall be provided as described below....

[etc.]

FIG. 117 **UTOU Subsystem:** Example Excerpt from Local Website
Terms of Use Page of a Website Provider Who Subscribes
to UTOU

11701 

Inventerprise®

UTOU-CONFORMING TERMS OF USE AGREEMENT

1. This Terms of Use Agreement governs the use of this Website and related Services. Visitation or use of Website and/or Services signifies agreement by You, the visitor or user, to this Terms of Use Agreement. Provider subscribes to Uniform Terms of Use Version 1.0, which document is incorporated in its entirety into this Agreement and the terms of which are binding upon You and Provider, except as specified in Section 2, "Identification, Localization and Opt-Out Provisions," below.

2. IDENTIFICATION, LOCALIZATION, AND OPT-OUT PROVISIONS.

2.1 IDENTIFICATION: *Provider means Inventerprise.*

2.2 IDENTIFICATION: *Website means www.Inventerprise.com*

2.3 LOCALIZATION: *Interpretation and all disputes arising out of this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the state of California*

2.4 OPT-OUT: *Subscription fee for newsletter is \$25/month. If a user is found to have spammed other users, the offending user shall reimburse Provider \$250 per offending email. Provider holds regularly scheduled maintenance of Website on.....*

[etc.]

FIG. 118 UTOU Subsystem: Document Linking Overview

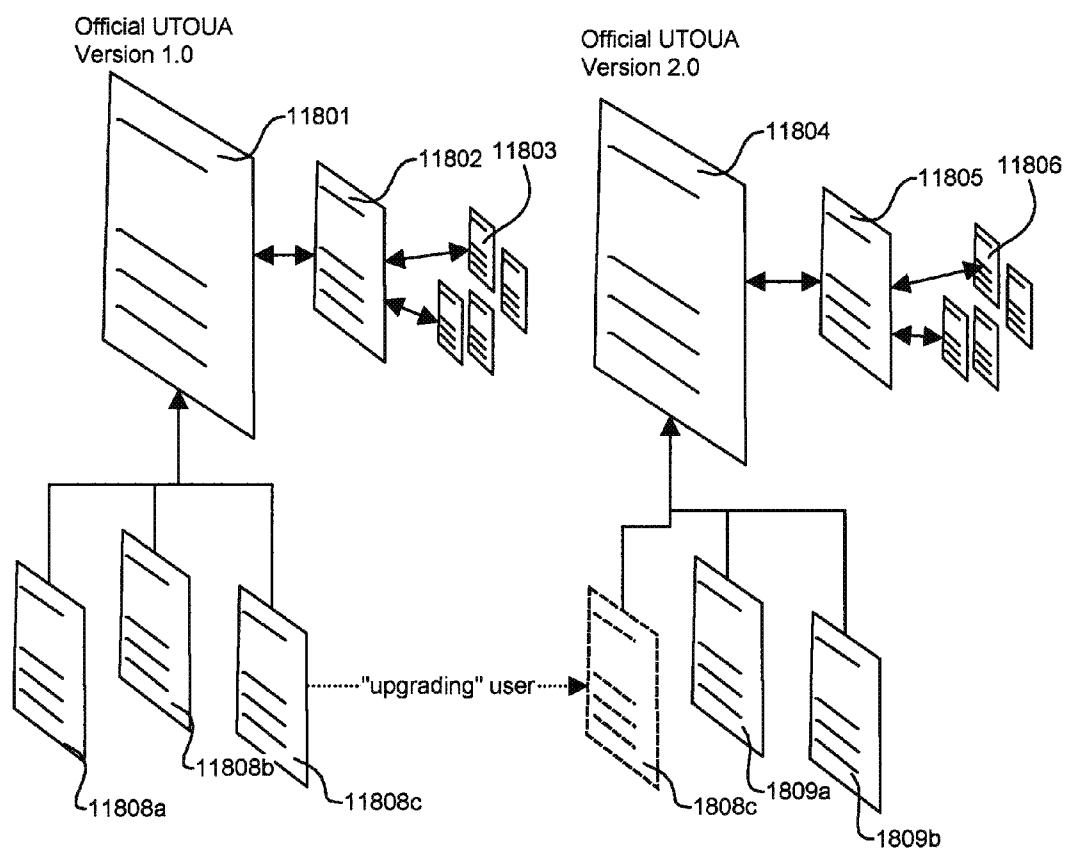


FIG. 119

UTOU Subsystem: "Registered Subscriber" Model
Process, with UTU Integration

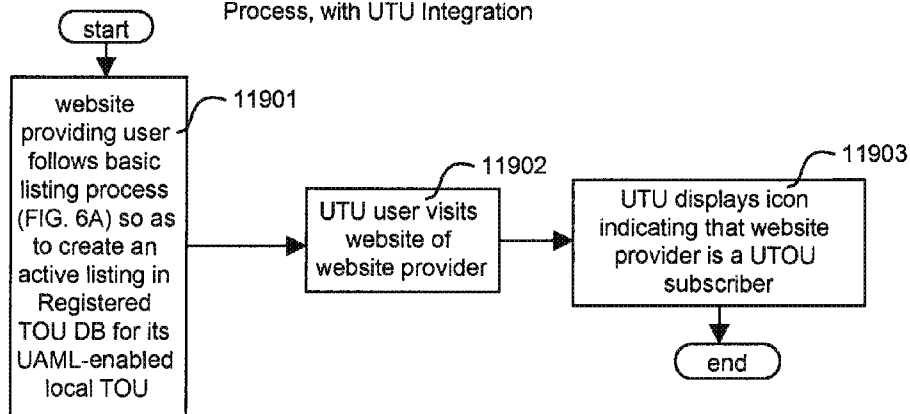
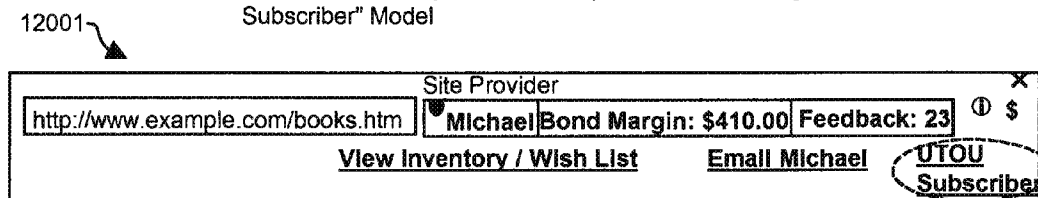


FIG. 120

UTOU-UTU Subsystems: Example UTU under "Registered Subscriber" Model



12002

FIG. 121 UTOU Subsystem: UFC Method Overview

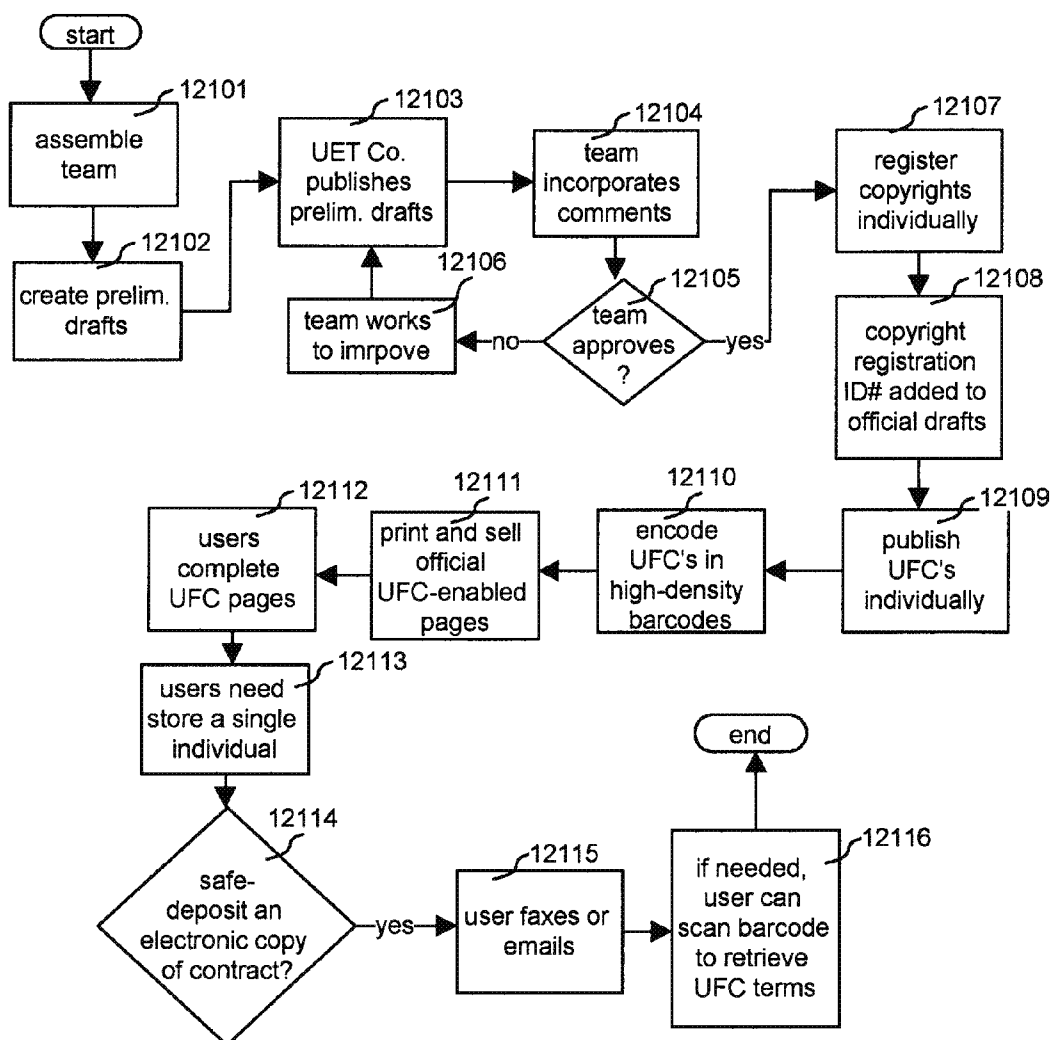


FIG. 122 UTOU Subsystem: UFC Sample UFC-Enabled Paper Page

12201 barcode 12202

UFC-Enabled
General Purpose Purchase Agreement Form GPPA-1

1. The terms of this Agreement appear in the Antecedent Document, which appears at the the following URL: <http://www.uetcompany.com/ufc/gppa-1.htm> and in U.S. Copyright Reg#XXXX. Additional provisions of this Agreement are specified in Section 2, "Identification, Localization and Opt-Out Provisions," below. The Antecedent Document is incorporated by reference in its entirety into the present Agreement, and its terms are fully in force and binding upon the parties EXCEPT THAT in the case of a discrepancy between the Antecedent Document and the terms in Section 2 below, the terms of Section 2 below shall control.

2. IDENTIFICATION, LOCALIZATION, AND OPT-OUT PROVISIONS.

2.1 IDENTIFICATION: Seller means _____.

2.2 IDENTIFICATION: Buyer means _____.

2.3 LOCALIZATION: Interpretation and all disputes arising out of this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the state of _____.

2.4 OPT-OUT and/or ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS:

[etc.]

BUYER

Printed Name

date

SELLER

Printed Name

date

FIG. 123

UTOU Subsystem:
UFC: Benefits

BENEFITS OF UFC USAGE:

1. Reduction in usage and storage of paper and ink
2. Reduction in ease of making and filing back-up hard copies or electronic copies, which translates to lower likelihood of loss of documents
3. Easier to transmit via fax, email, etc.
4. Uniform terms produce greater reliability in case law
5. Uniform terms become more familiar to legal professionals, reducing attorney time required for review
6. Multiple redundant means of recovering referenced terms, including: (i) web-accessible version; (ii) copyright office records; (iii) barcode

FIG. 124

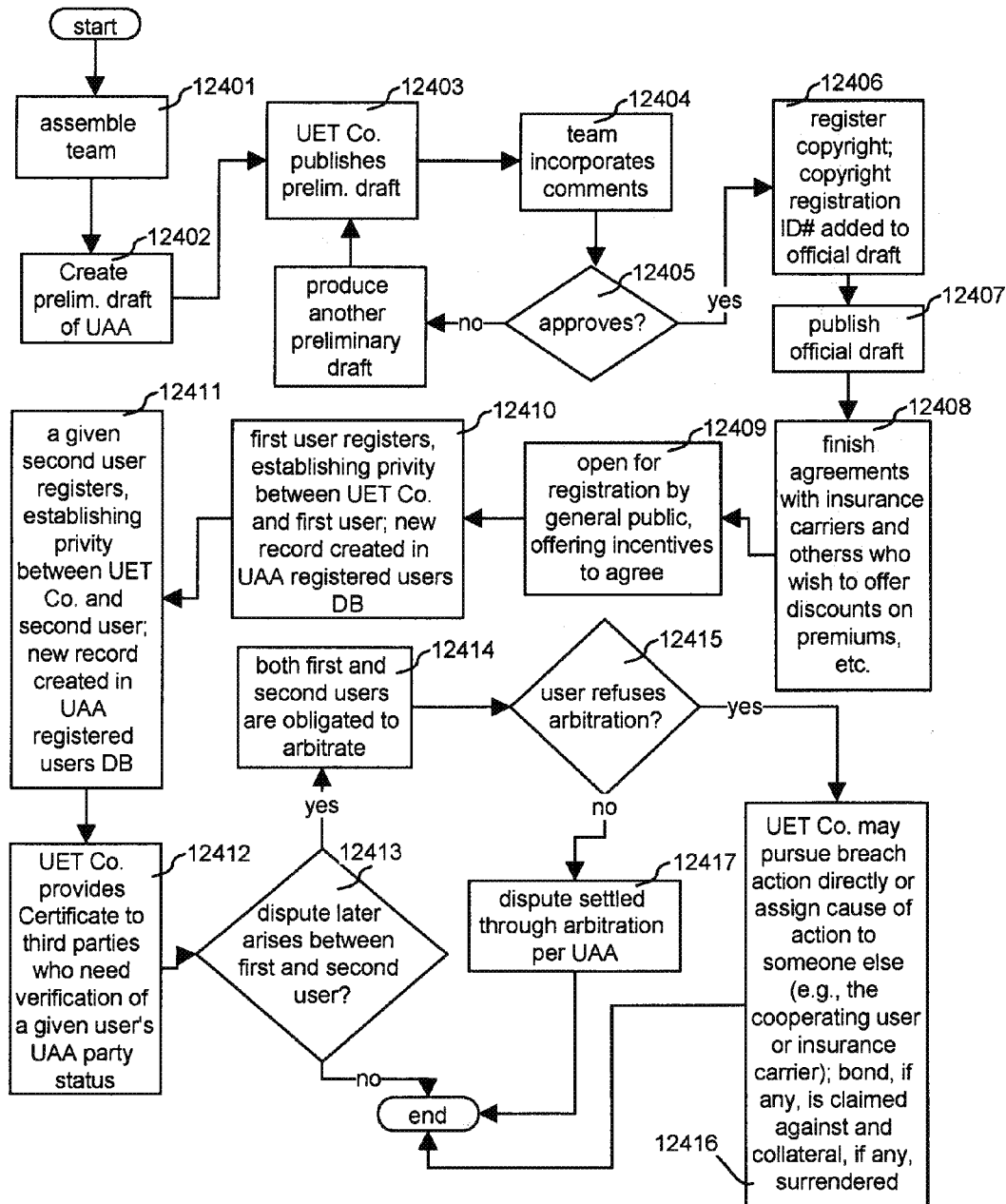
UArb Subsystem:
Method Overview

FIG. 125
UArb Subsystem:
PartyRelationships

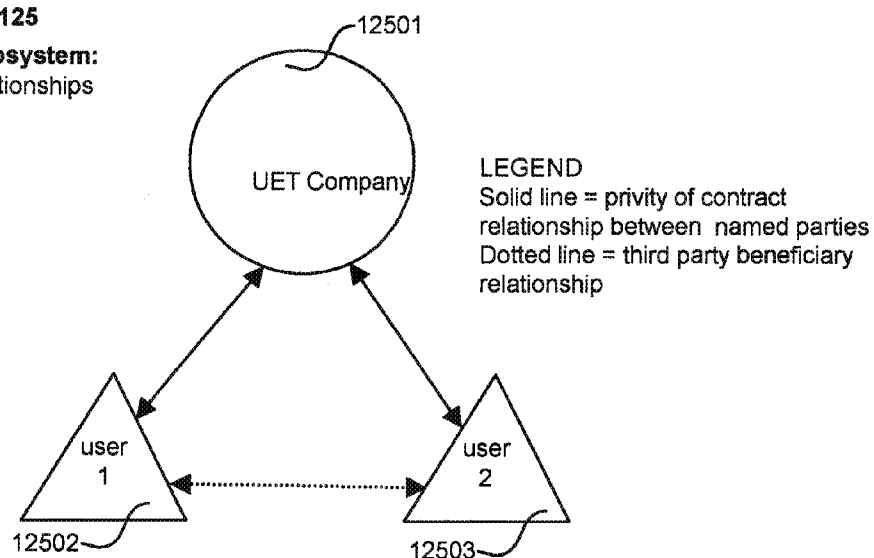


FIG. 126
UArb Subsystem:
PartyRelationships

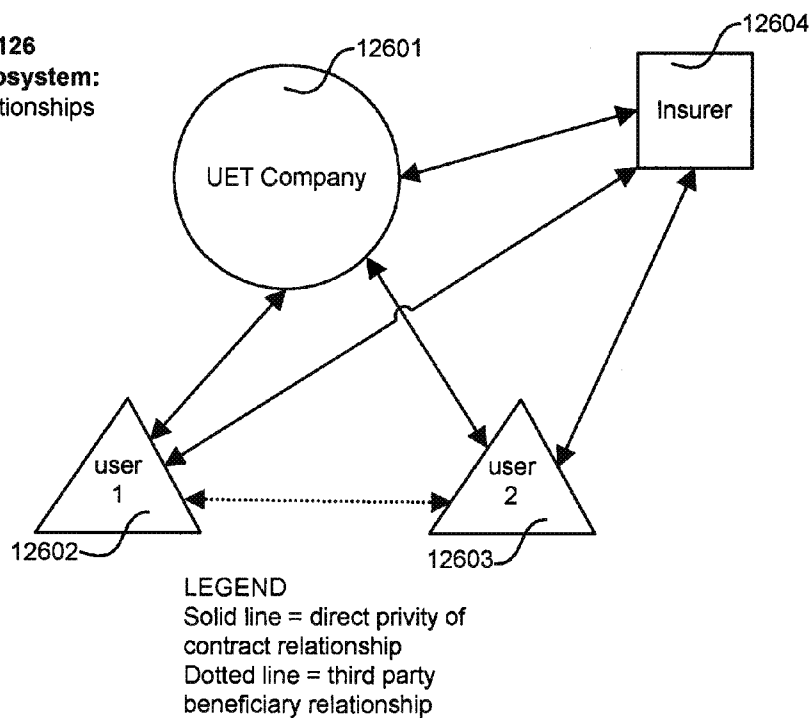


FIG. 127

UArb Subsystem:
Benefits

INCENTIVES FOR USER PARTICIPATION

1. Discounted insurance premiums (if offered)
2. Lower risk of frivolous or extortionist litigation
3. Lower costs in the event of dispute
4. Avoidance of court backlog: quicker resolution

FIG. 128

UArb Subsystem: Excerpt from Example Web Page
Hosted by UET Co. Displaying Universal Arbitration
Agreement

**UNIVERSAL ARBITRATION AGREEMENT
VERSION 1.0**

1. This web page comprises the Official Text of the **Universal Arbitration Agreement Version 1.0 (UAA-1.0)** The exact text hereof is also recorded in Copyright #XXX-XXX.
2. By signifying your agreement to this UAA, you, the registering user, are establishing a contractual relationship with UET Company. In so doing you are entitled to certain benefits and obliged to perform certain duties as follows. Being a party to the UAA may also make you eligible for special discounts offered by insurance companies and/or other third parties.
3. **THIRD PARTY BENEFICIARY.** The primary purpose of this UAA is to establish a third party beneficiary relationship between you and any other users who also agree to the UAA. You and UET Company, the parties to this Agreement, have a direct relationship -- "Privity of Contract." But this agreement also obligates you to perform a specific duty with respect to third parties: when a third party has entered into an identical contract with UET Company, i.e., when said third party has agreed to the UAA, you promise to submit to binding arbitration any disputes of the type specified below and arising between you and said third party. Said third party will, by virtue of entering into an identical UAA with UET Company, also owe this same duty to you.....

[etc.]

FIG. 129

UArb Subsystem: Example Certificate of User
Participation in UArb System


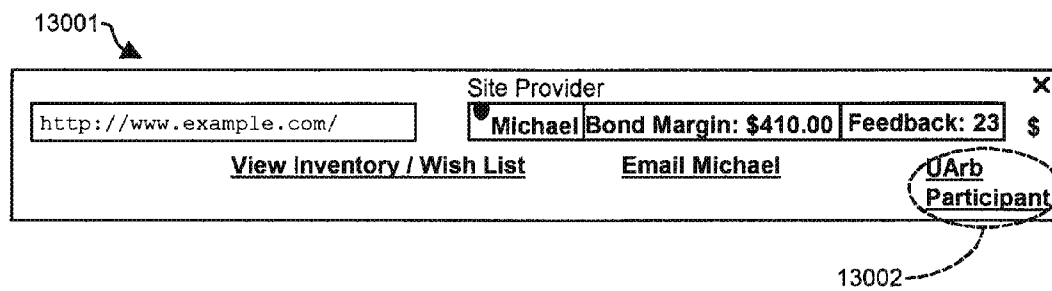
UNIVERSAL ARBITRATION AGREEMENT VERSION 1.0	
Certificate of Party Status	
	
1. TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This document certifies that John Q. Party has entered into a binding agreement with UET Company, the terms of which are essentially identical to the terms known as the Universal Arbitration Agreement Version 1.0., which can be found at the following URL _____ and in U.S. Copyright Reg. # _____ and, in encoded form, in the barcode above.	
[etc.]	
Signed	
_____ Bill Q. Uet CEO UET Co.	_____ date

FIG. 130 UArb-UTU Subsystems: Example UTU-UArb Integration



SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM, METHOD AND DEVICE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/583,109, filed Aug. 14, 2009, which is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/888,781, filed Jul. 9, 2004, which issued Oct. 6, 2009, as U.S. Pat. No. 7,599,938, and which claimed the benefit of priority filing to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/486,630, filed Jul. 11, 2003. Priority benefit of all of the above applications is claimed, and all of the above applications are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety into the present disclosure.

A portion of the disclosure of this patent document contains material which is subject to copyright protection. The copyright owner has no objection to the facsimile reproduction by anyone of the patent documents or patent disclosure, as it appears in the patent trademark office patent file or records, but otherwise reserves all rights whatsoever.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

None.

REFERENCE TO SEQUENCE LISTING, A TABLE, OR A COMPUTER PROGRAM LISTING APPENDIX

None.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to electronic informational and commercial transactions and interactions, specifically, to facilitating such transactions and interactions through the use of computers and the Internet.

2. Description of Related Art

A. Related Art: The Need for a Universal Electronic Transaction System

Two of the most frequently used Internet and World Wide Web services are (I) electronic commerce services, particularly, the buying and selling of goods and services wherein a portion of the transaction is conducted via the World Wide Web, and (II) information search services, particularly, providing a customized list of websites and Web-accessible documents in response to an inquiry submitted by a user to a Web search engine, whereby an index of Web pages is searched. While effective technology for each of the aforementioned services exists, its usefulness is severely limited by a number of technical factors as follows.

B. Related Art: Internet Auction Systems

Under the related art, dynamically priced e-commerce transactions are offered to Web users through the use of dynamically generated web pages that incorporate data drawn from the auctioneer's databases. Current providers of such services include eBay, Amazon, and Yahoo. This approach is not ideal in that such "deep Web" data cannot be readily indexed and catalogued by external search engine providers; thus, searching Internet auctions for a particular item requires that a user visit each individual auction site and search through that given website's search interface or have an intermediary do so.

Moreover, auction site providers typically frown upon attempts to index, analyze, or otherwise make use of information in the auctioneer's databases for purposes other than bidding, and these website providers may use their control of the information therein to prevent competition by other companies. Thus, obtaining accurate and complete market data pertaining to Internet auctions is more difficult than it would be in a transparent marketplace.

If an Internet user does not wish to list his or her auctions on a major site and pay the fees charged by the given Internet auctioneer, a user can start his or her own auction site. This alternative is not ideal in that it involves a great deal of time and expense and offers a low chance of success: to launch a new Internet auction site, one must purchase (or write), install, run and maintain expensive auction site software on expensive computer hardware, incur all the other risks and expenses associated with starting a business, and then come up with a way to draw bidders and sellers away from the existing major companies' sites. Very few people are up to the task.

What is needed, therefore, is an Internet auction system and method that allows (I) any person with a web page (II) to host an Internet auction on that web page (III) without requiring this person to purchase any software (IV) while yet allowing the person's auction to be searchable through any Web search engine and (V) also allowing data from all such Internet auctions in the world to be easily and freely gathered, analyzed and disseminated by anyone who wishes to do so.

C. Related Art: Internet Search Systems and Methods

Web search engines under the related art allow users to input terms and operators of their own choosing. Current providers of search engines include Google, MSN, and Ask Jeeves. However, the search function itself is still conducted according to the particular algorithmic approach established by the service provider. Such a "paternalistic" approach presumes that computer engineers or business owners are better equipped to create a search algorithm than are the people doing the searching, e.g., users at large. These systems are not ideal in that such a one-size-fits-all service is unlikely to yield results that are better than—or even equal to—those that could be obtained through the use of individual algorithms that have been uniquely tailored to meet the individual needs of a particular person with a particular search inquiry at a particular point in time.

What is needed, therefore, is a mechanism that allows Internet users to select the search methodology used in a particular search term, to combine the results of a search under one methodology with another search under another methodology, to assign how much weight is allotted to each methodology, to set standards against which each indexed item (e.g., document or record) is measured, to set maximum levels or tolerances for variations from such standards, and to otherwise define the way a search is performed rather than be reliant upon an a priori definition set by someone else.

D. Related Art: Internet Classified Ad Systems

Dynamically priced transaction vehicles (e.g., auctions) are not the only type of Internet classified ad. Numerous websites devoted to a given type of classified ad—personal ads, real estate ads, job listing ads, vehicle ads, and others—have been developed to meet such demand. Current providers of such services include Craigslist, Zip Realty, and Matchmaker.com. Again, however, in order to allow user posting and editing of such classified ads, these sites also rely upon database-driven, dynamic web page generation. Thus, most of the limitations described above in reference to Internet auctions apply to these classified ad systems as well: indexing by third parties is difficult and may cause legal battles with

website providers who believe that user-provided content is their property; compilation and analysis of such data is difficult.

What is needed, therefore, is a new Internet classified ad system and method that allows all classified ads of a given type on the entire World Wide Web to be searchable through a single search engine with field-by-field precision, that allows anyone with a web page to participate in this world-wide classified ad system without requiring any special advertising or database software on the part of the participant, and for all the data in such classified ads to be accessible to anyone with Web access for the purposes of information gathering and analysis.

E. Related Art: Internet Legal Vehicles

Under the related art, legal relationships between website providers and website users are governed by individual terms of use agreements that vary from website to website such that there are literally millions of different terms of use agreements in effect with respect to the millions of different websites available at the time of this writing. This approach is not ideal in that careful reading of each individual website's terms of use agreement is prohibitively time-consuming for a user of multiple websites, and the duplicative legal work associated with the creation of each individual terms of use agreement is wasteful. Meanwhile, resolution of disputes arising under seemingly infinite varieties of terms of use agreements leads to unpredictability in the case law.

Uniform codes (e.g., Uniform Commercial Code or "UCC") are known and have been effective in reducing inter-jurisdictional uncertainty. These uniform codes suggest standards for lawmaking bodies, such as state legislatures, to follow so that businesses operating in multiple states do not have to learn multiple legal systems. Unfortunately, the Internet, replete with millions of separately owned and operated private websites, has no such uniformity. Each website is essentially its own little fiefdom.

What is needed, therefore, is a system and method whereby uniformity in terms of use agreements can be advanced so as to allow greater efficiency and reliability for both website providers and website users.

Moreover, numerous contracts that are paper-based under the related art are extremely duplicative as well. Many common agreements, such as purchase or rental agreements, contain large numbers of very similar terms which vary slightly from one agreement to another, which situation again requires excessive legal review by the parties themselves as well as third parties such as consumer advocacy groups and the courts, and again thwarts predictability in the law. Meanwhile, millions of pieces of paper and millions of dollars are unnecessarily spent each year in the creation, documentation, and storage of these terms in contract form.

What is needed, therefore, is a system and method whereby essentially duplicative portions of contracts can be standardized and recorded more efficiently.

Even in situations where the law is well-settled, however, dispute resolution through the courts typically takes anywhere from several months to several years, as backlogs continue to grow. Alternative dispute resolution methods, such as arbitration (e.g., American Arbitration Association), mediation, and religious courts such as the Jewish Beis Din court system, are known and are preferred by many businesses, organizations, and individuals, since protracted legal battles are expensive and time-consuming, and for many litigants the adage "justice delayed is justice denied" holds true. These alternative dispute resolution methods, however, are still only employed in a fraction of cases, since arrangement for such proceedings is done on a case-by-case or contract-

by-contract basis. Moreover, many unsophisticated parties have little or no knowledge of the benefits and availability of alternative dispute resolution methods.

What is needed, therefore, is a system and method whereby the benefits of alternative dispute resolution may be made available to and more readily accessed by a larger portion of the population.

F. Related Art: HTML, Order Forms, and Contact Forms

Under the related art, contacting the provider of a website through the website itself relies upon a Web contact submission form (e.g., "<FORM ACTION= . . . ">) or purchase form. This approach is not ideal in that, since each website is designed completely differently from the next, a Web visitor must learn to navigate through the peculiar layout of each individual website in order to find the given site's order form or contact submission form.

Moreover, the Web order form concept itself is less than ideal in that, every time a user begins purchasing from a vendor through its website, the user must register with this vendor, providing credit card information, e-mail account address, and other sensitive data. Each time this data is circulated to a new party, the user's exposure to the risk of identity theft, fraud, and spam increases. Ideally, Internet users would be able to purchase from website providing vendors without having to register separately with each vendor and to fill out a separate purchase order form for each individual vendor website.

What is needed therefore is a superior communication system and method that allows users to interact with and purchase from all website providers through a single common interface, thus requiring no website navigation, no per-site registration, and no per-purchase order form submission.

Meanwhile, HTML itself is simply a language for defining the structure of a document, such as which part of the document is a title, which part is a paragraph, which part should be emphasized, and so on. HTML is silent about what the document actually says, i.e., HTML does nothing to tell us about the content or subject matter of a given paragraph, sentence, or phrase. Given this reality, under the related art, elaborate content analysis software has been developed, such as that of Applied Semantics, to "read" web pages in an attempt to ascertain the subject matter thereof without human participation. Such an approach is, at best, approximate. Thus, World Wide Web search engines, relying upon highly uncertain approximations, oftentimes return results that are highly variable in terms of relevancy. Ideally, the World Wide Web would be searchable with the field-by-field precision commonly seen in bookkeeping software applications or contact management software, in which programs users can easily search for a particular term, such as a last name, in a particular field, such as a last name field.

What is needed, therefore, is a method of constructing and parsing a web page so that the exact meaning and content thereof can be immediately and reliably ascertained and so that a group of web pages can be searched with field-by-field granularity.

G. Related Art: Internet Search Engine Methodology

Also, under the related art, one commercially successful methodology for searching and ranking the relevancy of web pages is that of citation ranking, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 6,285,999 to Page. This method ranks pages in part according to the number and nature of other Web pages that link to the given page. This method is not ideal in that it provides no means whatsoever for capturing the difference between a "positive" reference a "negative" reference. In other words, under this

method, a link from an article that ridicules the linked document counts just as much as a link from an article that praises the same document.

What is needed, therefore, is a ranking methodology based upon the actual opinions of the user community rather than upon hit-or-miss surrogates for these opinions.

H. Related Art: Internet Dictionary, Stylebook and Grammar Book Technology

Dictionaries, literary stylebooks, and grammar books have heretofore been the province of elite editors and academicians at publishing companies and universities. Language, however, evolves faster than such institutions. In order to speed up the pace at which such reference materials are updated, some attempts have been made to create limited-function, on-line dictionaries—such as dictionaries for computer terms—that allow user-submission of definitions, but these attempts are not ideal in that these dictionaries must still be edited by someone so that false or frivolous submissions do not get published. Such attempts, in the absence of a superior approach, would be even more futile in the more subtle areas of language, such as grammar and style.

One approach is that used in Wikipedia, an online “encyclopedia,” in which all the content is user-created and user-maintained. While the apparent democracy of such an approach seems attractive at first blush, the actual performance of such an approach is disappointing: a novice in a field can delete the work of an eminent scholar in the same field and replace this work with nonsense. Endless retaliatory deletions, re-writings, and political squabbles ensue. Meanwhile, someone trying to use the Wikipedia as a reference tool does so at his or her own risk, since the content thereof may or may not be accurate at any given time and changes from day to day.

What is needed, therefore, is an effective and efficient means by which a dictionary, stylebook, grammar book or other reference material can be created, maintained, and used as an authoritative reference tool by anyone with Internet access without the need for content-editing institutions.

I. Related Art: Web Browser Toolbar Technology

Software commonly called “toolbars”, such as the NetZero, AOL, and Yahoo Companion toolbars, whereby features are included in or added to a Web browser, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, are known. These toolbars typically feature advertisements or convenient access to a certain function, such as a Web search engine, that the given toolbar provider wishes to offer users.

One noteworthy variation on this theme is a toolbar feature used by Gain.com, which displays advertisements based upon a user’s browsing habits, such as the websites he or she visits. This approach to the toolbar is not ideal in that the toolbar essentially exists to generate ad revenue for the toolbar maker at the expense of website providers themselves. In fact, as alleged in a recent lawsuit, this toolbar mechanism may be used to display ads for competitors of the website provider whose website is being browsed. Ideally, instead of working against website providers, the toolbar would actively serve the purposes of both website providers and visitors—without requiring each individual website provider to build and distribute its own toolbar.

What is needed, therefore, is an effective and efficient means through which the toolbar serves to enable easy, direct interaction between the toolbar user and virtually any provider of a website being browsed.

J. Related Art: Additional Technologies

Computers—which term is meant to include for purposes of this document all manner of computer and telecommunication hardware and software, including CPUs, RAM, ROM,

disk drives, removable data storage media, ports, cables, routers, switches, interface devices, keyboards, point-and-click devices, wireless transmission/reception hardware, audio and video display monitors, modems, cards, power supplies, networks, networking equipment, operating systems, etc.—are known. Software comprising instructions stored on digital media whereby information is processed and steps are performed is known. Protocols for the storage and retrieval, both locally and remotely, of information using electronic devices are known. A URL (Uniform Resource Locator), a URI (Uniform Resource Identifier), a file name and a file path are known.

Markup languages (e.g., SGML, HTML, XML) and methods for accessing and manipulating markup language documents (e.g., DOM, SAX) are known, as are methods for displaying information in such documents (e.g., Web browsers, CSS, XSLT) and identifying individual vocabularies used therein (e.g., Namespaces). Database management systems (e.g., Oracle, Sybase), database query languages (e.g., SQL) and means of dynamically generating web pages which incorporate material drawn from a database (e.g., ASP, PHP) are also known. Techniques and software for mapping data from one type of database to another are known. Internet bonding and instantaneous electronic payment systems (e.g., U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/848, 639 by Harrison) are known.

Instant messaging services, such as AOL Instant Messenger, whereby a real-time or near real-time data connection is established between an Internet user and the service operator so that real-time delivery of text exchanges between users can be affected, are known.

Public recordation of information such that said information is assigned, indexed, and can be retrieved by a unique alphanumeric identifier, such as copyright registration, is known. Techniques for encoding data on paper for machine retrieval, such as bar codes and high-density bar codes (2D), are known. Means for hosting an image file and updating this image file each time the data in a database field is changed (e.g., Web Page hit counters) are known.

Third-party-beneficiary contracts are known. A “third-party-beneficiary contract” is “a contract between two or more parties, the performance of which is intended to benefit directly a third party [“one not a party to an agreement”], thus giving the third party a right to file suit for breach of contract by either of the original contract parties.” Black’s Law Dictionary, 6th edition, page 1480 (West publishing Co., St. Paul, Minn., 1990).

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Disclosed are a Universal Electronic Transaction (UET) system, method, and device comprising several subsystems and submethods/subprocesses as well as the physical apparatus of a computer network configured to execute certain steps. An entity called the UET Company is assumed to be the implementer of the UET system. Elements include:

The URLIT identifier. A “URLIT” identifier is a result of a process whereby a given URL is registered and access privileges established. The URLIT can be manipulated into multiple forms so as to serve multiple functions. It serves as a security measure to ensure that a registered user to whom a URL is registered has access to the content of the web page at the given URL, and that the party controlling the content of the web page has access to the password-protected registered user account to which the given URL is registered. The URLIT serves as a key code in relating records between databases in a relational database complex. The URLIT

serves as a transaction identifier by which auctions and other transactions can be tracked. The URLIT serves as part of file names that identify image files intended for display in association with the aforementioned web page.

UAML. The URLIT is a crucial part of a markup system called the Universal Advertisement Markup Language or "UAML." The UAML allows an Internet auction, classified ad, or other material for which indexing might be useful, such as poems or songs, to be embedded in any static web page. The resulting "UAML-enabled" web page can be parsed, UAML-tagged data extracted and imported into the fields of a relational database record, and the resulting record searched so that UAML-enabled auctions, ads, and other listings across the entire World Wide Web can be found, ranked, and analyzed with field-by-field precision.

UTU. The URLIT further enables a system and software program called a "Universal Toolbar Utility" (UTU). The UTU appears as a toolbar in a Web browser and serves to establish a data connection (push or pull) between a client computer on which the UTU is being used and the UET Company. A current URL being browsed is transmitted to the UET Company which in turn requests a file so identified. If the web page to which the URL points is properly UAML-enabled and the URL is properly registered, a variety of content can be transmitted for UTU display, including a contact or order form whereby interaction with or purchasing from a website provider directly through the UTU, processed by the UET Company, is made easy.

Userithm Search Engine. A "Userithm Search Engine" (USE) (from "user-defined" and "algorithm") allows users to design their own unique search algorithms. A "search component" is defined by a user's data input. A given methodology for the search component is selected from a menu of different search methodologies. A weight is assigned to the search component for use in combining the results of the search component with another search component. A standard for data within a field is set, along with a tolerance for variation from the standard. Search results are combined according to user-assigned weights, and a resulting rank list is returned to the user, along with a performance indicator for each search component so that the user can immediately discern which search technique is most effective for the particular case.

Lexivote search methodology. A "Lexivote" system provides a mechanism whereby a user submits an opinion regarding which website is most relevant to a word or phrase. The opinion—essentially a vote—is then used in a method of ranking search results.

Lexary. A "Lexary" is an electronic reference tool which provides access to an entry that is created and maintained by a community of users at large. Specifically, the Lexary is an on-line dictionary, thesaurus, style book, and grammar book, wherein users can submit, edit, rate, and challenge definitions of terms, grammar notes (punctuation, syntax, etc.), and style conventions for English or another language.

Uniform Terms of Use. A "Uniform Terms of Use" (UTOU) system provides a mechanism whereby a "terms of use agreement" that governs use of an individual website can be created, reviewed, maintained, and interpreted efficiently and predictably.

Universal Form Contract. A "Universal Form Contract" (UFC) system is an extension of the UTOU system into off-line settings, providing a mechanism whereby a written contract document can be created, executed, stored, and interpreted efficiently and predictably.

Universal Arbitration. A "Universal Arbitration" (UArb) system provides a mechanism whereby a UET user can make alternative dispute resolution arrangements efficiently.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 provides a flowchart of the method by which the Universal Electronic Transaction (UET) technology is created, deployed, and used.

FIG. 2 provides a diagram of the UET system and its component subsystems.

FIG. 3 depicts a diagram of the physical apparatus of the UET technology.

FIG. 4 depicts a flowchart of a method by which the UAML subsystem is created and deployed.

FIG. 5 depicts a flowchart of the process by which users of the UAML subsystem are registered and their accounts created.

FIG. 6A depicts a flowchart of a process by which UAML advertisements/listings are made available.

FIG. 6B depicts a flowchart of a URL conflict resolution process.

FIG. 7A depicts a flowchart of a process by which a URLIT is assigned to a Web address, used in an image location, and otherwise used to enable the UAML system.

FIG. 7B depicts an example URL and URLIT information associated therewith.

FIG. 8 depicts a flowchart of a process by which UAML-enabled web pages are created.

FIG. 9 depicts an example UAML-enabled web page.

FIG. 10 depicts an example of an HTML submission form whereby information can be submitted to a code generator program so that UAML tags can be automatically generated to describe the submitted information.

FIG. 11 depicts an example of an excerpt from source code of the UAML-enabled web page.

FIG. 12A depicts a flowchart of a process whereby documents submitted for use within the UAML subsystem are validated.

FIG. 12B depicts a flowchart of a UAML security check process.

FIG. 13 depicts a chart of sample data that could be described by a particular UAML tag, a "UAML type" tag, so as to identify a particular database.

FIG. 14 depicts a chart of some fields that could be contained in a record within a relational database complex for use in the UET system.

FIG. 15 depicts a diagram of extracting PCDATA within a particular element within the UAML-enabled document and inserting the data into a record in the relational database complex.

FIG. 16 depicts a diagram of some databases and relationships in the relational database complex.

FIG. 17 depicts a diagram of an effect of having content of a listing hosted on two servers, one under control of the UET Company and the other under control of the user.

FIG. 18A depicts a flowchart of a process by which images hosted by the UET Company and appearing in listings are updated when database information changes.

FIG. 18B depicts a temporal diagram of an image at a first moment in time and an image at a second moment in time.

FIG. 19A depicts a flowchart of a process whereby continuing validity of a listing is confirmed.

FIG. 19B depicts a chart of different scheduling options for executing the process in FIG. 19A.

FIG. 20 depicts a flowchart of a process for invalidating a listing.

FIG. 21 depicts a flowchart of a process for cutting short an auction.

FIG. 22 depicts a flowchart of a process for delisting a listing.

FIG. 23 depicts a flowchart of an example usage scenario.

FIG. 24 depicts a flowchart of an auction bidding process.

FIG. 25 depicts a flowchart of an auction completion process.

FIG. 26 depicts an excerpt from an example "My Registered URLs" page.

FIG. 27 depicts an excerpt from an example auction review and bid submission page related to an auction listing.

FIG. 28A is a diagram of a relationship between UAML-enabled listings under control of users and related pages under control of the UET Company, and a relationship between the listing pages and third party companies.

FIG. 28B is a diagram of an example UAML-enabled web page including a listing and various databases that include a record related to this listing.

FIGS. 28C, 28D, and 28E depict excerpts from web pages displaying data extracted from listings.

FIGS. 29 through 36 depict revenue models for the UAML subsystem.

FIG. 37 depicts an example of the Universal Toolbar Utility in use.

FIG. 38 is a flowchart of steps for using the UTU.

FIG. 39 depicts an example of the Universal Toolbar Utility in use, in expanded form.

FIG. 40A is a flowchart of a process for creation of an inventory list or wish list for display through the UTU.

FIG. 40B depicts an excerpt from an example web page hosted by the UET Company displaying lists of a given registered user's inventory lists and wish lists.

FIG. 40C depicts an excerpt from an example web submission form through which a user can modify a given inventory list.

FIG. 41 is a flowchart of the process whereby a user uses the UTU universal shopping cart feature.

FIG. 42A and FIG. 42B are diagrams depicting a one-to-one relationship between a URLIT and a UAML-enabled listing in contrast to a one-to-many relationship between a URLIT-stem and successive iterations of a document at a particular URL when used strictly for UTU purposes.

FIG. 43 is a diagram depicting a web page and databases involved in displaying information associated with the web page through the UTU.

FIG. 44 is a diagram depicting relationships between data in a shopping cart record of a UTU user and inventory lists associated with web pages under the control of other users from whom the UTU user is purchasing.

FIGS. 45 and 46 depict an example of an alternative embodiment of the UTU, configured to facilitate automatic contributions to nonprofit organizations.

FIG. 47 is a flowchart of the process through which the UTU is used to donate to nonprofit organizations.

FIG. 48 is a flowchart of the process through which the UTU is used to benefit environmentally conscious website providers and hosting services.

FIG. 49 depicts an example of the UTU in use displaying a "seal of approval" that indicates that a website provider or hosting service has met standards set by a user that has been found to be qualified to evaluate environmentally conscious business practices.

FIG. 50 is a flowchart of a process for user creation of a submission form or auction that is to be accessible through the UTU.

FIG. 51 depicts an excerpt from an example web submission form used in the creation of a UTU submission form.

FIG. 52 depicts an excerpt from an example web submission form used in the creation of an auction to be displayed through the UTU.

FIG. 53 is a flowchart of a process through which users participate in use an iTicker feature of the UTU.

FIG. 54 depicts an example of a UTU embodiment displaying scrolling iTicker headlines.

FIG. 55 depicts a chart of example UAML tags common to all listings.

FIG. 56 depicts a template for a subject-specific tag names used in the present disclosure.

FIG. 57A depicts a chart of example subject-specific tags, corresponding to the fields of the UET Company database record in a database, for use in UAML-enabled listings for collectible coins.

FIGS. 57B through FIG. 57H depict other subject-specific vocabularies.

FIG. 58 is a flowchart of a process through which variable data in dynamically generated web pages can be tagged for use within the UAML system.

FIG. 59A is a flowchart of a process through which automatic data capture hardware, such as bar-code scanners and RFID readers, can be integrated into the UAML subsystem such that listings throughout the World Wide Web can be searched for a UPC or EPC.

FIG. 59B is a flowchart of a process through which the UAML subsystem can be used through a telephone.

FIG. 59C is a flowchart of a process through which a search query can be composed and the UAML subsystem can be used through e-mail.

FIG. 59D depicts an example e-mail to be sent to the UET Company, where it is parsed and a search performed according to search criteria specified in the e-mail.

FIG. 59E depicts an example e-mail sent by the UET Company to a user in response to a query such as that depicted in FIG. 59D.

FIG. 60 is a flowchart of a process through which the Userithm search engine is used.

FIG. 61 depicts a template for web pages for use in submission of search queries under the Userithm search engine subsystem.

FIG. 62 is a flowchart of a process by which search components are defined on-the-fly in real time by a user of the Userithm search engine subsystem.

FIG. 63 is a flowchart of the Userithm search and ranking process.

FIG. 64 is a flowchart of the subcomponents search and ranking process.

FIG. 65 depicts an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user submits a Userithm search query.

FIG. 66 depicts an excerpt from a sample search submission form with predefined methodology which still allows entry of intercomponent user assigned weights.

FIG. 67 depicts a chart of different search methodologies that can be used within the Userithm search engine system.

FIG. 68A is a flowchart of the normalization process.

FIG. 68B depicts an equation whereby an overall score of a document is produced by combining weighted scores of the document under various search components.

FIGS. 69 through 71 are charts of scores of a group of hypothetical web pages.

FIG. 72 depicts a template for display of search results along with performance gauges associated with each result.

FIGS. 73 and 74 depict excerpts from example results pages including performance gauges.

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FIGS. 75 through 86 depict excerpts from alternative example submission forms through which a user may submit a Userithm search query.

FIG. 87 is a flowchart of the process whereby search components are defined in a subject specific database search.

FIG. 88 depicts an example e-mail in which a user submits Userithm search queries via e-mail.

FIG. 89 depicts an example e-mail wherein results of a Userithm search query submitted by e-mail are provided to a user.

FIG. 90 is a flowchart of a process whereby the USE subsystem is accessed via e-mail.

FIG. 91 depicts an excerpt from an example submission form through which a user can submit choices to the UET Company regarding a customized search engine.

FIG. 92 is a flowchart of a process by which a build-your-own-search-engine feature is used.

FIG. 93 depicts an excerpt from an example web page through which word-votes are submitted for use in the Lexivote search system and methodology.

FIG. 94 is a flowchart of a process through which word-votes can be obtained from users of a search engine.

FIG. 95 is a flowchart of an alternative process through which word-votes can be obtained from users.

FIG. 96 depicts a chart of options for requiring users to submit word-votes.

FIG. 97 depicts a sample weighting schedule for weighting word-votes.

FIG. 98A depicts a flowchart of a Lexivote ranking process.

FIG. 98B depicts an equation used in the Lexivote ranking process.

FIG. 99 depicts an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user can modify his or her word-votes.

FIG. 100 depicts an overview of databases and database relationships involved in the Lexivote and Lexary subsystems.

FIG. 101 depicts a flowchart of the process of creation, deployment and use of the Lexary subsystem.

FIG. 102 depicts an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user can look up a definition in the Lexary.

FIG. 103 depicts an excerpt from a sample document in which approved senses of a given term are displayed.

FIG. 104 depicts an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user may submit a new sense for consideration for approval by the user community for inclusion in the Lexary.

FIG. 105 depicts an excerpt from a sample document displaying pending proposed senses.

FIG. 106 depicts an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user may submit a sense challenge.

FIG. 107 is a flowchart depicting a process by which an authority rating of a user is calculated.

FIG. 108 is a flowchart depicting a process by which a given sense is flagged.

FIG. 109 is a flowchart depicting a process through which a choice is edited.

FIG. 110 is a flowchart depicting a process whereby a sense is approved by the user community for inclusion in the Lexary.

FIG. 111 is a flowchart depicting a sense challenge process.

FIG. 112 is an excerpt from a sample submission form through which a user can submit a query to a Lexary-enabled USE system.

FIG. 113 is an excerpt from a sample secondary selections page for use in a Lexary-integrated USE.

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FIG. 114A use a flowchart of a process whereby the Lexary-integrated USE is used.

FIG. 114B is a flowchart of a process whereby a thesaurus entry is submitted for consideration for approval by the user community for inclusion in the Lexary.

FIG. 114C depicts an excerpt from a sample document in which approved senses of given term are displayed along with a link to a document displaying thesaurus entries related to the given sense of the term.

FIG. 115 is a flowchart depicting a process whereby the UTOU system is created, deployed, and used.

FIG. 116 depicts an excerpt from an example document wherein a version of a UTOU agreement is displayed.

FIG. 117 depicts an excerpt from an example document wherein a UTOU-conforming local terms of use agreement is displayed.

FIG. 118 is a diagram of a link relationships between the official UTOUA and various other documents.

FIG. 119 is a flowchart depicting a process by which a "Registered Subscriber" model of the UTOU system is integrated with the UAML and UTU systems.

FIG. 120 depicts a sample UTU displaying that a website provider is a subscriber to the UTOU system.

FIG. 121 depicts a process whereby the UFC system is created, deployed, and used.

FIG. 122 depicts an excerpt from a sample UFC-enabled document.

FIG. 123 depicts a chart of benefits of the UFC system.

FIG. 124 is a flowchart depicting a process by which the UArb subsystem is created, deployed, and used.

FIG. 125 is a diagram depicting relationships between the UET Company and two users of the UArb system.

FIG. 126 is a diagram depicting an alternative embodiment of the UArb system that includes an insurance company.

FIG. 127 is a chart of benefits of the UArb system.

FIG. 128 is an excerpt from an example web page that displays terms of a version of a Universal Arbitration Agreement.

FIG. 129 depicts an excerpt from an example certificate certifying that a user is a participant in the UArb system.

FIG. 130 depicts an embodiment of the UTU configured to display that a given website provider is a participant in the UArb system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION WITH REFERENCE TO THE DRAWINGS

1. Preface

The Present Disclosure

As is clear from the following detailed description, the disclosed invention is a subtle and complex one, including both technical innovations and broad syntheses. Every attempt has been made to render the text highly readable, avoiding lengthy restatements of known material. Toward that end, many simple examples and specific details have been provided for the sole purpose of illustration. As will be apparent to anyone of ordinary skill in the art, the disclosed invention lends itself to rich variation and alteration, yet such modification remains within the scope of the invention. Therefore, the following embodiments of the invention do not serve to limit the claimed invention but rather to teach its generality through the use of particulars.

For instance, several new markup language techniques are disclosed below. For the sake of simplicity of explanation, certain tag names are used in depicting embodiments of the

invention. However, it should be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art that the disclosed techniques can be used with other tag and field names being substituted for the particular names used in this description, and that the invention can be implemented so as to conform to one or more sets of standards as established by the World Wide Web Consortium or other standards-making bodies. Since these standards change through time, this disclosure has been drafted to explain the invention itself without limiting the invention to any particular set of standards or currently popular conventions. Where possible, functional and descriptive names have been used so that this document can be most easily understood by the reader and can be translated easily and effectively into other spoken languages.

2. Introduction

The Universal Electronic Transaction System

Disclosed is an invention called a "Universal Electronic Transaction" (UET) system, which is to be operated by a UET Company. The UET system comprises computer hardware and software configured to execute certain steps of a disclosed UET method, which method includes both computer-implemented and human-implemented steps.

The UET system makes possible a new way of using the Internet and World Wide Web. Certain processes that were heretofore considered essential to the World Wide Web are rendered largely unnecessary, and certain inefficiencies that were heretofore considered inherent are eliminated.

Each of the four major building blocks of the UET system—namely, (I) the URLIT/UAML/UTU subsystem, (II) the Userithm/Lexivote/Lexary subsystem, (III) the UTOU/UFC subsystem, and (IV) the UArb subsystem—are modular, i.e., each building block can be successfully implemented individually without reference to the other building blocks. However, when combined to form the complete UET system, the resulting whole enjoys multiplicative advantages as the individual modules support, complement, and enhance each other.

3. URLIT/UAML/UTU Subsystem Overview

A central feature of the first subsystem is an innovation called a "URLIT" (a term derived from "URL" and "iteration"). The URLIT is a tool used by the UET Company and its customers ("users") to establish identity, security, and communication. Typically, a user requests a URLIT for use with respect to a specified URL, and this URLIT is embedded in a web page at the given URL. The URLIT, combined with the system within which it works, fundamentally alters the ways in which the World Wide Web can be used.

In order to be effective, the URLIT is described in markup language tags embedded in a web document. These tags are part of a disclosed "Universal Advertisement Markup Language" (UAML).

The UET Company parses the user's web page, and if this page meets certain requirements, it is accepted as a "listing." The listing can be virtually any type of advertisement—a personal ad, real estate ad, used car ad, want ad—and can even be an Internet auction listing.

When a listing is accepted, a record is created in the UET Company's relational database complex, and fields of the record are populated with UAML-tagged data in the user's web page.

Once the record has been created and populated, the user's listing can be easily found by other users. Other users can visit

the UET Company website and perform a search of the UET Company's databases, which includes the record associated with the given user's web page. Since the record contains individual fields corresponding to individual UAML nodes in the user's web page, the record contains much more specific information about the given user's web page than could be extracted from an HTML page that was not UAML-enabled. Thus, a search through the UET Company site is much more precise than a search through a conventional Web search engine.

One special type of listing deserves particular attention: the Internet auction. A UAML-enabled Internet auction listing displays real-time information, such as the current high bid, even though the web page itself is static. Display of this dynamically updated information is made possible by reference to image files hosted by the UET Company which are specific to the given listing and are overwritten each time the variables they represent change.

The URLIT also serves a crucial role in a disclosed "Universal Toolbar Utility" (UTU). The UTU is part of or works in conjunction with a Web browser such that, when a user is browsing a properly URLIT-enabled web page, the UTU serves as a communication conduit whereby the browsing user can view the web page provider's inventory and wish list, can purchase from the website provider, or can submit information to the website provider via a submission form—all through the toolbar known as the UTU. In this way, the UTU renders Web submission forms and Web purchase forms largely obsolete. It also makes possible a "universal shopping cart" such that purchases from many different websites can all be added to a single shopping cart, making time-consuming registration with each different website provider unnecessary and navigation to the website's purchase form or contact form unnecessary.

4. Userithm Search Engine/Lexivote/Lexary Subsystem Overview

The second subsystem provides users the power to define their own search algorithms. To achieve this effect, data input fields are grouped into clusters called "search components." In a basic embodiment, three distinct pieces of data are input by a user for each search component: (I) the term or terms to be searched, (II) a search methodology selection, and (III) a weight. Additional fields may also be included in a search component as discussed below.

When a user defines two or more search components, a separate search of the UET Company databases is performed for each component, and results of each search are scored according to the given search methodology. Then, the multiple results lists are combined into a single list according to the weights assigned to each component by the user, i.e., the results of a search under a higher weighted component have a greater effect on the final list ranking than do the results of a search under a component that has been assigned a lower weight by the user.

The Userithm search engine may also include additional fields for user input of data. For instance, users may set their own standards for a particular variable. This technique is most useful for Userithm search engine embodiments that are geared for a particular subject matter, such as real estate. For instance, in a Userithm search engine devoted to real estate, a user may assign a value of "3" to set the standard for the number of bedrooms. Units with three bedrooms score the maximum under this criterion, while units with two bedrooms or four bedrooms score lower, while units with one bedroom or five bedroom score even lower.

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Users may also set their own tolerance levels for variation from standards. Thus, the user may set, in the above example, a tolerance of plus or minus one bedroom, such that units with two, three, or four bedrooms are not filtered out of search results, but units with one bedroom or five bedrooms are.

Userithm search engines devoted to specific subject matter, such as stocks, mutual funds, vehicles, real estate, personal ads, etc., may also include intercomponent weighting fields in addition to intercomponent weighting fields.

While the Userithm system has been designed to accommodate multiple pre-existing search methodologies—as well as any methodologies developed after the time of this writing—a particular novel search methodology, called a “Lexivote” method and system, is also disclosed. The Lexivote system provides a mechanism through which users can submit a word or phrase along with a website address that the user believes is a valuable resource pertaining to that word or phrase. Then, when another user submits a search query including that word or phrase, search results are scored according to such user preference submissions or “votes” such that websites receiving more votes with respect to a particular word or term are ranked higher than websites receiving fewer votes or no votes with respect to the searched word or phrase.

To take more advantage of the Lexivote system, the UET Company may also use a disclosed method and system called a “Lexary”. The Lexary is an online reference tool—specifically, a combined dictionary, thesaurus, stylebook, and grammar book—in which entries and senses are submitted, maintained, and evaluated by the user community per disclosed processes.

5. Uniform Terms Of Use/Universal Form Contract Subsystem Overview

The third subsystem streamlines UET participation while also establishing a foundation for beneficial developments in Internet law. It should be noted, however, that it is beyond the power and scope of this document and this technology to alter statutory or case law in any jurisdiction. Thus, deployment of technologies disclosed herein does not guarantee any particular judicial interpretation.

Under a disclosed “Uniform Terms of Use” system, the UET Company hosts a web page that comprises a number of generic terms that have been established collaboratively with the legal community and the user community. A website provider can, in its own terms of use agreement, “subscribe” to the UTOU version displayed in that web page, thereby incorporating by reference the terms thereof. Having done so, the website provider needs only to articulate a handful of terms that are unique to its specific website. Visitors to the subscribing website, once they have reviewed the UTOU version referenced, need only review the site-specific terms of use. Over time, numerous beneficial effects accrue to the website provider and website user communities: legal fees are saved, time is saved, and the law governing Internet usage develops in a more cohesive, predictable fashion.

One extension of the UTOU system is a disclosed “Universal Form Contract” method and system. Under the UFC system, paper contracts are written to incorporate by reference uniform terms that are hosted online by the UET Company, again creating savings in terms of legal expense, paper usage and storage, and efficient development of case law.

6. Universal Arbitration Subsystem Overview

The fourth subsystem streamlines UET participation by offering users broad and convenient access to the benefits of

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alternative dispute resolution. Users agree with the UET Company to submit disputes to alternative dispute resolution when these disputes arise with other users who have also so agreed. External parties, such as insurance companies, can also participate in the system by offering special incentives to users who participate and thereby diminish the insurance companies’ exposure to litigation costs.

7. Subsystem Interaction

When the four subsystems are deployed together, numerous beneficial synergies arise: For instance, listings created under the UAML subsystem can be searched under the Userithm search engine subsystem; Web pages comprising these UAML-enabled listings can be provided by users who participate in the UTOU and UArb subsystems such that disputes arising out of UET usage can be handled reliably and efficiently.

8. General Introductory Drawings

The present invention may be more fully explained through reference to the drawings.

FIG. 1 provides an overview of the current invention construed as a method. Specifically, the present document discloses a four-step process: creation and deployment of the Universal Advertisement Markup Language (UAML) subsystem **101**, including major parts such as the URLIT mechanism and the Universal Toolbar Utility (UTU); creation and deployment of the Userithm Search Engine (below) **102**, including the Lexivote search methodology subsystem and the Lexary subsystem; creation and deployment of the Uniform Terms of Use (UTOU) and Universal Form Contract (UFC) subsystems **103**; and creation and deployment of the Universal Arbitration (UArb) subsystem **104**. Each of these steps is described in greater detail below.

FIG. 2 depicts an overview of the current invention construed as a system, wherein interaction between subsystems serves to produce a greater whole.

FIG. 3 depicts an overview of the current invention construed as an apparatus.

9. Detailed Description of URLIT and UAML

FIG. 4 depicts the steps necessary for creation and deployment of the UAML subsystem. As will be clear to anyone of ordinary skill in the art, the depicted steps can be performed in an order that differs from that depicted. URLIT software for processing URL submissions and assigning URLITs is developed **401** so as to execute steps depicted in FIG. 7A and exemplified in FIG. 7B. UAML vocabularies and standards for well-formed UAML and valid UAML documents of different types (“UAML listing document type definitions” or “LTDs”) are established **402**; example vocabularies appear in FIGS. 55 through 57H. A complex of relational databases needed to manage information used in the UET system is created **403**; major databases and relationships are depicted in FIG. 16. Next, a validating UAML parser and related software for mapping data extracted from UAML-enabled documents to appropriate fields in records in the UET Company’s relational databases as exemplified in FIG. 15 are created **404**.

Although it is not necessary for the UTU to be included in the UAML subsystem, the benefits of this feature are significant and desirable. If the UET Company chooses to include the UTU **407**, then software for performing functions such as those depicted in FIGS. 37 through 54 are developed **406**. An electronic payment and bonding system such as that disclosed

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in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/848,639 by Harrison (hereinafter, "Harrison bonded payment system") is developed or integrated with the remainder of the UET system **405**.

Next, internal and external interfaces for UET Company staff and the general public of users respectively are created **408**, including integration with, inter alia, the Userithm Search Engine and the EQML techniques discussed below. Thereafter, the UAML subsystem is made available to the public, and standards for the use of UAML and participation in the UET system in general are disseminated **409**. Finally, the UAML subsystem is continually improved through experience and suggestion **410**.

Usage of the UET system by the public begins with a user registration and account creation process depicted in FIG. 5. Visiting the UET Company website **501**, the user submits required information **502**, including first and last name, address, e-mail address, password, and other contact or identification information, and, presuming the submission is complete, and a new record is created in the registered user's database to establish the new user's account **503**. If the user wishes to buy and/or sell through the UET system **504**, he or she may also be required to submit financial information, such as credit card numbers, Social Security numbers, bank account information, electronic funds transfer information, and credit references, and, for larger transaction volumes, purchase a bond through a mechanism such as the Harrison bonded payment system **505**.

A process for listing an ad (e.g., an Internet auction, job listing, real estate listing, registered UTOU listing, or other listing) through the UET system is depicted in FIG. 6A. A user logs into his or her account with the UET Company **601**. If the listing is to appear at a URL that has not previously been registered to the user's UET account **602**, the user submits the exact URL of the page where the listing is to appear **603**. This URL is compared to all URLs currently registered in the UET system **604**, and if a conflicting registration exists **605**, a URL conflict resolution process is followed **606** as depicted in FIG. 6B. If the URL submitted is not currently registered to someone else **605**, the submitted URL is added to the user's account as a registered URL **607**.

Next, a unique alphanumeric character string called a "URLIT-stem" is assigned to the newly registered Web address **608**. The URLIT-stem may be randomly generated or can be the product of a predetermined URL-conversion algorithm, but no two URLIT-stems should be identical to each other.

When the user is ready to use the registered URL for a listing, the user requests a URLIT for use in the new listing **609**. The URLIT is produced by adding a serial number to the URLIT-stem **617**, and the URLIT is provided to the user **617**. The serial number added to the URLIT-stem to produce a URLIT must be unique with respect to that URLIT-stem but need not be unique with respect to other URLIT-stems. Thus, the first serial number to be applied to the URLIT-stem can simply be a "1". The second time a URLIT is requested for the same URLIT-stem, the serial number applied to the URLIT-stem can be simply "2".

Equipped with the new and unique URLIT, the user creates a UAML-enabled Web page (an HTML document) in which the URLIT is included per UAML standards **618**. The user then uploads this page to his or her website **619**. The user then logs into his or her UET Company account and submits the listing for activation **620**. An initial validation process, depicted in FIG. 12A, is followed to determine whether the listing is accepted for inclusion in the UET system **621**. If accepted **610**, a new record is created in a Central Listings Database **613**, this record including fields such as those

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depicted in FIG. 14. The UAML parser software then extracts the UAML-tagged data and maps this data to corresponding fields in the Central Listings Database and a subject-specific database that corresponds to the particular type of listing **614**, if any, specified in the listing. The subject-specific database and the LTD applicable to the listing are identified in a "UAML type" element, for which example data appears in FIG. 13. Data in UAML elements are extracted and entered into the corresponding fields in the UET Company database as exemplified in FIG. 15.

An identical copy of the page in which the new listing appears is stored in the snapshots database **615** for use in a later comparison, such as a comparison used in a process for confirming continued validity of the listing, depicted in FIG. 19A.

Since the listing appears on the user's own website, the user is free to promote the web page and listing by whatever means he or she deems appropriate, including submission of the given URL to search engines not affiliated with the UET Company **616**. In this way, the easy capturing of a static web page is combined with the power of field-by-field searching and the database-driven flexibility of dynamically generated content as described below.

FIG. 6B depicts the steps of the URL conflict resolution process. First, the user who has submitted a URL already registered to another user is notified of the conflict **631**. If the submitting user indicates that he or she wishes to contest the prior registration **632**, the prior registrant is notified of the contest **633**. Both parties may then submit evidence of their ownership rights in the URL **634** to the UET Company. The UET Company then renders its decision **635** based on the evidence submitted. If the loser accepts **636** the decision of the UET Company, the conflict has been resolved. If not, the UET Company refers the opposing parties to resolve the dispute by other means **637**. Such disputes can often be resolved by simply testing access: a person who is unable to access a given URL—by uploading a URLIT-enabled web page, for instance—is not likely to be the rightful owner thereof, especially if the opposing user does have such access. However, it is possible that two conflicting parties could have access to the same URL, a situation which renders the "access test" unhelpful.

The URLIT formation and usage process is separately depicted in FIG. 7A. First, after the user has submitted the URL of the document in which a listing is to appear, a unique identifier is assigned to this location **711**. This unique identifier is the URLIT-stem. When the user wishes to activate a listing at the URL, he or she requests a full URLIT for use in the listing; this full URLIT is created by adding a serial number to the given URLIT-stem **712**. The user then embeds the URLIT in UAML tags per UAML standards so that his or her listing can be validated and made active **713**. The URLIT also serves as a portion of the filename for any image files required for a valid document of the chosen type of listing **713**. For instance, typically five image files are required for an auction listing; the names of these five image files can simply be the URLIT plus a letter (e.g., a, b, c, d, and e). The URL of each image is used in the web page that includes the listing so that when this web page is called, the image is also served **714**. When the user decides to remove the listing and put a new listing up at the same Web address, he or she requests a new URLIT, which is created by replacing the prior serial number with the next incremental serial number **715**.

FIG. 7B illustrates the process in FIG. 7A through example. Here, an example URL has been submitted by a user **701**. A unique identifier, the URLIT-stem, is then assigned to this URL **702**. When the user requests a URLIT for use in a

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listing, a serial number is added to the URLIT-stem to produce a complete URLIT **703**. This URLIT is then, in some cases, used in the name of a unique, dynamically updated image file that resides on the UET Company's servers **704** such that the user has no control over the content of this image. In such cases, when the user creates the web page in which his or her listing is to appear, he or she includes an HTML image reference to this file **705** so that it can serve as a dynamic indicator of the current high bid, number of bids, or other variable content as described in more detail below in FIGS. **18A** and **18B**. When the user subsequently decides to reuse the given URL for publishing a different listing, he or she requests a new URLIT, which is provided **706** by replacing the serial number of the previous URLIT with the next incremental serial number. The new URLIT serves to uniquely identify the new listing.

Creation of a UAML-enabled web page can be handled in many ways, as depicted in FIG. **8**. If a user wishes to tag data by hand **801**, he or she may do so **808**. Otherwise, the user may visit the UET Company website **802** where he or she may choose **803** between downloading a UAML editor for stand-alone use on a local computer **805**, such as a laptop or desktop, or simply entering all data to be included in his or her listing into a form on the UET Company site and submitting it **804**. An example of such a submission form appears in FIG. **10**. This Web-accessible UAML generator returns a UAML-enabled web page to the user **807** by whatever means is preferred, either providing the marked up text on the Web or via e-mail. When properly submitted, UET Company software adds HTML and UAML tags to the user-submitted information so as to produce a document such as that which appears in FIG. **11**. The stand-alone UAML editor serves as a typical HTML editor with the added functionality of generating UAML tags so as to produce a UAML-enabled web page **806**. It may also include an automatic means of requesting URLITs, validating UAML documents, etc.

FIG. **9** depicts the end result of the process in FIG. **8**: a basic UAML-enabled web page as displayed in a typical browser, such as Netscape or Internet Explorer. A link **901** to the UET Company through which the UET system is made possible is provided, as well as a link **902** to the UET Company web page that corresponds to the user's listing, e.g., FIG. **27** (a listing that is not an auction will be represented on the UET site by a page that is similar to that depicted in FIG. **27** in that it displays information drawn from the UET Company database records pertaining to the given listing except that no data entry fields through which a bid can be submitted appear in the page, being unnecessary to a non-auction listing). The listing user, identified by a registered user ID **908**, has specified that payment will be processed through the UET Company **903**. A link to the web page on the UET Company site through which a bidder can place a bid is also provided; such a web page is depicted in FIG. **27**. Five URLIT enabled images—time remaining **910**, sellers feedback rating and bond margin gauge **908**, current high bidder **907**, current high bid **904**, and number of bids **905**—also appear in the listing document, along with an item description and other information. An excerpt from the source code of the web page depicted in FIG. **9** appears in FIG. **11**; such a document **1101**, as is plain, includes both HTML tags and UAML tags. The disclosed UAML system takes advantage of the standard Web browser practice of ignoring unrecognized tags, so that the UAML functionality can be added to a web page without the appearance of the page being affected.

Note that the UAML tags describe only parts of the data, namely, that which is to be extracted for replication in the UET Company databases. Thus, much of the data in the

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document is "invisible" from a UAML perspective, just as the UAML tags themselves are ignored by a Web browser when displaying this page as shown in FIG. **9**. By design, however, the data that is described within UAML tags also appears in some form in the web page as displayed by browser. UAML-tagged text is text that is also displayed as text in the browser, and the UAML-tagged image files are displayed as images in the Web browser. In other words, not all data that is relevant from an HTML perspective is relevant from a UAML perspective, but most if not all data that is relevant from a UAML perspective is also relevant from an HTML perspective in this document. Such is the preferred relationship between UAML data and HTML data; preferably, UAML tags should not include attributes, for instance. Data to be captured by a UAML parser should be visible through the Web browser so as to minimize the likelihood of a discrepancy between crucial information seen by a website visitor and that "seen" by a UAML parser. Thus, for instance, a validating UAML parser may be configured to ignore any UAML tags appearing in HTML "comment" tags, since the data within such tags may be ignored by a Web browser in displaying the document.

Since the web page **900** is hosted on the user's website—either on a computer owned and operated by the user or one which belongs to the website hosting company from which the user rents Web space—and therefore under control of the user, the user can modify the appearance of the web page **900** to suit his or her business branding needs and personal aesthetic preferences so long as the UAML standards for validity of a document are not violated. Such complete user control of the appearance of an auction listing is not possible under the related art systems in which the appearance of auction listings is set by the auctioneer.

While the web page is static, the image files serve as dynamically changing indicators by virtue of the process depicted in FIG. **18A**, producing the effect depicted in FIG. **17**. When a listing is made active **1801**, the relevant fields of the database record in the auction listings database in the UET Company relational database complex are queried to retrieve the current values of the fields **1802**. Specifically, the current high bid field, the current high bidder field, and the other fields which can change during the course of the auction are queried, and the current values of each of these fields is converted to an image file **1803**. Each resulting image is named per the URLIT filename step described above and stored at the appropriate image location **1804** so that when the user's auction listing web page is requested **1805**, these dynamically updated images are returned for display in the requesting browser **1806**.

Whenever a new bid is submitted, data in the relevant fields changes **1808**. When the data in these fields changes, these fields are queried **1802**, and a new image is created displaying the new value of the data in each of the relevant fields **1803**. The old image is overwritten with the new image **1804** using the same file name and location. The process is repeated until the listing is no longer active **1807**. For illustration, FIG. **18B** depicts an image file **1813** (e.g., jpg or gif file) which displays the value of the current high bid field at time **1**. After a higher bid has been submitted (time **2**), the value of the current high bid field changes and a new image **1814** is created and replaces the old image **1813**.

The net effect is that the features of a dynamically generated web page can be replicated through a static web page. As shown in FIG. **17**, the static web page **1701** is hosted on the user's website host servers **1704**, while each image **1702** serving as a variable real-time indicator is hosted on the UET Company's servers **1703**. This image file is overwritten with a new image at the same file location each time the informa-

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tion it portrays changes as per the process depicted in FIG. 18A. Thus, each time the static web page is requested, the latest value represented by the image is presented to the user. The user cannot control the content of the image or delete the image 1702, since it is hosted on the UET Company's servers 1703. Also, while the information appears in an image file 1702 in the web page itself 1701, the underlying data is still stored as a value by the UET Company, a more searchable form.

FIG. 12A depicts the initial validation process used during the basic listing process of FIG. 6A to determine whether the listing submission is accepted or rejected 621. Specifically, UET Company software requests the file located at the submitted URL 1201. If the page is found 1202, then the document is parsed and compared to the standards for well-formed UAML 1203, which includes syntactical requirements as well as the requirement that a URLIT be present in the document and tagged as such. If well-formed 1204, the document is then compared to the LTD for the specified type of listing 1205. If the document is valid 1206 under the given LTD, the security check process of FIG. 12B is performed 1207. If the security check passes 1208, then the registered user account of the submitting user is compared to the minimum standards for acceptance of a listing 1212. For instance, if the submitting user currently has a past due balance owed to the Company is otherwise delinquent in his or her responsibilities to the UET Company or another registered user, his or her submission will be rejected 1209. If all facets of the validation process are passed, then the listing is accepted 1210.

FIG. 12B depicts the UAML security check process used 1207 in the initial validation process of FIG. 12A. First, the URLIT appearing in the submitted web page is compared to the active URLITs in the UET Company databases 1221. If the URLIT in the submitted page is existent and active (e.g., not expired) 1222, the URLIT is compared to registered URL information in the UET Company databases 1223. If the web page in which the URLIT is being used appears at the same URL for which the given URLIT was issued 1224, then the user ID specified as that of the lister in the listing is compared to the user ID associated with the registered user account to which the URL is registered 1225. If the lister matches 1226, then the image names and locations in the web page are compared to the image names and locations associated with the given URLIT 1229 if applicable. If any security comparison fails, the security check fails 1227. If all succeed, the security check passes 1230.

FIG. 13 depicts a chart of sample data choices which may be appropriate for designation of a given type of listing in the "UAML type" element. Each of these choices typically specifies a different database within the UET Company database complex, a different LTD, and sometimes a different vocabulary that is used by valid documents of the given listing type.

FIG. 14 depicts some of the fields occurring in records of a specific database within the UET Company's relational database complex, the central listings database. These fields include the URLIT, the listing type, the user ID of the lister, etc. UAML-tagged data in a document is extracted by UET Company parsing software and input into the corresponding field in the appropriate database within the UET Company database complex as illustrated in abstract form in FIG. 15. The URLIT field may be used as the "key" field whereby records of the central listings database are related to records in other databases; the listing user field may serve as the key in other relationships.

FIG. 16 depicts the UET Company relational database complex such that primary databases and important relationships between certain databases are represented. As is plain to

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one skilled in the art, additional databases may and should be used to supplement those depicted in order to effectively serve the purposes of a given implementation of the disclosed UET system. Moreover, a limited deployment of the current system could be effectively implemented without reference to some of the depicted databases. For instance, the UET Company may not wish to serve user demand for personal ads and would therefore have no needs for a personal ads database.

FIG. 19A depicts the process by which the continued validity of a listing is confirmed. At predetermined times, such as those suggested in FIG. 19B, the URL associated with an active listing is requested 1901. If the page is found 1903, the page currently appearing at the URL is compared with the document stored in the snapshots database associated with this listing 1905. If the page cannot be found, is no longer well-formed and valid 1910, or one or more prohibited alterations have been made 1912, then the listing invalidation process depicted in FIG. 20 is followed 1911. Also, if a page is temporarily unavailable and later found but the temporary absence is considered unacceptable for the type of listing (e.g., an auction listing was unavailable during the hour prior to close) 1907, the listing invalidation process in FIG. 20 is also followed 1911. If the listing has expired (e.g., the auction has closed) 1909, then the delisting process depicted in FIG. 22 is followed 1906.

When an auction that is currently running is found to be invalid, special measures must be taken, since the contractual obligations undertaken by seller and any bidders were premised on a particular closing time, one which will not be reached when the auction is cut short. Thus FIG. 21 presents the process used in cutting short an auction. After the listing invalidation process depicted in FIG. 20 has been followed, bidders are also notified that the auction has been cut short 2101. All URLIT-enabled image files associated with the listing are overwritten with "auction cut short" notices so that any subsequent viewers can be so informed 2102. Business rules established by the given UET Company are applied regarding whether the auction can be restarted, etc. 2103.

All listings, whether delisted by the user's choice or by the UET Company for some reason, eventually go through the delisting process depicted in FIG. 22. Records pertaining to listings being delisted are marked as inactive so that they are no longer included in the records searched through user submitted search queries 2201. The lister's experience rating, such as that used in the Harrison bonded payment system, is updated to reflect any events that may have caused the delisting or may otherwise affect the registered user's experience rating 2202. The listing then enters a period of expiration during which period any image files, such as those used in an auction listing, display information indicating that the listing has closed but also displaying the final values (i.e., the winning bid) so that the parties to the auction can still refer to the images 2203. Finally, when the expiration period has ended, the listing is officially expired and the images, if any, are replaced with their final form, which can be whatever the UET Company chooses, such as a UET Company banner ad 2204. The relevant database records are deleted and archived or otherwise handled as the UET Company wishes 2204.

FIG. 23 depicts the steps that may occur in a given usage case. For example, considering the lister to be a first user, a second user wishes to search the Web 2301. The second user chooses to perform a Web search through the UET Company 2310, or the user may search through a third party website 2303. In either case, search results are returned to the second user 2308 who then clicks through to view the lister's web page including the listing 2311 which includes UAML-tagged data, although the UAML will not be visible to a

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visitor unless he or she examines the actual source text of the given web page. If the second user wishes to verify the authenticity of the listing or find out more about the lister **2313**, the second user clicks the appropriate link appearing in the web page **2316** and thereby visit the UET Company website, specifically, the dynamically generated web page associated with the given listing **2317** and incorporating certain information as stored in the UET Company databases. Thereafter, the second user interacts with the lister via the web page, by following the auction bidding process depicted in FIG. **24**, for instance, or via the UTU, e-mail, or other mechanism or process **2320**. Some actions, such as bidding, may require registration and purchasing of a bond **2321**.

FIG. **24** depicts an auction bidding process for use in the UET system. After having visited the listing page **2401**, a potential bidder clicks through to the UET Company site **2403** where he or she views a dynamically generated web page, such as the example depicted in FIG. **27**, which presents auction information as stored in the UET Company databases. Here the user reviews the auction information, and if he or she wishes to bid, the buyer registers if necessary **2405** and logs into his or her UET Company account **2409**. Presuming that the buyer is in good standing **2408**, the buyer then may submit his or her bid via a bid submission form such as that depicted in FIG. **27**, which depicts an excerpt from the dynamically generated web page that displays content from a database record associated with the listing **2701**; clearly, this web page resembles conventional Internet auction listings, since it, unlike a UAML-enabled static web page, is a dynamically generated page. Upon submission of a bid, the database record pertaining to the given auction listing is updated **2406** and images are replaced **2411** per the process depicted in FIG. **18A**. Bid confirmation notices, outbid notices, etc., and other optional processes are followed **2412**.

When the auction ends, the auction completion process in FIG. **25** is followed **2413**.

To summarize, the basic information flow for usage of a URLIT includes the steps:

- The first user submits a URL to the UET Company
- The UET Company assigns a URLIT-stem to the URL
- The first user requests a URLIT
- The Company adds a serial number to the URLIT-stem to produce a URLIT

- The UET Company provides the first user the URLIT
- The first user embeds the URLIT using UAML tags in a UAML-enabled HTML document

- The first user uploads the document such that it appears at the URL associated with the URLIT

- The first user notifies the UET Company that the listing is ready

- The UET Company requests the document at the URL
- The UET Company parses, validates, and authenticates the document

- The UET Company inputs data extracted from UAML-tagged elements in the document into corresponding fields of database records

- the UET Company notifies the first user that the listing is active

- A second user performs a search through the UET Company

- Search results are returned to the second user
- The second user requests the document containing the first user's listing

- The document (hosted by the first user's hosting service) is served to the second user, along with any URLIT-enabled images (hosted by the UET Company), as in the case of a UAML auction

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If the second user is using a UTU and the first user has created a wish list, inventory list or other UTU content, this content is made available to the second user through the UTU (see below)

If the listing is a UAML auction and the second user wishes to bid, the second user requests the UET Company site page associated with the given listing, reviews the information therein, and submits his or her bid

The URLIT-enabled images are updated to reflect the new high bid, number of bids, etc.

When the auction closes, the first and second users are notified that the transaction identified by the particular URLIT has been consummated

If the first and second user are bonded and electronic funds transfer information is correct, payment is wired from the second user's account to the first user's account instantaneously upon the close of the auction

If a dispute arises, the aggrieved user visits the UET Company site and opens a dispute claim specifying the transaction by URLIT

If the first user wishes to reuse the URL for another listing, he or she requests a new URLIT for use with the URL and process begins again

Note that this overview is meant to cover the highlights of a URLIT's lifespan. Various peripheral steps are not explicitly mentioned, such as the periodic revalidation of the UAML-enabled web page containing the user's listing, periodically updating the "time remaining" image file, etc. Additional URLIT-related processes and criteria can be established, such as automatic expiration of a URLIT after a predetermined period of time has elapsed.

Management of a user's listings is handled through the "My Registered URLs" page associated with the given user's account as depicted in FIG. **26**. Information may be displayed as shown in columns, including a URL column **2601** where each item is linked to the given URL itself; a URLIT-stem column **2602**; an active URLIT column **2603**, where each item is linked to the record in the given UET Company central listings database associated with the given URLIT; and various columns associated with the UTU described below, including the inventory list column **2604**, which displays which inventory list is assigned to the given URL; the wish list column **2605**; the UTU contact form column **2606**; and the UTU auction column **2607**.

FIG. **28A** depicts a diagram of the relationship between user-hosted UAML-enabled web pages containing listings and corresponding pages dynamically generated by the UET Company in response to browser requests. Depicted are a group of UAML-enabled pages **2803**, each of which contains an active listing. These pages **2803** have been parsed and validated by the UET Company's computers **2802**, and a record has been created in the UET Company's databases for each listing. The UET Company's databases can be searched through the UET Company's search page **2808**.

For each listing **2803** a corresponding dynamically generated page **2801** can be requested through the UET Company site. For instance, suppose that a particular web page **2803a** is an auction listing, similar to that depicted in FIG. **9**. If a visitor wishes to bid, he or she requests the corresponding page **2801** on the UET Company site, which appears similar to the page depicted in FIG. **27**.

Notice that other companies can also collect data from the UAML-enabled pages **2803**, since the markup tags can be parsed by anyone. Thus, for example, Company A may collect and store some data on its computers **2805** from some UAML-enabled pages, while Company B catalogs other pages on its computers **2806**. Each of these companies may in

turn publish data pertaining to or links to these pages through its own Company website page **2804**, **2807**. Examples of the types of web pages that could be effectively produced by third parties using information derived from UAML listings appear in FIGS. **28C** through **28E**.

FIG. **28B** presents a more detailed view of information relationships underlying FIG. **28A**. A given user's web page **2803b** is hosted by a Company C's Web server **2811**. Included in this user's web page **2803b** are a number of UAML tags **2812** describing the data in the web page (most of the HTML within which these UAML tags are embedded is not shown for the sake of simplicity of this example; see FIG. **11** for fuller context). The UET Company computers **2802** request the web page **2803b** and parse the UAML data **2812**. Security check is made with reference to the registered URLs database record **2813** pertaining to the URL of the given web page **2803b** and the given registered users database record **2814** pertaining to the registered user to whom the URL is registered. When the listing is approved, a record is created in the central listings database **2815**, a copy of the web page is stored in the snapshot database **2816**, and a record is created in the subject-matter-specific database **2817** (the coin listing database in the depicted example) and related to the central listings database record **2815** by the URLIT field. When requested, the UET Company computers **2802** serve a dynamically generated web page **2818** that incorporates the data stored in the company databases, e.g., FIG. **27**.

FIG. **28C** depicts an excerpt from a web page created by a third party, not the UET Company, that has parsed the UAML-tagged data out of various listings of a particular type, in this case, poems, that have been published by users through UAML-enabled web pages on their own websites. FIG. **28D** depicts an excerpt from another third-party-published web page, in which data has been extracted and analyzed and then published in statistical form.

Although a third party would not have the full control and security benefits of the URLIT system, it is nonetheless fully possible for a third party to parse UAML-enabled pages, index them, publish its own site and provide its own high-precision search engine. FIG. **28E** depicts an excerpt from a web page through which visitors can submit a query for such a search. Such transparency provides a significant advance over the "proprietary data" model used in the related art.

10. Revenue Models for Use with the UAML System

Several different revenue models are possible: FIG. **29** depicts a model in which listings are required to carry banner ads for which advertisers pay the UET Company **2903**. FIG. **30** depicts a model in which users pay a fee for payment processing **3003**. FIG. **31** depicts a model in which users pay a fee to search listings through the UET Company, paying either on a search-by-search basis or on a subscription basis **3102**. FIG. **32** depicts a model in which users pay a fee to list a listing either on a per-listing basis or a subscription basis **3202**. FIG. **33** depicts a model in which data gained about listings and users through the UET system is sold to third parties for research or marketing purposes **3303**. FIG. **34** depicts a model in which revenues are generated through advertising related to the search engine, either through paid advertisements thereon, payments to be included in search results, or other methods **3404**. FIG. **35** depicts a model in which sellers and/or bidders must purchase a bond through the UET Company before being allowed to place listings offering something for sale **3503**. FIG. **36** depicts a model in which access to certain UET services is contingent upon user

agreement to participate in opt-in marketing campaigns (e.g., to receive e-mail advertisements), for which advertisers pay the UET Company **3601**.

11. The Universal Toolbar Utility (UTU) Subsystem

FIG. **37** depicts a "screenshot" of an embodiment of the Universal Toolbar Utility (UTU). The UTU can be integrated into a Web browser or operated in conjunction with a Web browser. The UTU leverages the URLIT system to provide a large number of services directly through the toolbar that have conventionally been provided only through web pages.

The UTU **3701** depicted in FIG. **37** shows the URL of a web page in the address field **3702** as in a typical Web browser. Additionally, however, the user name of the site provider **3703**, the bond margin gauge **3704** corresponding to the site provider's UET Company account, and the site provider's feedback or credibility rating **3705** also appear. A link **3706** to display the given site provider's inventory list and wish list and a link **3707** to display a contact form through which the site provider can be contacted are also supplied.

In this way, several pieces of information that may or may not be available in the particular web page being browsed at a given time are nonetheless readily available through the toolbar.

FIG. **38** depicts steps whereby the UTU serves its function. A UTU user acquires and installs the UTU **3801**. As in some common forms of toolbar or instant messenger software, the UTU establishes a live data connection to the UET Company computers when the UTU user is online **3802**. The UTU transmits the URL of a web page currently being browsed by the UTU user **3803**. If the given URL is registered in the UET company databases **3804**, the document at the URL is requested, parsed, and checked for continued validity **3805**. Note that, as described below, a page need not include a listing in order to be valid for UTU purposes.

If the page is valid for UTU purposes **3806**, the additional information such as that depicted in FIG. **37** is transmitted from the UET Company computers to the UTU installed on the UTU user's computer **3807**. The user of the UTU can ignore the additional information in the toolbar and continue Web browsing as usual, or can click on one or more of the additional information links, so as to expand the toolbar **3809** and view the inventory list, wish list, submission form or other in-toolbar content associated with the given URL **3812**. An example of the expanded UTU appears in FIG. **39**. If the UTU user wishes to interact with the website provider **3811**, he or she follows the appropriate process for contacting, purchasing from, or bidding on the auction of the website provider through the UTU **3810**.

FIG. **39** depicts the UTU in expanded form. As shown, the inventory that the given website provider has associated with the given URL through the inventory/wish list creation process depicted in FIG. **40A** appears, allowing the UTU user to check those items which he or she wishes to buy and add the checked items to the UTU "universal shopping cart" through the process depicted in FIG. **41**. The total value of items currently in the UTU user's cart—items which have been added to his or her cart from other vendors' inventory lists that he or she has viewed earlier in the given browsing session—is also shown, and he or she can click the appropriate link to display the other items in his or her cart.

Also visible is a wish list that the given website provider has associated with the URL in the UET Company's databases. If the UTU user wishes to respond to the website provider's wish list, letting the website provider know that the UTU user has something that the website provider wants, the

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UTU user simply clicks the “offer your item” link to display the website provider’s contact form.

FIG. 40A depicts a process whereby a given website provider creates inventory and wish lists and associates these lists with registered URLs in the UET company database complex. The website provider logs into his or her account at the UET Company website 4001. The website provider visits the “My Inventory and Wish Lists” page 4002, an example of which is depicted in FIG. 40B. If the website provider wishes to create an inventory list 4003, he or she clicks the “create new inventory list” link to create a new record 4004 in the inventory list database and browse the “Create and Modify Inventory List” page, such as the example depicted in FIG. 40C. From this page, the website provider submits items to be included in the particular inventory list record 4005, and/or removes any items that he or she no longer wishes to sell. If the website provider wishes to create additional inventory lists 4006, the process for creating an inventory list is repeated.

If the website provider wishes to create a wish list 4007, a similar process is followed: a new record is created 4008 and items that the website provider would like to acquire are added to the wish list 4009. The process is repeated 4010 as necessary. If the website provider wishes to edit an existing list 4011, he or she can also do so 4012.

Once at least one wish list or inventory list has been created, the website provider can choose to assign the list to a URL that has been registered with the Company 4013. This is done through the “My Registered URLs” page 4014, where assignments of lists to URLs are made 4015 by clicking on the name of the list currently assigned to the given URL (or “add” if no list is assigned) to visit another submission form (not depicted) through which he or she can choose from a list of available lists.

FIG. 41 depicts a process by which the UTU user uses the universal shopping cart utility function of the UTU. The website provider registers with the UET Company, gets bonded per the Harrison bonded payment system, and provides electronic funds transfer information for a receiving account into which funds collected from buyers will be deposited 4101. The UTU user registers, gets bonded and provides payment account information, such as a credit card account, bank account, or other account from which funds to pay for purchases made through the UTU are to be drawn 4102. The website provider creates an inventory list 4103 per the process in FIG. 40A. The UTU user logs into his or her account through the UTU and uses the UTU 4104 per the process in FIG. 38. If the UTU user wishes to purchase something in the website provider’s inventory 4105, the UTU user checks the checkbox next to the item or items and clicks the “add to cart” button 4107. The selected items are then marked as “reserved” in the UET company database record pertaining to the given inventory list. When an item is reserved, it no longer is displayed when the given inventory list is displayed in the UTU but appears in the shopping cart of the UTU user who has reserved it.

If the UTU user wishes 4110, he or she can visit other websites and add more items to his or her shopping cart 4111 from other vendors unrelated to the aforementioned website provider. Thus, instead of filling out multiple purchase forms and registering with multiple web vendors, the UTU user can buy from any number of vendors through a single interface: the UTU.

When the UTU user is ready to checkout 4112 and confirm the purchases in his or her cart, he or she clicks the “checkout” button 4113, reviews a list of the items in his or her cart (not depicted), and clicks “confirm purchases”. The UTU user’s

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confirmation can be processed directly through the UTU, or, alternately, this last step of the process can be handled through a Web form on the UET Company website. Once the UTU user confirms the purchases, the amount due is charged to the payment account previously provided 4114. If the payment is not successful 4115, e.g., a credit card is declined, the UTU user is notified and instructed to contact the Company 4116. Otherwise, funds are then wired to the website provider’s receiving account previously provided 4118, minus any processing fees charged by the UET Company, etc. If the electronic funds transfer is impossible for some reason 4119, the website provider’s funds are held by the UET Company and the website provider is notified and requested to provide a valid receiving account 4120. In any case, once funds have been collected from the UTU user, the purchased item is marked “sold” and is no longer visible through the UTU nor available for purchase 4121. The website provider is then instructed to deliver the item immediately 4122. If the UTU user does not confirm his or her purchases before ending the UTU session during which they were reserved, these items are removed from reserved status so that other users may purchase them.

FIGS. 42A and 42B illustrate the difference between usage of a URLIT for UAML listings and usage of a URLIT-stem for UTU purposes. In the context of UAML listings, the URLIT serves both a security/authentication purpose and a transaction identification purpose. Thus, a given URLIT can only be used for one UAML listing. If a URL is reused for another UAML listing, a new URLIT must be used; usage of a URLIT that has already been used for a previous listing will result in rejection under the validation process depicted in FIG. 12A.

Meanwhile, however, transactions that take place through the UTU do not rely upon the URLIT as a transaction identifier. In this case, therefore, a one-to-many relationship is possible. Thus, within the context of the UTU system, a URLIT-stem can be reused for multiple iterations of a web page at the particular URL for which that URLIT-stem was generated and assigned, provided that this URLIT-stem is correctly tagged as such in the UAML embedded in the web page.

FIG. 43 depicts data relationships underlying the UTU system. The website provider’s web page 4301 hosted by the website provider’s computers 4304 includes embedded UAML tags identifying a URLIT-stem 4302. The UTU 4303 transmits the URL being browsed by the UTU user to the UET Company’s computers 4305. This URL is compared to the registered URLs in the registered URLs database, and provided that there is a match and that the URLIT-stem in the website provider’s web page is the URLIT-stem assigned to the registered URL in the registered URL database record 4306, the inventory list or wish list from the inventory database or wish list database associated with the given URL is retrieved from the inventory and wish list database record 4307 and transmitted to the UTU 4303. The UTU user clicks to expand it and thereby view the inventory and/or wish list(s) that the website provider has associated with the URL.

FIG. 44 depicts the data relationships between the various inventory lists that various website providers have assigned to registered URLs and the shopping cart that the UTU user uses to purchase from these website providers all through the same shopping cart vehicle hosted by the UET Company. The UTU universal shopping cart feature eliminates the need to register with individual website providers, to go through a different checkout process with each website provider, or otherwise undergo redundant steps. Avoidance of such redundancy not only saves time and makes online shopping easier, but, in

reducing the number of separate site registrations and purchase transactions, minimizes the risk of improper usage of users' personal information, such as identity theft.

The UTU user visits a first website and through the UTU views the associated inventory list **4401**, adding an item to his shopping cart **4402** as per the process depicted in FIG. **41**. Then the user visits a second website and adds another item to his shopping cart **4402** from the inventory list **4403** associated with the second site. The user then visits a third website, views the inventory list **4404** associated with the given URL in the UET company database complex, and adds another item to his or her shopping cart **4402**. Since both the inventory lists and shopping cart are hosted on the UET Company's computers **4405**, when it is time to checkout, the UTU user can simply checkout but a single time and purchase thereby multiple items from multiple vendors.

FIG. **45** depicts an alternative embodiment of the UTU. This toolbar, geared toward the promotion and financial support of nonprofit institutions, provides both a "Site Provider Supports" field **4501** and an "I Support" field **4502**. Participation in this mechanism is accomplished on the part of the website provider by way of a process depicted in FIG. **47**. The UTU user, meanwhile, selects the organization that he or she supports directly from the UTU itself, which displays a pop-up menu **4601** for the "I Support" field as depicted in FIG. **46**. The options available in the "I support" field are the names of the organizations that have successfully activated a record in the donees database through the process depicted in FIG. **47**. The UTU user can select his or her preferred donee from the pop-up menu, and a portion of the proceeds from his or her purchases through the UTU goes to whichever donee is the selected donee at the time the given user checks out.

FIG. **47** depicts a process by which a donee database record is created and activated, the website provider designates a donee for UTU sales, and the UTU user designates a donee for UTU purchases. A nonprofit organization logs into its account at the UET Company **4701** and provides evidence of its nonprofit status, qualification as a 501(c)(3) corporation, etc. If the UET Company staff determines that the nonprofit organization is qualified **4703**, a new record is created in the donees database **4704**, the nonprofit organization is notified, and the nonprofit organization is requested to provide additional information as required in the new record **4705**, such as electronic funds transfer information. If all required information is submitted **4706**, the nonprofit organization's record in the donee database is made active **4707**.

The website provider logs into his or her UET Company account, and if he or she wishes to have a portion of the proceeds of sales conducted through the UTU donated to a qualified nonprofit, selects a donee from the active donees **4708**. As discussed in reference to FIG. **46**, the UTU user can also select a donee from the active donees **4709**. Thereafter, a portion of proceeds from sales and/or purchases conducted through the UTU are donated to the registered nonprofit user or users designated by the website provider, UTU user, or both **4710**. Business rules established by the UET Company can fix the percentage of the transaction value donated, or the registered user account of a given donor can provide a field wherein a percentage is set by the donor correctly.

Business rules established by the UET Company can also provide that donors are charged for donations or an alternate scheme can be established, such as absorption of some or all of the cost of the donation by the UET Company, or matching of donations by the UET Company or by a third party **4711**. The tax deduction is treated according to applicable law.

FIG. **48** depicts a process whereby a "seal of approval" can be displayed by the UTU when environmentally friendly

websites are being viewed. An "eco-user" who wishes to be approved as an "eco-operative" logs into its UET Company account **4801** and applies to be an eco-operative **4802**. This application includes demonstration that the eco-user, such as a nonprofit or governmental agency, is competent to determine whether a website provider adheres to particular environmentally friendly standards. If the UET Company staff determines that the eco-user is qualified **4803**, a new record is created in the eco-operatives database **4804**, and the fields of the record are populated with information pertaining to the eco-user.

Thereafter, a website provider logs into its UET Company account and applies for a seal of approval from the eco-user **4805**. The eco-user then investigates the relevant practices of the website provider or the host of the website provider's website **4806**. If the provider or its website hosting service meets the requirements for the given eco-user's seal of approval, the relevant URL or URLs are added to the given eco-user's approved list **4807**. Then, when a UTU user visits the approved web page(s), the UTU displays the eco-user's seal of approval **4808** as demonstrated in FIG. **49**.

FIG. **49** depicts a UTU embodiment that includes the eco-operative seal of approval feature. As shown, a "Solar-Powered" icon appears in the toolbar, indicating that the given URL is controlled by a website provider or hosted by a website hosting service that has been approved by the eco-user who offers the "Solar-Powered" seal of approval.

As demonstrated above, a wish list or inventory list can be created for display through the UTU when a given URL is being browsed by a UTU user. FIG. **50** depicts a process by which contacts form or auction can alternately be created for display in the UTU. The website provider logs into his or her account at the UET Company **5001** and visits an "In-toolbar options" page **5002**, where he or she can choose to create an in-toolbar submission form **5003** or in-toolbar auction **5004**. If the website provider chooses to create a submission form, a new record is created in the in-toolbar submission forms database **5005** and the website provider specifies fields to be included in the submission form **5006** through a submission form such as that depicted in the example in FIG. **51**. If the website provider chooses to create an in-toolbar auction **5004**, a new record is created in the in-toolbar auctions database **5007** and the website provider provides information pertaining to the auction **5008** through a Web submission form, depicted in the example in FIG. **52**. Finally, as with wish lists and inventory lists, the website provider then visits the "My Registered URLs" page and designates which URLs will allow display of the auction **5009**. The contact form, however, will display through the UTU any time the "e-mail [user name of website provider]" link is clicked in the UTU. Alternately, this link can be a conventional "mail to" link, of which the e-mail address is that which the website provider designates, or a link to a Web submission form hosted on the UET Company site. If an in-toolbar contact form is used, the submission is processed through the UET Company servers and forwarded to the website providing user at the e-mail address associated with the website provider's registered user account.

FIG. **53** depicts a process by which another optional feature is used. The "iTicker" is a UTU function to which UTU users can subscribe so as to be presented with scrolling headlines that are provided by a chosen source. These headlines can be provided by any approved iTicker provider, and are especially well-suited for distribution of information to members of long-standing group affiliations, such as school alumni, club members, church members, and enthusiasts (sports team fans, etc.).

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An iTicker provider logs into his or her account at the UET Company **5301** and applies for iTicker provider status **5302**. This application may require demonstration of affiliation with the particular group to which the proposed iTicker headlines and content will be directed, i.e., if an iTicker provider wishes to provide headlines for alumni of a particular school, the UET Company may require the iTicker provider to demonstrate its official capacity to represent that school. If the iTicker provider is approved for iTicker provider status **5303**, a new record is created in the iTicker provider's database **5304** and the iTicker provider inputs headlines and URLs to be associated with these headlines into the iTicker provider record **5305**, which can be maintained and updated as often as the iTicker provider wishes so as to keep the content fresh. Although not necessary, the UET Company may wish to require that the URL associated with a given headline be the address of a web page that is properly UAML-enabled so as to be a valid "news" UAML listing **5306**.

After the iTicker subscription has been made available **5307**, the UTU user can subscribe to the given iTicker provider's iTicker **5309** such that when the UTU is in use, the iTicker headlines provided by the iTicker provider are displayed in the UTU in scrolling form and can be clicked if the UTU user wishes to view the article associated therewith **5310**. FIG. **54** depicts a UTU embodiment with iTicker function **5401**.

FIG. **55** depicts a chart of example UAML tags or elements common to virtually all listings, including one element identifying the UAML markup language (or namespace, if XML is to be used to implement the invention); an element declaring the LTD/type of listing; one describing the URLIT; one identifying the UET Co. through which the listing is to be processed (more than one UET Co. may exist), inc. a child element link (in HTML) to the UET Co.; and one describing the lister's user ID. Some elements are to contain only PCDATA; others should contain both prescribed data (e.g., "Seller:") and one or more child elements, including HTML elements to be captured for validation purposes, e.g., to verify that the lister ID links to UET Co. page associated with lister's UET account or that a proper image reference to URLIT-enabled image exists. Such validation of HTML elements (to appear in UAML "phrase" elements) is crucial to insure that listings display in browsers per UET standards. These common elements can only appear once in a valid UAML listing document, and omission or deviation from mandatory content (URLIT, link, etc.) is fatal to listing approval.

FIG. **56** depicts an abstract template of nomenclature used in figures pertaining to subject-specific vocabularies. Specifically, for this disclosure, each tag begins with "UAML" to denote that the tag element pertains to the present invention; a different name may be used in a given implementation. Each tag then names a subject-specific database which, in addition to the central listings database, is to store information extracted from UAML-described elements. For instance, a coin listing involves a record in the central listings database and a record in the coin listings database, the subject-specific database. Finally, each subject-specific tag includes the field name into which data described by that tag is to be entered.

FIG. **57A** depicts a chart of an example subject-specific tag vocabulary for use with collectible coin listings. FIG. **57B** depicts such a vocabulary for car listings. FIG. **57C** depicts such a vocabulary for real estate listings. FIG. **57D** depicts such a vocabulary for job listings. FIG. **57E** depicts such a vocabulary for personal ads. FIG. **57F** depicts such a vocabulary for book listings, which, preferably, rely primarily upon the ISBN of the given book for easy and reliable grouping and

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indexing, since book names and other identifiers may be often misspelled; notice that the database in these tags is called "ISBN listings" so as to distinguish from "ISBN reviews", a database and listing type for book reviews. FIG. **57G** depicts two separate vocabularies, one for product listings which rely primarily upon the EPC of the given product, another for product listings which rely primarily upon the UPC of the given product for easy and reliable grouping and indexing, since product names and other identifiers may be often misspelled.

FIG. **57H** depicts such a vocabulary for use in a listing for a lending institution. This vocabulary includes a special tag for use with web pages that include dynamically generated, variable content, the tag that includes the "Dyn" letters. Data described by this tag is not stored by the UET Company. Rather, when a search is done on this field, the data is looked up from the listing page itself in real time. In this way, the UAML technology, designed to enhance the functionality and searchability of static web pages, can also be used to search dynamically changing pages more effectively than the related art allows. This approach allows data that changes rapidly, such as interest rates offered by a lender, to be looked up for current values each time such is necessary.

FIG. **58** depicts the process of using UAML in dynamically generated pages.

Search results can also be obtained using nontraditional means of submitting search queries. FIG. **59A** depicts the process through which automatic data capture hardware, such as a bar-code scanner or RFID reader, can be used to perform a search of UAML enabled listings throughout the entire World Wide Web. First, the automatic data capture mechanism, coupled to a computer including a computer monitor, is used to scan a product for its RFID tag or bar-code number, a UPC or EPC number **5901**. This information is submitted to the UET Company, and a search is then performed in the appropriate field of the appropriate database **5902** on the given identification number. These results are then returned to the user **5904** in the form of a hypertext document that includes links to listings for the given identified product.

The barcode reader can also be used in an alternative embodiment (not shown) optimized for real estate. A URLIT can be encoded in barcode form, placed on a "For Sale" sign that is installed at a property, and then scanned by an interested party. The listing associated with the URLIT is then looked up for more information on the property.

FIG. **59B** depicts the process through which a telephone can be used to perform a search of UAML-enabled listings throughout the entire World Wide Web. A user calls a telephone number dedicated to this purpose and, when prompted, enters the ISBN number of a book for which he or she wishes to search **5911**. Menu options the UET Company wishes to offer, such as sorting preferences, can also be selected **5911**. A search is then performed in the ISBN listings database and the results are ranked according to the user selected preferences, if any **5912**; default ranking is by price in ascending order. Text-to-speech technology is then used to read the nine top results to the user, each result (book title, price, seller ID) being identified by a digit **5913**. If the user wishes to purchase **5914**, he or she enters the digit corresponding to the results desired. The user then enters his or her user ID and personal identification number, etc., and confirms the purchase **5915**. The sale is processed as other sales, with funds being drawn from the buyer's payment account and funds being wired to the seller's receiving account, the seller being notified by e-mail of the sale, etc. **5916**.

FIG. **59C** depicts the process through which an e-mail can be used to perform a search of UAML-enabled listings

throughout the entire World Wide Web. First, the e-mail, using the disclosed markup language called "EQML", is written per the process depicted in step box 5921. The e-mail is then e-mailed to the UET Company at an e-mail address dedicated to this purpose 5922. The EQML text in the e-mail is then parsed and a search performed according to the criteria specified in the UAML-enabled e-mail 5923. The results for each search query defined in the user's e-mail are then e-mailed back to the user 5924. An example of an EQML-enabled e-mail 5931 appears in FIG. 59D. Note the structure of an EQML document: the EQML language (or root element, or namespace, where applicable) is specified, and then each separate query is defined in a separate element. Each query element includes child elements such as: an ID number element that identifies one query as opposed to other separate queries in the same document; a database element; an element specifying the field to be searched and the search string; an element specifying the field by which results should be sorted; an element specifying the sort order; an element specifying the number of results desired. Additional or alternative tags can be used; some elements can be omitted and default values used.

FIG. 59E depicts an e-mail from the UET Company to the UET user in which the results of the queries submitted by the e-mail depicted in FIG. 59D are provided to the submitting user.

12. Userithm Search Engine (USE) Subsystem

The Userithm search engine (USE) system allows a user to design his or her own search algorithm in real time, on-the-fly. Although the USE system can be used with a wide variety of databases and database content, including databases of articles, court cases, statutory law, patents, dictionary or thesaurus entries, business records, etc., the illustrative case of the World Wide Web is used herein to demonstrate the function and benefits of the USE system. Specifically, the USE system disclosed herein represents a superior technique for locating relevant documents in response to a search query by a user attempting to find information on the World Wide Web.

FIG. 60 depicts an overview of the process through which the user uses the Userithm search engine. The UET Company provides a search page through which clusters of information, called "search components," can be input by the user and transmitted to the UET Company. The user accesses the search function by visiting the search page on the UET Company website 6001. The user then defines one or more search components per the search component definition process 6002 and submits his query 6003. A search, including a separate search for each search component as described below, is performed and results are ranked according to the search and ranking process 6004. Results of the search are provided to the user 6005 along with gauges of the performance of each result under the individual search components 6006. The user can then view the search results and performance gauges and refine his or her search as necessary. A wide variety of additional steps can also be performed as described below.

FIG. 61 depicts an excerpt from a web page including a Web submission form whereby the user search query can be submitted. Included are three "search components" 6105a, 6105b, and 6105c. Each search component includes a weight field, a search term field, and a search methodology field. For instance, in search component A 6105a, a field is provided wherein a user can enter a weight 6102, a word or group of words to be searched 6103, and a selection 6104 from radio buttons provided in the depicted search methodology menu.

The process for defining search components through an interface such as the various example submission forms disclosed herein is depicted in FIG. 62. Provided that a search methodology selection is available 6201, the user selects the methodology from the given search methodology menu 6202 for the given search component. Provided that usage of a search term is applicable 6203, the user provides a search term or terms for the given search component 6204. Provided that intracomponent weight assignments are applicable 6205, the user provides intracomponent weights for subcomponents of search components 6206. Provided that intercomponent weights are applicable 6207, the user sets a weight for the given search component 6208. If ideal-setting is allowed 6209 as in the search interface depicted in FIG. 80, the user inputs an ideal 6210 pertaining to the given variable. Provided that the given search component allows user input of tolerances 6211, the user inputs a tolerance pertaining to the given ideal 6212. If the user wishes to define more search component 6213, the process is repeated 6214 for each search component. Once all search components have been defined 6215, the search is ready for submission.

FIG. 63 depicts an overview of the search and ranking process. If a given search component is "compound"—meaning that it contains subcomponents 6301, which are individual searches to be performed and then combined to establish the score of a document under the compound component—then the subcomponents search and ranking process is performed first 6302 and for each other compound search component 6303. If the search contains a simple component 6304, then a separate search is performed for each simple component 6305 under the algorithm described by the user-input criteria of that search component, i.e., the selected methodology, terms, etc. Each separate search component therefore yields a separate raw score list 6305. Each individual raw score is then normalized 6306 to a single scale, such as 0 to 100, where 0 represents the lowest performing page and 100 represents the highest performing page under the given search component, thereby producing a normalized score for each document for each search component. Normalization is accomplished through a process depicted in FIG. 68A. Each normalized score is then multiplied by the user-assigned weight for the given search component 6309, and the weighted values assigned to each page under each search component are combined to yield a single overall score 6309. Results are then ranked according to their scores.

FIG. 64 depicts the subcomponents search and ranking process. An individual search is performed according to the specified or default methodology for each subcomponent 6401, yielding a raw score for each document for that subcomponent. Results for each subcomponent are then normalized 6402. The normalized results under each subcomponent are multiplied by the weight assigned to the given individual subcomponent 6403. The process is repeated for each other subcomponent 6404. The resulting weighted values are combined to form a single overall score for each document 6405. The overall scores for each document are then normalized again 6406 and then multiplied by the weight assigned to the whole compound component by the user 6407.

FIG. 65 depicts an example of a primary USE submission page, where "primary" means that the depicted interface provides only the fields necessary for simple search component definition; no compound components appear in this particular search definition interface. In the depicted example, the user has assigned a weight of "50" to the first search component, a weight of "10" to the second search component, and a weight of "10" to the third search component. The user-provided search term of the first search component is the word "guitar."

The search methodology selected by the user for this first component is “pay-for-placement,” a search methodology under which pages are ranked according to the amount bid by an advertiser, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 6,269,361 to Davis.

The user has also input the term “guitar” as the search term for the second search component, but has selected the “links to” methodology for this search component. The links to methodology ranks pages according to the number of link citations to the given page, as per the methodology depicted in U.S. Pat. No. 6,285,999 to Page, or a similar interconnectedness-based ranking methodology.

The step of selecting a methodology can be broken out such that a user first selects a methodology and then inputs search terms and weights; FIG. 66 depicts a submission form for use in such an embodiment.

FIG. 67 depicts a chart of example search methodologies that can be offered as options in the search methodology menu available to each search component. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but simply illustrative.

FIG. 68A depicts the process of normalizing the scores of items being ranked to a single scale (0 to 100 in this case). Normalization is necessary so that scores from separate searches can be combined in a meaningful way.

The score of a page A according to the present invention can be defined, as depicted in FIG. 68B, as

$$r_1(A) = w_1(r_2(A)) + \dots + w_{n-1}(r_n(A))$$

where $r_1(A)$ is the overall score of page A; $r_2(A), \dots, r_n(A)$ are the normalized scores of A under each individual search component; and w_1, \dots, w_{n-1} are the weights individually assigned to each search component by the user.

This formula is applied in the examples depicted in FIGS. 69 through 71. FIG. 69 provides an example of a normalized score list and a resulting weighted score list of a hypothetical set of ten pages under a hypothetical first search component with a user assigned weight of “50”, such as the first search component depicted in FIG. 65. FIG. 70 depicts an example of a normalized score list and a resulting weighted score list of the hypothetical set of 10 pages under a hypothetical second search component with the user assigned weight of 10, such as the second search component depicted in FIG. 65. FIG. 71 depicts a final ranking of these ten pages, wherein the weighted value of each page under the first search component is combined with the weighted value of that page under the second search component to produce a final value, the score of the given document. Documents are ranked according to their scores as depicted in the overall rank list in FIG. 71.

In order to maximize the utility of allowing users to define their own search algorithms, users may also be provided with immediate feedback on the performance of the search components they have designed. FIG. 72 provides a template for such a feedback mechanism. In this abstract search results page, a first column from the left displays the URLs of ranked documents in order of their overall rank. A next column displays document scores under the first search component’s search criteria. Another column displays document scores under the second search component’s search criteria. Another column displays document scores under the third search component’s search criteria, and so on.

FIGS. 73 and 74 depict the search component gauge in an example usage. Referring to FIG. 73, a URL 7301 of a document is displayed in the first column; the rank of the document under the first search component is displayed in the second column 7302; and the rank of the document under the second search component is displayed in the third column 7303. Referring to FIG. 74, an example results page geared specifically for searching auctions, gauges of the performance of

each document under certain subcomponent searches are displayed. For instance, in a search where the user has allotted some weight to longevity and feedback scores of sellers, ranks of the sellers of the searched items under these criteria are provided, specifically, the longevity ranking 7401 and the feedback ranking 7402 (different from a feedback rating) of a given seller.

FIG. 75 depicts an excerpt from an example web page containing a Web submission form through which an advanced USE search can be performed, “advanced” referring to a USE embodiment which provides one or more compound search components. The embodiment in FIG. 75, optimized for use with an Internet auction system, provides two simple search components as well as a group of subcomponents that together form a third “compound” search component, “compound” signifying that a search component is enabled for processing that occurs at the intracomponent level—between subcomponents—prior to processing at the intercomponent level. Specifically, as depicted, a number of fields are provided into which a user can put a weight on a particular attribute associated with a seller or item in an auction environment, such that the weight is used to place relative importance upon one subcomponent as opposed to another subcomponent. Thus, for instance, in the depicted example, the user has input a weight of 10 into a “bonded or insured” field 7501, a weight of 5 in a “feedback total” field 7502, and a weight of 10 in a “feedback ratio” field 7503, thereby establishing the relative importance of search results obtained under searches performed for these three subcomponents relative to each other.

FIG. 76 depicts an example of a compound search component that includes subcomponents optimized for searching stocks. As depicted, this advanced USE allows user entry of an individual weight for each subcomponent. Thus, a user can assign the relative emphasis to be placed upon the results of each search under one subcomponent relative to the results under other subcomponents. Note that a user does not have the option of selecting a search methodology for each subcomponent; the search performed under each subcomponent is performed according to a default methodology that is specific to that subcomponent, e.g., a “book value” subcomponent searches records pertaining to stocks and scores them according to book value; a “P/E ratio” searches stock records and scores them according to price-earnings ratio. The user simply defines which variable is more important to him or her.

FIG. 77 depicts an alternative embodiment of a compound search component optimized for searching bonds, including subcomponents with default methodologies for ranking bonds by grade, interest rate, etc.

FIG. 78 depicts an alternative embodiment USE optimized for searching mutual funds, including subcomponents with default methodologies for ranking mutual funds according to their performance over different time periods.

FIG. 79 depicts another alternative embodiment USE optimized for searching mutual funds, including subcomponents with default search methodologies for ranking mutual funds according to the types of assets in which the given mutual invests.

FIG. 80 depicts a “level 2” advanced USE. In a level 2 advanced USE, the subcomponents can be assigned not only a weight but also an ideal, i.e., a value that sets the standard against which other values are measured within the given subcomponent’s search results. For instance, a user may assign a value of “3” to set the standard for the number of bedrooms. Given this value as the standard, units with three bedrooms score the maximum under this subcomponent, while units with two bedrooms or four bedrooms score lower,

while units with one bedroom or five bedrooms score even lower. Meanwhile, emphasis on search results from this subcomponent relative to those from other subcomponents is established by user-assigned weight.

FIG. 81 depicts a level 2 advanced USE embodiment optimized for searching job listings. Here, the user sets his or her ideal value for numbers of hours of work per week, for instance, and available positions are ranked under a "hours per week" subcomponent according to how close each listed position comes to the user's ideal. Intracomponent weighting is again performed according to weights input by the user.

FIG. 82 depicts a level 2 advanced USE optimized for searching an automobile ad database, again providing data entry fields through which a user can assign an ideal and a weight to a given subcomponent. In this particular example, a field is also included whereby a user can submit an e-mail address where search results can be sent.

FIG. 83 depicts a variation of the level 2 advanced USE embodiment that provides two search components having subcomponents, optimized for searching a personal ads database. In this example, the results from each of two depicted compound components can be weighted relative to each other. Specifically, a given record is ranked according to each subcomponent in a "physical traits" compound component and these results are weighted and combined to produce a single score for that compound component. The same is done for a "personal traits" compound component. Then the result of the physical traits component is combined with the result of the personal traits component according to the user assigned weights of each compound component so as to produce a single overall score for the given record.

FIG. 84 depicts a level 3 advanced USE. In a level 3 advanced USE, not only can a weight and an ideal be assigned to a subcomponent, but also a tolerance level with respect to variation from the ideal can be assigned. The tolerance level essentially serves as a filter mechanism as opposed to a scoring mechanism. In other words, records falling outside of an acceptable level of variation get no score under the search component. Alternately, at the choice of the given UET Company, records that exceed the tolerance set by the user can be excluded from search results altogether.

In either case, the syntax a user uses to enter a tolerance level that can be properly processed can take whatever form the UET Company chooses to support. For instance, the tolerance level can be specified using a percentage accompanied by a plus (+) or minus sign (-); an integer that simply indicates how many units away from the ideal threshold an item can fall before exclusion; a greater than/less than relationship; or any other relative or absolute indicator that will serve to establish a meaningful boundary for acceptable variation.

Thus, in FIG. 84, a search algorithm input form is depicted that includes two simple search components, A and B, and one compound search component, C. The compound search component provides subcomponents whereby searches on language, length, author rating, publication rating, and freshness of an article can be defined. Each subcomponent provides a data entry field for ideal, weight, and tolerance assigning for the given subcomponent. As shown, for the length subcomponent, the user has input "+50%/-5%" to indicate a willingness to accept articles that are up to 50 percent longer than the user-established ideal length (400 words in the depicted example) and down to 5 percent shorter than this ideal length. The user has entered a "0" in the tolerance field for author rating to indicate that no variation from the ideal is acceptable in this subcomponent. The user has entered a "+" in the tolerance field for the publication rating to indicate that variation of any magnitude is acceptable provided that this

variation is positive, i.e., values greater than the user-established ideal are acceptable and values less than the ideal are not.

FIG. 85 depicts a variation of the level 2 advanced USE in which one search component, labeled "must have", serves as a filter, while the second component, labeled "prefer to have", serves to rank results that have passed through the filter. The particular example is a USE optimized for searching airline flights.

FIG. 86 depicts a primary USE with but a single field. This particular embodiment, of course, is attractive for its simplicity. Rather than having separate fields for selection of a search methodology and input of user-assigned weights and search terms, all three characteristics of a simple search component are input using operators that are parsed by the UET Company computers after submission by the user.

Thus, in the depicted example, the first search component is defined via two main parts: (I) a search term ("fingering") and (II) some information in parentheses. The information in parentheses identifies a search methodology to be used in the search under the given search component and a weight to be assigned to results of the given search component relative to other search components. Specifically, a number appears first and then is separated by a comma from a methodology selection. Thus, following the first search term in the depicted example is the information "(25, linksto)". This information puts an intercomponent weight of "25" on the first search component and selects "linksto" as the search methodology for the first search component. Two more search components as input by the user are included in the depicted example.

13. USE Subsystem

EQML Integration

FIG. 88 depicts an example of an e-mail through which a USE query can be submitted to the UET Company, thereby providing the same power and flexibility afforded by the submission form embodiments depicted above while using e-mail as the submission medium. As depicted, EQML tags are used to denote a database to be searched, a search methodology for each component, an intercomponent weight for each component, a search term for each component, and so on.

FIG. 89 depicts an example of an e-mail returned to the UET user by the UET Company in response to a search query submission submitted by an e-mail such as that depicted in FIG. 88. Results are returned to the user, including the Web address of each result and performance gauge information pertaining to each result.

FIG. 90 depicts the process by which e-mail is used to tap the USE subsystem.

14. USE Subsystem

The "Build-Your-Own Search Engine" Feature

FIG. 91 introduces an extension of the USE concept: the "Build Your Own Search Engine" system. FIG. 91 depicts an excerpt from a sample web page that includes a Web submission form through which a user can select features to be included in a search engine interface that the user can then embed in his or her own website. The search itself is still conducted through the UET Company computers, but the user can pick and choose what features will be included in the particular search engine interface.

Specifically, the user follows the process in FIG. 92: First, the user chooses which UET Company databases are to be searched **9201**. Next the user selects the number of simple search components that are to be offered **9202**. The user then selects which search methodologies are to be available for use with each simple search component **9203**. The user then chooses how many, if any, compound components are to be offered **9205**. The user then chooses which subcomponents are to be included in each compound component **9206**. The user then specifies whether intercomponent weighting **9207** is to be offered (if not, then each search component is equally weighted), and, if compound components are used, whether intracomponent weighting **9208** is to be offered. If compound components are being used, the user indicates whether ideal setting is to be offered **9209** and whether tolerance setting is to be offered **9210**. The user then specifies whether results are to include search component performance gauges **9211**. Once the form has been submitted, the HTML to be included in the web page where the user is to host his or her submission form is e-mailed or otherwise provided to the user **9212**. Queries submitted through the user's submission form are then processed by the UET Company as normal **9213**.

15. USE Subsystem

Lexivote Rankine Methodology

Allowing users to design their own algorithms and manipulate the power of multiple search methodologies, as demonstrated above, is a powerful tool. However, the power of the USE can be even more fully realized when combined with a more powerful relevancy ranking methodology than the related art provides.

The Lexivote ranking methodology essentially allows a search engine user to interview millions of other users to find documents most relevant to his or her query. Specifically, a database of "word-votes" is created, then populated over time through user input, and then searched in response to a search query so as to provide the most relevant documents pertaining to the term or terms searched.

A word-vote, in its simplest form, is a pairing of two data: (I) a word datum and (II) a URL datum. Thus, a given word-vote could be a group such as "music" and "http://www.performer.org". A word-vote database record, in its simplest form, has two corresponding fields: the word datum field and the URL datum field.

Word-votes are cast one at a time by individual users. Specifically, the user inputs a word and inputs a URL that he or she believes to be the URL of the best resource pertaining to that word.

A query for use in the Lexivote system is, in its simplest form, a word. When a query consisting of a word is submitted for a search under the Lexivote methodology, the word-vote database is searched for matching word-votes. A matching word-vote is a word-vote record in which the word datum in the word-vote vote matches the query word.

Results of the search are ranked using matching word-votes. In its simplest form, the score of a document A under a Lexivote search according to the present invention is

$$r(A)=m$$

where $r(A)$ is the score of the document A and m is the number of matching word-votes in which the URL is the same as the URL of document A.

Thus, for instance, assume that users have cast exactly 1000 word-votes in which "music" is the word, and, of these 1000 word-votes, exactly 7 of them contain "http://www.per-

former.org" as the URL. When a query on the word "music" is submitted, there are 1000 matching word-votes, and the score of the document appearing at the URL <http://www.performer.org> under the submitted query is 7.

Complexity and subtlety can be added to the process quickly. For instance, the word datum in a word-vote can be a phrase or almost any character string rather than just a single word. A word-vote can include more than one URL-datum field, such that there can be a one-to-many relationship between the word/phrase datum and the URLs associated with this datum in a single word-vote database record.

In such a one-to-many word-vote, the URL data fields can be weighted such that a user puts his or her favorite URL in first, his or her second favorite URL in second, and so on. Then, instead of the score of the document being simply the number of matching votes that include the URL of the document, such matching votes are weighted according to the priority of the given URL in each matching vote. Greater weight is assigned to the first URL than to the second URL, and greater weight is assigned to the second URL than the third URL. A formula for scoring under such an approach appears in FIG. 98B.

Additionally, word-vote derivatives can be included. A word-vote derivative is an additional datum derived from a word-vote. For instance, every word-vote database record can include an additional field that is automatically populated with simply the domain name appearing in the URL datum. This domain name field can then be used in a secondary ranking methodology: when the basic Lexivote ranking methodology yields rankings that are very close together, the domain name field is used in a sort of "tiebreaker" methodology; a URL that includes a more popular domain name ranks higher than the URL that includes a less popular domain name.

The Lexivote system is further explained in reference to the figures. FIG. 93 depicts an example of an excerpt from a web page **9301** that provides a search query submission form. Also included are the fields necessary for submission of a word-vote to a Lexivote system operated by the UET Company. Specifically, the user chooses a word or phrase to enter in the word datum submission field **9302** and then enters into the URL datum submission field **9303a** a URL that identifies the web page that he or she believes to be the most relevant page associated with the given word or phrase. If the user wishes to submit more than one URL to be associated with the chosen word, he or she can enter them in the additional "Favorite Website . . ." fields provided **9303b**, **9303c**. The user then submits both his search query and his word-vote by clicking the "search" button.

While FIG. 94 depicts a process by which the Lexivote system can be implemented without the use of registered user accounts, this approach is particularly vulnerable to abuse. The preferred embodiment therefore is that depicted in FIG. 95, which is based upon registered user accounts. Through this approach, several quality control measures can be implemented. For instance, by allowing only registered users to cast word-votes and preventing any registered user account from including a duplicate word-vote, i.e., a word-vote in which the word datum is identical to that of another word-vote, the given user account can be limited to one word-vote for any given term. This measure will help to reduce the likelihood of attempts to "stuff the ballot box." (Note that the presence of multiple word-votes cast by the same user and including identical URLs as the URL data is not problematic; certainly, the same website can be a user's favorite website pertaining to a variety of different words.)

Thus, in the preferred embodiment, the user logs into his or her UET Company account **9501** and uses the UET search engine **9502**. At predetermined times, intervals, or events, the user is asked to cast a word-vote **9503**; the UET Company can choose to follow some suggested timing criteria depicted in FIG. **96** for requesting users to submit word-votes or adhere to a schedule of its own design.

Over time, as more and more users participate in the Lexivote system and cast more and more word-votes, the word-vote database grows richer and the Lexivote ranking methodology more effective.

FIG. **97** depicts an example weighting scheme for use in an embodiment in which one-to-many relationships are possible in word-votes.

FIG. **98A** depicts a process through which pages are ranked according to word-votes. First, registered users cast their word-votes **9801**. For each word-vote, a new record is created in the word-votes database and related to the user account of the user casting the vote **9802**. As discussed above, each word-vote includes a word/phrase datum and a URL datum (or more than one URL datum in certain embodiments).

When the user submits a query **9803**, results are ranked according to matching votes **9804**, or, in some embodiments, weighted matching votes.

One benefit of the account-based approach is that users can change their votes as their tastes change and as the World Wide Web evolves. FIG. **99** depicts an excerpt from an example web page through which the user can view and alter his or her word-votes in an account-based Lexivote system. This feature can be used to further enhance the functionality of the Lexivote system by assuring “freshness” of word-votes; users can be periodically required to confirm previously cast word-votes or otherwise update them if the user’s preferences have changed or a URL is no longer valid.

16. USE Subsystem

Lexary Reference Tool

A Lexary is provided to further enhance the functionality of the Lexivote subsystem and USE subsystem.

The Lexary is an electronic reference tool that includes two basic reference features, entries and senses. The Lexary serves the combined functions of a dictionary, thesaurus, grammar book, and stylebook. An entry is a word, phrase, punctuation mark, or other datum that may be included in such reference materials. A sense is a definition, synonym, antonym, usage note, or other descriptive content that explains the entry with which the sense is associated. Thus, a sense can be a dictionary sense (e.g., a definition of a word entry), a thesaurus sense (e.g., a synonym or antonym of a word entry), a grammar sense (e.g., a usage note pertaining to a punctuation mark entry), or a style sense (e.g., a usage note pertaining to an editorial convention entry, such as idiomatic usage of a phrase or proper citation of a source).

The Lexary provides a mechanism through which users can submit entries and senses. Additionally, so that the Lexary can serve as an authoritative source of information, the Lexary also provides a number of quality control mechanisms. Without such mechanisms, the anarchy and misinformation that characterizes many user-generated-content sites would almost certainly overtake the Lexary also.

When a new sense is submitted, whether in association with an existing entry or a new entry, the new sense is marked “proposed.” In order for the sense to move beyond proposed status to “approved” status, it must receive a predetermined threshold number of “subscriptions,” a subscription being an

indication of approval of the sense by a registered user. Once approved, the sense becomes published as part of the Lexary such that a search on the given entry will return the given sense as an authoritative statement.

Over time, as the number of Lexary users increases, users with unusually high levels of linguistic understanding will periodically encounter senses that have been approved but are not completely accurate. The Lexary therefore provides a “challenge” mechanism through which the user can call an existing approved sense into question and seek to supplant it with an improved version of the sense. The challenge is denied or upheld through a special voting procedure that involves only a small portion of the whole user community, namely, the users who have already demonstrated an outstanding track record with respect to contribution of material to the Lexary. This track record is represented by the user’s authority rating.

A general method of creation, deployment and use of the Lexary system appears in flowchart form in FIG. **101**. First, a group of databases necessary for use in the Lexary system, such as those depicted in FIG. **100**, are created **10101**, as are a group of interfaces through which users can submit, review, search, subscribe to, challenge, flag, and edit entries and senses **10102**.

Once the Lexary has been made available to the public, a user logs into his or her UET Company account **10103** and, if the user so desires **10104**, the user enters a term search through the Lexary search interface **10105**. Search results are returned to the user **10106**, including an entry or entries matching the search term and a sense or senses associated therewith.

If the user wishes to add a new entry **10107**, the user enters information pertaining to the new entry through a new entry submission form **10108**, and if the entry does not already exist **10109**, the entry is added as a new entry record in the entries database **10111**.

An entry is not searchable through the official published Lexary until at least one sense associated with the given entry has been approved. If a user wishes to add a new sense **10112** to be associated with an entry, the user enters the new sense through a new sense submission form **10113** and a new record is created in the senses database and related to the given entry record in the entry database **10114**. The new sense is marked “proposed” at this point.

If the user wishes to review proposed senses **10115**, he or she submits a search on the term to be reviewed **10116** and results are returned to the user **10117**. If there are some pending proposed senses associated with the search term **10118**, the user clicks through to a sense review page **10119**. If the user wishes to subscribe to a sense **10112**, he or she clicks the “I subscribe” link and a new record is created in the sense subscription database **10121** noting the subscription of the user to the given sense **10122**.

Occasionally, users will propose inappropriate senses in an attempt to be funny or offensive. If the user wishes to flag such a sense **10123**, the flagging process depicted in FIG. **108** is followed **10124**. If the user wishes to challenge an approved sense **10125**, the sense challenge process depicted in FIG. **111** is followed **10126**. If the user wishes to alter a choice he or she has formerly made—such as a sense or subscription he or she previously submitted—the choice editing process depicted in FIG. **109** is followed **10128**.

Any time a choice made by a user affects a calculation used in the Lexary system, the process of performing this calculation is restarted **10129**. For instance, sense approvals are based on the number of user subscriptions; thus, when a user submits a new subscription, a sense selection process,

depicted in FIG. 110, must be followed again; running of the process need not occur immediately but rather can be conducted at regularly scheduled intervals at the choice of the UET Company. Similarly, since a user's authority rating is based upon approved senses, an authority rating process, depicted in FIG. 107, should be followed when a sense authored by a user has become approved.

For the sake of simplicity, the following figures depict excerpts from sample web pages for a limited scope deployment of the Lexary, specifically, one that serves only as a dictionary. It should be understood that one of ordinary skill in the art can easily modify the depicted pages so as to allow the searching, submitting, and editing of non-dictionary entries and senses, such as grammar and style entries and senses. It should also be noted that the same basic processes disclosed herein can be used for management of longer entries, such as encyclopedia entries, although the Lexary is primarily aimed at serving the purposes described above.

FIG. 102 depicts a Web submission form 10201 through which a term can be looked up in the Lexary. FIG. 103 depicts an excerpt from a sample results page 10301 generated and returned to the user in response to a Lexary search query.

The results page 10301 displays all approved senses associated with the term searched. Additionally, the number 10302 of subscriptions to each sense is displayed to the right of that sense. The user ID 10303 of the user who submitted the given sense is also displayed, as is the authority rating 10304 of this sense author.

A link 10305 to a page that displays pending proposed senses associated with the entry, such as the page depicted in FIG. 105, is displayed. A link 10306 to a page including a Web submission form through which a new sense for the entry can be submitted, such as the "Submit New Sense" page depicted in FIG. 104, is also displayed. An advertisement 10307 also appears. An advertiser pays the UET Company to serve the advertisement 10307 each time certain terms are searched in the Lexary.

When a user wishes to submit a new sense, he or she does so through a Web submission form such as the form 10401 in FIG. 104. For a dictionary sense (as depicted), the submission form includes fields for a part of speech, a qualifier (such as transitive or intransitive in the case of verbs), a definition, an etymology, and a usage note. Clearly, additional fields can be used and different fields should be used for different types of entries, e.g., grammar or style.

If a user wishes to subscribe to a pending proposed sense, he or she does so by clicking an "I subscribe" button 10502 appearing in the review proposed senses page 10501 depicted in FIG. 105. If a user wishes to flag a proposed sense, he or she clicks a "flag" link 10503 to initiate the flagging process depicted in FIG. 108. Inappropriate use of the Lexary can result in demerits which subtract from a given user's authority rating; enough demerits can result in a negative authority rating 10504.

FIG. 106 depicts an excerpt from an example "Sense Challenge Submission" form 10601. Through such a form, a user may submit a challenge to a currently approved sense. Such a challenge may be necessary when an approved sense is good enough to have received enough subscriptions to be approved but nonetheless is, in the eyes of the challenger, incomplete or otherwise imperfect. Fields to be included in a sense challenge page should include an "explanation for the challenge" field and a "proposed alternative" field.

An embodiment of the authority rating process is depicted in FIG. 107. In the depicted embodiment, a user's authority rating equals the total number of "qualifying subscriptions," where qualifying subscriptions are defined as subscriptions

by other users to approved senses that were authored by the user being rated, minus any demerits. Certainly, other formulae for producing an authority rating can be used. For instance, a recursive definition, using one or more known techniques for handling recursive equations, can be used. Such a definition might define a first user's authority rating in terms of authority ratings of other users who have subscribed to senses authored by the first user.

The flagging process is depicted in FIG. 108. After a flag has been submitted by a user 10801, UET Company staff reviews the flagged sense 10208. If the staff determines that the flagged sense was not submitted in good faith 10803, the sense record pertaining to the flagged sense is deleted 10804 and a negative history note is entered in relation to the user account of the submitter of the flagged sense 10805. Such a negative history note may result in demerits per UET Company business rules. If the violation is sufficiently egregious or part of a pattern of misconduct, additional action may be taken 10806, such as suspension of the offending user account.

Occasionally, users will find that they no longer agree with senses they themselves have submitted or with senses to which they have previously subscribed. In such a case, the user can follow the choice editing process depicted in FIG. 109. The user browses the "My Lexary Choices" page 10901, from which he or she can review previously submitted subscriptions and senses 10902. If the user wishes to alter such a choice 10903, the user selects the choice to be modified 10904 and makes the appropriate change 10905. If the user alters a sense 10906, the altered sense is treated as a new sense submission 10907: all previous subscriptions to that sense are voided and the modified sense enters "proposed" status. This measure is necessary so that approved senses are not subsequently altered into a form that would not have received such approval from the community.

Senses are approved through a sense selection process such as that depicted in FIG. 110. The UET Company can choose 11002 to weight subscriptions with reference to the authority rating of the subscribing user 11004 and 11005, or to simply count all subscriptions equally 11003. Whichever methodology is chosen, the score of a sense is compared to a predetermined threshold 11006, and if the score meets or exceeds this threshold, the sense is approved 11007.

Senses are challenged through a sense challenge process depicted in FIG. 111. If a user wishes to submit a challenge, he or she does so through the submission of a form such as that depicted in FIG. 106, and a new record is created in the sense challenges database 11101. Provided that the submission meets minimum requirements for completeness 11102, the author of the challenged sense is notified and given the opportunity to submit a rebuttal to the challenge 11103. After this rebuttal has been received or a certain period of time has elapsed, a panel of users who are considered "top members" are notified of the challenge. Top members are users with the highest authority ratings, and the top member panel may consist of approximately 300 to 500 top members.

Panel members must cast a vote agreeing or disagreeing with the challenger's case within a certain period of time 11105, each vote being a record in the sense challenges votes database. If not enough votes are received to reach a quorum 11106, the challenge fails. But if a quorum is reached and enough votes for the challenger are received to meet or exceed a predetermined threshold 11107, the challenge is upheld and the challenger sense replaces the challenged sense 11108. The UET Company can choose whether a successful challenger sense inherits all the subscriptions of the challenged sense it replaces or simply is awarded a minimum number of

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subscriptions to become approved. The UET Company can also choose what happens to the replaced sense.

The viability of the sense challenge process relies upon the participation of top members. A top member who repeatedly fails to respond when asked to vote on challenges may be removed from the top members panel and replaced by another top member **11109**.

The Lexary can be integrated with the Userithm search engine system to produce an even more effective search mechanism. FIG. **112** depicts an excerpt from a web page including a USE search submission form **11201**; this particular USE embodiment provides two simple search components.

When a search query submitted through this form **11201** contains search terms that appear in the Lexary as entries with more than one associated sense per entry, the user is presented with a secondary selections page such as that **11301** depicted in FIG. **113**. This page provides an input field **11302** next to each available sense so that a user can eliminate ambiguity by selecting the particular sense of the word that he or she intends.

For instance, if a user submits a search query that includes the words “rubber” and “stamp” as depicted in the example in FIG. **112**, he or she may be presented with a secondary selection page such as that **11301** depicted in FIG. **113**. This page **11301** displays two approved senses associated with the word “rubber” in the Lexary. This page also displays two approved senses associated with the word “stamp” in the Lexary. The user can either bypass the use of secondary selections by clicking a “bypass this step” button, or he or she can check a checkbox next to the sense in which he or she intends the word, thereby indicating his or her secondary selection, and then click the “search according to my selections above” button to submit the search query.

This process is summarized in the flowchart depicted in FIG. **114**. When a user submits a query **11401** and the chosen search methodology relies in part upon the meaning of the given word **11402** (as opposed to a search simply for the appearance of a word in a domain name, for instance), the submitted search term or terms are looked up in the Lexary **11403**. If any of the search terms appear as entries in the Lexary with more than one associated sense **11404**, a secondary selections page such as that depicted in FIG. **113** is presented to the user **11405**. If the user chooses to refine his or her search through the use of a secondary selection **11406**, the search is performed with reference to the particular sense or senses selected by the user **11407**. Otherwise, the search is performed as usual without reference to secondary selections **11408**.

Searches performed using secondary selections can be enhanced by reference to the thesaurus-like functionality of the Lexary. Specifically, the usage of synonyms of a particular sense of a word in a document helps to indicate that the word is being used in the intended sense in the document. Thus, while the process of submitting a thesaurus entry is essentially similar to the process of submitting any other type of entry, a thesaurus entry submission process is depicted in FIG. **114B**. In the depicted embodiment, while viewing senses associated with an entry, a user locates the particular dictionary sense for which he or she wishes to submit a synonym **11411**. The user then clicks through, using a link such as that **11421** depicted in FIG. **114C**, to view the thesaurus entry related to the given sense **11412**. The user can then view thesaurus senses associated with the particular dictionary sense of the word, and, if desired, the user can click through to a Web submission form whereby he or she can submit the new thesaurus sense **11413**. The new thesaurus

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sense then enters “proposed” status as usual **11414**, allowing other users to submit subscriptions **11415**, and the sense approval process is followed as usual **11416**.

17. UTOU Subsystem

A Uniform Terms of Use (UTOU) subsystem is provided to further facilitate informational and commercial transactions and interactions between users of the UAML and USE subsystems.

The UTOU subsystem allows a website provider to “subscribe” to a particular version of a Uniform Terms of Use Agreement (UTOUA) by properly referencing the UTOUA in “local” terms of use agreement governing a relationship between the website provider and a website user.

In so doing, the UTOU subsystem enables significant savings in terms of time and expense for both website providers and website users while also causing numerous beneficial side effects, such as laying a foundation for uniformity in Internet-related law.

A process of creation, deployment and use of the UTOU subsystem is depicted in flowchart form in FIG. **115**. The embodiment depicted in FIG. **115** is an “open subscription” model, meaning, that any website provider can participate in this model without registering with the UET Company. A “Registered Subscriber” model is provided, in contrast, in FIG. **119**. There are advantages and disadvantages to both models: under the open subscription model, the convenience of participating may encourage more participants; under the registered subscriber model, quality assurance mechanisms can be implemented and UTU integration is possible.

Under the open subscription model, a promulgator—an entity such as the UET Company, a nonprofit organization, or a governmental agency—assembles a UTOU drafting team that includes representatives of the legal community, consumer advocacy groups, and other interested parties **11501**. The team produces a preliminary draft of a first (or, in later iterations, a next) version of the UTOUA **11502**. The promulgator publishes the preliminary draft on its website together with a mechanism through which citizens-at-large can comment on the preliminary draft **11503** for a predetermined period of time. After the comment period ends, the drafting team incorporates knowledge gained through the public comment procedure into the draft **11505**. If, after these revisions, the team approves the draft as final **11506**, it is published as the official final draft of the given version of the UTOUA **11507**. Otherwise, another preliminary draft is produced **11504** and the public comment procedure is repeated **11503**.

Related information, such as standards for proper usage of the UTOUA is also published **11507**. Older versions of the UTOUA, if any, remain at the URL where they were originally published so that any citations to them remain valid.

The official draft of the latest UTOUA version is registered in a governmental copyright office **11508**, and a unique copyright number is added to the official draft **11509**; in this way, a dispute about the actual language appearing in the draft can be resolved by reference to the copy of the draft at the copyright office.

If a website provider wishes to subscribe to the UTOUA **11510**, the website provider drafts its own local terms of use agreement so that it conforms to the standards set forth on the promulgator website (and in the UTOUA itself) **11512**. A conforming local terms of use agreement includes a valid reference and link to the UTOUA version to which the website provider subscribes as well as a group of terms that are specific to the website provider’s local terms of use agreement. These site-specific terms, called “ILO” provisions,

identify the website provider, indicate which jurisdictional laws apply, and provide all terms that differ from or add to the terms of the UTOUA version to which the website provider subscribes **11512**.

When a visitor visits the website provider's website, he or she can see that the website provider subscribes to the UTOUA by viewing the local terms of use agreement **11513**. If the visitor is already familiar with the version of the UTOUA to which the website provider subscribes **11514**, the visitor need only read the ILO provisions **11515** in order to be informed about the contractual provisions to which he or she is agreeing in using the website.

In allowing website visitors to focus strictly on these site-specific provisions applicable to the given website, the UTOU subsystem saves visitors a great deal of time and encourages them to read the local terms of use agreement.

Any time the visitor wishes to refresh his or her knowledge of the UTOUA, the visitor can simply click through from the local terms of use agreement to the UTOUA **11517**. Whenever a website provider misuses or deviates from the standards for conforming usage of the UTOUA, misconduct can be reported to the promulgator **11518**.

If a dispute arises between the website provider and the visitor **11519**, the provisions of both the local terms of use agreement and the UTOUA, provided the latter has been properly incorporated by reference by the former, apply to the dispute, with the site-specific ILO provisions trumping any conflicting terms in the UTOUA **11520**. As the terms of the UTOUA are interpreted during the resolution of disputes, the body of case law pertaining to the UTOU develops into a richer and more uniform body of law than is possible in the absence of such a system **11521**.

As decisions interpreting the UTOUA provisions are handed down, a document linking system, such as that depicted in FIG. **118**, is deployed to further facilitate easy researching of legal issues pertaining to the UTOUA and development of a settled body of Internet law **11522**.

FIG. **116** depicts an excerpt from an example web page **11601** hosted on the promulgator website. This page **11601** displays a version of the Uniform Terms of Use Agreement, including terms that describe how a conforming subscription can be made effective as well as the actual terms that will be legally active and applicable when a conforming subscription is in effect.

FIG. **117** depicts an excerpt from an example web page **11701** hosted on the website provider's website. This page **11701** displays the local terms of use agreement, which has been made effective in conformance with the UTOU standards for subscription. Thus, the UTOUA version indicated in the document is incorporated by reference so as to be legally active. ILO provisions are also included, serving to identify the website provider, the website, the jurisdiction whose laws will apply to conflicts arising out of the agreement, and the site-specific opt-out provisions.

FIG. **118** depicts document-linking relationships underlying the UTOU subsystem. Depicted is a first version **11801** of the UTOUA and a second version **11804** of the UTOUA. Multiple local terms of use agreements **11808a** and **11808b** link to the first version **11801** and multiple local terms of use agreements **11809a** and **11809b** link to the second version **11804**. One terms of use agreement **11808c** is depicted at two different moments in time: at one time, this local terms of use agreement **11808c** incorporates by reference the first version of the UTOUA **11801**; at a later date, this document **11808c** has been modified by the website provider so as to incorporate the second version of the UTOUA **11804** by reference.

Each version of the UTOUA links to a marked-up, exact copy of the same document. Thus, for instance, the first version of the UTOUA appears in "clean" form **11801** and links to a "marked-up" document **11802** that includes the same version of the UTOUA. Each clause or provision of the marked-up UTOUA **11802** is an individual hyperlink to another page **11803**. The latter page **11803**, continually updated by the promulgator, provides a list of cases in which the individual UTOUA provision linking to the latter page **11803** has been interpreted.

This document linking system allows anyone to visit the marked up version of the UTOUA and click on an individual contractual provision so as to view cases relating to that provision. Researching the legal significance of any given provision in the UTOUA is thereby made much easier.

The registered subscriber model includes all the steps of the open subscription model but involves the additional steps shown in the flowchart in FIG. **119**. The website provider tags his or her local terms of use agreement with UAML tags, specifically, using the UTOU tag vocabulary (not depicted), and lists the local terms of use web page as any other UAML-enabled listing per the process depicted in FIG. **6A**. Thereafter, when a UTU user visits the web page including the UTOU listing **11902**, the UTU displays an icon indicating that the given website provider is a registered UTOU subscriber **11903**. Such an icon **12002** appears in the UTU embodiment **12001** depicted in FIG. **120**.

Registering UTOU subscribers through the UAML listing method allows certain benefits: the local terms of use agreement can be validated, like other UAML listings, by comparison to standards for conforming subscriptions, while the presence of a URLIT enables UTU integration as described above.

18. UTOU Subsystem

UFC Subsystem

The basic approach of the UTOU subsystem can be extended into a Universal Form Contract (UFC) subsystem.

The UFC subsystem allows two or more users to establish a written contract between each other that "subscribes" to a particular Universal Form Contract by properly referencing the UFC in the written contract; the terms of the UFC referenced in the written contract are stored in multiple locations for easy retrieval.

In so doing, the UFC subsystem enables significant savings in terms of time and expense for users while also causing numerous beneficial side effects, such as reducing the use of paper by potentially millions of pages annually and laying a foundation for uniformity in contract law.

A method of creating, deploying and using an embodiment of the UFC subsystem appears in flowchart form in FIG. **121**. A drafting team is formed **12101** to create a preliminary draft for each type of Universal Form Contract **12102**. Types of UFCs may include: a UFC apartment rental agreement; a UFC personal property purchase agreement; a UFC nondisclosure agreement; a UFC will; and other such legal instruments. The UET Company then publishes the draft of each UFC **12103** for public comment. Once the public comment period ends, the drafting team modifies each UFC so as to accommodate useful public comments **12104**. When the draft is finally approved by the team **12105**, each UFC is individually registered in the copyright office **12107** and the copyright registration number is added to the official draft so that parties can verify the official terms through an independent source **12108**.

Each UFC is published individually on the website of the UET Company site so that only one UFC appears per URL **12109**. Each UFC is then encoded in high-density bar-code form **12110**, which bar-code is then printed along with human readable text on an official "UFC-enabled" paper page **12111** such as the example page **12201** depicted in FIG. **122**.

Users wishing to record an agreement in written form acquire a UFC-enabled page that references the appropriate UFC type, fill out the ILO provisions by hand or machine print, and then execute the agreement with signatures **12112**.

In this way, most written contracts can be reduced from several pages to one page **12113** while still containing the same amount of contractual provisions.

If a user wishes to create a back up copy of the executed UFC-enabled contract document **12114**, he or she can fax or e-mail an electronic copy of the UFC-enabled contract document to the UET Company for storage as a digital file related to the user's UET Company account **12115**. Whenever a user or third party needs to look up the UFC terms incorporated into the written document, three different ways are readily available: visit the URL identified in the written document, scan and decode the bar-code on the document, or retrieve the copy of the document deposited at the copyright office **12116**. These and other benefits are described in the chart depicted in FIG. **123**. Most importantly, the UFC subsystem offers a significant opportunity to reduce the waste of paper and other resources used in making paper.

19. Universal Arbitration Subsystem

A Universal Arbitration Subsystem is also provided to further facilitate informational and commercial transactions and interactions between users of the UAML and USE subsystems.

The UArb subsystem allows users to form a community by contracting with an intermediary such that members of the UArb community are bound to submit their disputes to alternative dispute resolution.

A method of creation, deployment, and use of the UArb subsystem appears in flowchart form in FIG. **124**. First, a drafting team, including representatives from the legal profession, insurance industry, consumer advocacy groups, and other interested parties, is formed **12401** to create a preliminary draft of the Universal Arbitration Agreement (UAA) **12402**. The UET Company then publishes the preliminary draft for public comment **12403**. After the public comment period ends, the drafting team incorporates these comments **12404**. When the drafting team approves the final draft **12405**, the final official draft is registered at the copyright office and the copyright registration number is added to the official draft for the reasons discussed in reference to the UTOU subsystem above **12406**. The official draft is then published on the UET Company website **12407**.

The UET Company optionally arranges any agreements with insurance companies or other parties who may wish to offer incentives to encourage users to participate in the UArb subsystem **12408**. The UArb system is then made available **12409** so that a user can register by agreeing to the Universal Arbitration Agreement **12410**. Such agreement establishes privity of contract between the agreeing user and the UET Company, which serves as an intermediary in the UArb subsystem as described below. Other users also agree to the UAA **12411**, and a new record is created in the UAA participants database for each participant.

Thereafter, if a third party, such as an insurance company, needs to verify that the agreeing user has agreed to the UAA, the UET Company can provide a certificate indicating the

agreeing user's party status and the expiration date of the current UAA agreement between the agreeing user and the UET Company **12412**.

In the event that a dispute later arises between two users who have both agreed to the UAA during the effective term of both parties' agreements **12413**, both agreeing users are obligated to submit that dispute to binding arbitration **12414**. If one of the agreeing users so obligated refuses arbitration **12415**, enforcement of the arbitration duty can be pursued by the other agreeing user or by the UET Company directly, or the cause of action can be assigned to someone else for enforcement **12416**. Otherwise, the dispute is settled through arbitration per the UAA **12417**, and the parties thereby enjoy considerable savings in terms of time and money in avoiding litigation through the court system. Additional benefits are described in the chart in FIG. **127**.

FIG. **125** depicts the party relationships described above. Specifically, a first agreeing user **12502** forms a binding UAA contract with the UET Company **12501**. A second agreeing user **12503** also forms a binding UAA contract with the UET Company **12501**. The terms of the UAA provide that any agreeing user agrees to submit disputes with third parties to binding arbitration when said third parties have also agreed to the UAA. These terms create a mutual "third party beneficiary" relationship between one agreeing user and another agreeing user.

FIG. **126** depicts the party relationships described above so as to include an insurer **12604**. The insurer **12604**, in order to incentivize users to participate in the UArb subsystem, may offer premium discounts to users who agree to the UAA. A separate agreement, establishing privity of contract between the insurer **12604** and an agreeing user **12602**, may thereby be formed. The insurer **12604** may wish to make such an offer to users so as to reduce its exposure to litigation costs.

FIG. **128** depicts an excerpt from an example web page, hosted by the UET Company, which contains an embodiment of a version of the Universal Arbitration Agreement.

FIG. **129** depicts an excerpt from an example certificate through which the UET Company certifies that an agreeing user has agreed to the UAA.

The UAML/UTU subsystem and UArb subsystem can be integrated to enhance the functionality of each other. Specifically, when a UTU user visits a UAML-enabled listing of a website provider who has agreed to the UAA, information can be transmitted from the UET Company to the UTU indicating that the website provider is a UArb subsystem participant. The UTU can then display an icon informing the UTU user of the website provider's UArb status.

FIG. **130** depicts an embodiment of the UTU **13001** displaying such an icon **13002**.

20. Ramifications

As shown, the disclosed URLIT and UAML system offers users opportunity, flexibility, economy, and precision. UAML listings, including Internet auctions, can be hosted on any website, and the appearance of such listings is determined by the user. Indexing and searching such listings is easy, and the precision and accuracy of such searches are much greater than conventional HTML pages and Web search engines allow. This power can even be tapped by e-mail, telephone, or other nontraditional search input media. Meanwhile, the subject matter of UAML listings is almost limitless: auctions, jobs, personals, automobiles, real estate, and all manner of other classified ads.

The disclosed UTU reduces or eliminates the need for traditional Web submission forms and purchase forms,

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thereby saving user's time and reducing the risk of identity theft. The universal shopping cart feature allows purchasing from multiple vendors through a single interface. The inventory and wish list features give website providers an additional vehicle for maximizing the value of their websites.

The disclosed Userithm Search Engine gives users tremendous leeway in customizing search algorithms to meet their individual needs for a unique search in real-time, on-the-fly. Performance feedback is provided immediately so that users can improve their own techniques over time. The Userithm Search Engine method can be applied to a wide variety of subject matter, including auctions, personal ads, real estate, investment vehicles and more.

The disclosed Lexivote search methodology offers direct access to the collective intelligence of the World Wide Web user community. Lexivote search results are essentially the product of countless individual interviews, making for highly dependable levels of relevancy.

The disclosed Lexary reference materials method provides both the currency of a user-maintained resource and the authority of extensively reviewed content, while avoiding the pitfalls of anarchy.

The disclosed UTOU subsystem brings order and commonality to the disjointed, unpredictable landscape of relationships between website providers and website users. In so doing, high priority, unique contractual terms are brought into focus while common terms need not be read over and over. Meanwhile, the UTOU establishes a platform upon which rich and settled case law can develop rapidly.

The disclosed UFC subsystem offers the advantages of the UTOU subsystem while also reducing paper usage and storage requirements while making the transmission and backup of important legal documents easier.

The disclosed UArb subsystem allows the formation of intentional communities via the Internet, whereby the efficiencies of alternative dispute resolution are made conveniently available to citizens at large.

21. Scope

Although the description above contains many specifics, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments of this invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given. For instance, it will be understood that features of one embodiment may be combined with features of other embodiments while other features may be omitted or replaced as being nonessential to the practice of the invention. As is plain to one skilled in the art, the disclosed invention can be deployed using entirely different tag names as long as the purposes for which these tags exist are served. Following disclosed tagging conventions may be useful, but one skilled in the art will see that the invention can use other conventions or be modified to meet external standards, e.g., XML.

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What is claimed is:

1. A system for use in a social network environment comprising:

a first computer system accessible via a first computer network, said first computer system comprising a data processor and a memory;

a first user account record stored in said memory, said first user account record being associated with a first social group, wherein said first social group is one of a multi-

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tude of different social groups within said social network environment and wherein each social group has an associated respective real-time news ticker;

a real-time news ticker of said first social group, said real-time news ticker of said first social group comprising a plurality of real-time news items pertaining to said first social group; and

a second user account record, said second user account record comprising a first subscription to said real-time news ticker of said first social group, said first user account record being different from said second user account record, wherein:

an association between said first user account record and said first social group is verified as a condition for said first user account record being permitted to distribute news items through said real-time news ticker of said first social group.

2. The system in claim 1 wherein said first social group is selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a group pertaining to a first academic institution;
- (ii) a group pertaining to a first religious institution;
- (iii) a group pertaining to a first club; and
- (iv) a group pertaining to a first interest.

3. The system in claim 2 additionally comprising a verification mechanism to verify said association of said first user account record with said first social group.

4. The system in claim 1 wherein:

said association between said first user account record and said first social group is verified through a first access requirement; and

said system additionally comprises a revenue component, said revenue component being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) an advertising component for causing display of a first advertisement in a context of user activity;
- (ii) a payment-processing component for processing a first user-to-user payment;
- (iii) a purchase component for facilitating a first user-to-user sale; and
- (iv) a data-gathering component for collecting data about user activity.

5. The system in claim 4 wherein said first access requirement pertains to a first unique character string and wherein said system additionally comprises a reception component to receive a first submission, said first submission being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a submission comprising at least an indication of user approval of another submission;
- (ii) a submission comprising at least an indication of user disapproval of another submission;
- (iii) a submission comprising a first user comment on another submission; and
- (iv) a submission by way of a first telephone, barcode scanner, or RFID reader.

6. The system in claim 1 additionally comprising an entry for a reference resource, said entry being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a dictionary entry comprising community-edited content;
- (ii) a thesaurus entry comprising community-edited content; and
- (iii) an encyclopedia entry comprising community-edited content.

7. The system in claim 1 additionally comprising first indicia of a first quantity, said first quantity being based at least in part on user activity and being selected from the group consisting of:

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- (i) a dollar amount; and
- (ii) a measure of user approval.

8. The system in claim 1 additionally comprising:

an indicia information component, said indicia information component configured for providing first indicia information, said first indicia information configured for causing first indicia to appear in a first resource when said first indicia information is embedded in said first resource, said first resource being hosted on a second computer system, wherein:

said second computer system, is different from said first computer system; and

said first indicia indicate a first quantity, said first quantity being based at least in part on user activity and being selected from the group consisting of (i) a dollar amount and (ii) a measure of user approval.

9. The system in claim 1 additionally comprising a first wish list or a first inventory list for display in connection with said first user account.

10. The system in claim 1 additionally comprising a validity checking component for performing a security comparison check whether a first uniform resource locator (URL) associated with a first news item satisfies a resource validation criterion for inclusion in the newsfeed.

11. A system for use in a social network environment comprising:

a first computer system communicatively coupled to a first computer network, said first computer system comprising a data processor and a memory and being configured for at least partly providing a first social network environment, the first social network environment having a multitude of different social groups;

an account component configured for storing a first user account in said memory and storing a second user account, said second user account being different from said first user account;

a subscription component for establishing a first subscription in which said second user account is subscribed to said first user account; and

a real-time news ticker component configured for providing, per said first subscription, a plurality of real-time news items pertaining to said first user account when said second user account is in use; and wherein:

said first social network environment comprises a first social group that is one of said multitude of different social groups, said first social group being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a group pertaining to a first academic institution;
 - (ii) a group pertaining to a first religious institution;
 - (iii) a group pertaining to a first club; and
 - (iv) a group pertaining to a first interest;
- and wherein:

said plurality of real-time news items comprises a first real-time news item, said first real-time news item comprising a first URL or a first link to said first URL; and wherein:

a security comparison check is performed of said first URL such that said first URL is verified to satisfy a first criterion for inclusion in said plurality of real-time news items.

12. The system in claim 11 wherein said first user account is affiliated with a first entity, said first entity being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a first nonprofit organization;
- (ii) a first academic institution;
- (iii) a first religious institution;
- (iv) a first entity meeting a first environmental standard;

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- (v) a first website-hosting entity;
- (vi) a first website provider;
- (vii) a first bonded seller; and
- (viii) a first club.

13. The system in claim 11 wherein said first real-time news item is associated with news distributed to subscribers within said first social group and said first user account is a verified user account, said verified user account being verified to be associated with said first social group.

14. The system in claim 11 wherein said first real-time news item further comprises first content, said first content being received by way of said first user account.

15. The system in claim 11 further including a product information component that comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) an advertisement for causing display of a first advertisement in a context of user activity, said user activity pertaining to a first keyword;
- (ii) a wish list for causing display of a first wish list in a context of user activity; and
- (iii) an inventory for causing display of an inventory list in a context of user activity.

16. The system in claim 11 additionally comprising:

- (i) a payment-processing component for processing a first user-to-user payment; and
- (ii) a purchase component for facilitating a first user-to-user sale.

17. The system in claim 11 additionally comprising:

- (i) a terms-of-use component, said terms-of-use component configured for storing a plurality of provisions for resolving disputes between users of the social network environment; and
- (ii) a dispute resolution component for resolving disputes between users of the social network environment.

18. A social network method comprising:

receiving first account information at a first computer system via a first computer network, said first computer system comprising a data processor and a memory;

storing said first account information in a first user account in said memory;

storing a second user account, said first user account being different from said second user account;

verifying, via a first computer network, a relationship between said first user account and a first entity, wherein said first entity is one of a multitude of different entities in said social network;

receiving, via said first computer network a first subscription in which said second user account is subscribed to said first user account; and

distributing, via said first computer network, when said second user account is in use, a real-time news ticker per said first subscription, said real-time news ticker comprising real-time news related to said first user account or said first entity.

19. The method in claim 18 wherein said first entity is selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) a first academic institution;
- (ii) a first religious institution; and
- (iii) a first club.

20. The method in claim 18 additionally comprising:

generating revenue, said generating revenue being selected from the group consisting of:

- (i) providing an advertisement in a context of a user activity, said user activity pertaining to a first keyword;

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- (ii) collecting information about users and user activities and selling said information about users and activities;
- (iii) processing a first user-to-user payment; and
- (iv) processing a first user-to-user sale. 5
- 21. The method in claim 18 additionally comprising: monitoring a plurality of user activities, said plurality of activities comprising a first user activity, said first user activity pertaining to a first resource; and performing a security comparison check to validate said first resource according to a first validation criterion. 10
- 22. The method in claim 18 additionally comprising: facilitating community interaction, said facilitating community interaction being selected from the group consisting of:
 - (i) recommending a first user to a second user when said first user matches at least a first criterion of interest to said second user; 15
 - (ii) providing a report mechanism, said report mechanism configured to allow a first user to flag a first post by a second user as being inappropriate; and 20
 - (iii) providing a community mechanism, said community mechanism configured to allow a plurality of users to join an intentional community via said first computer network.
- 23. The method in claim 18 additionally comprising: at least partly causing display of first quantity indicia, said first quantity indicia pertaining to user activity and being selected from the group consisting of (i) a dollar amount and (ii) a score based on user feedback. 25
- 24. The method in claim 18 wherein said verifying said relationship comprises verifying a first user, said verifying said first user comprising verifying said first user's access or control. 30
- 25. The method in claim 18 further comprising displaying a wish list associated with a user of the social network environment. 35
- 26. The method in claim 18, further comprising: generating a user interface, said user interface displaying a plurality of provisions of an agreement for resolving disputes between users of the social network environment; and 40
- facilitating resolution of disputes between users of the social network in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

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- 27. A social network method comprising:
 - submitting first account information from a first computer system to a second computer system via a first computer network, said first computer system comprising a data processor and a memory;
 - logging into, via said first computer network, a first account in a social network environment, said first account being affiliated with a first entity, wherein said first entity is one of a multitude of different entities in said social network;
 - demonstrating, via said first computer network, access in accordance with a first account verification requirement; and
 - providing, via said first computer network, real time news pertaining to said first entity, said providing news comprising submitting, via said first computer network, first content for inclusion in a first real-time news ticker, wherein:
 - said first real-time news ticker is configured to at least partly cause display of said first content when a second account is in use; and
 - said second account is different from said first account.
- 28. The method in claim 27 wherein said social network environment includes a capability to offer products for sale within the social network environment, the method additionally comprising:
 - acknowledging agreement, via a user interface, to a provision regarding a dispute resolution service provided by said second computer system for user-to user purchases in the social network environment.
- 29. The method in claim 27 wherein said social network environment comprises a first social group, said first social group being selected from the group consisting of:
 - (i) a group pertaining to said first entity; and
 - (ii) an intentional community of users who share a common interest.
- 30. The method in claim 27 additionally comprising:
 - paying for a first advertisement, said advertisement being displayed when a keyword associated with said advertisement is relevant to a user activity;
 - offering a first good for sale; and
 - selling said first good.

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