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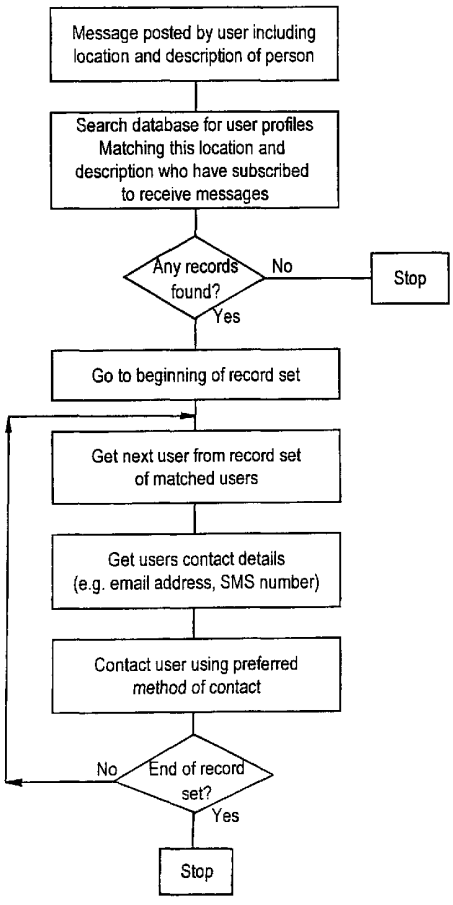
(54) Title: MESSAGING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A messaging system allows people (senders) to send message to others (recipients) whom they have seen, using only a description of the recipient and information about the time and place where they were seen. Typically, text and/or multimedia messages will be sent from the senders mobile telephone (3) to the mobile telephone of one or more potential recipients (4) via a central message pushing system (1) which identifies potential recipient using a dynamically updatable database (2) of members details.

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Messaging System

The invention relates to the general field of sending messages from one person to another, and more specifically to messaging methodology and hardware for use as an introduction/dating system. In particular, the invention enables a person to send a message to another person, without having to know specifically who they are.

Background of the invention

At the present time several magazines run a dating column where a person may leave a message for an unknown person whom they have seen or encountered, in the hope that said person will see the message and respond to them. This system is unsatisfactory because of the low probability that the person to whom they wish to send the message would see the message, the low probability that they would be able to recognise that it was themselves for whom it was intended and the fact that because they would not see it until some time after the chance meeting, they are less likely to want to respond.

The aim of the present invention is to allow a person to send a message to a stranger whom they encounter. Typically, they will send an e-mail or short text message from their own mobile telephone.

The invention aims to enable that message to reach the intended person and preferably to allow them to respond in a fun, safe and convenient fashion.

Brief summary of the invention

The invention provides a new system, allowing people to send messages to other people who they have met in a chance encounter and whose conventional contact details (name, address, phone number, e-mail address etc.) they do not have.

According to the present invention there is provided a message pushing system for sending messages to recipients, the system comprising a database of details of individual potential recipients, telecommunications links for communicating with message sending and message receiving devices, the message pushing system being adapted to receive a message from a message sending means, the message comprising details of the intended recipient of the message, wherein the message pushing system compares the details of the intended recipient of the message with the database of potential recipient's details thereby establishing one or more members who may be the intended recipient, the message pushing system being adapted to transmit said message to the message receiving means of the one or more members who may be the intended recipient.

Preferably, the details of individual potential recipients include details of the individual's physical appearance. The details may be selected from a list comprising their sex, their hair length and colour, their eye colour, their age, their skin colour, their height, and their clothing.

Preferably, the database will also include the e-mail address, mobile telephone number, name, address or other contact details of individual potential recipients.

Preferably also, the database will also include locations where the potential recipient may be. The database may also contain the current location of the recipient. The database may also maintain a list of previous locations.

Preferably also, the message pushing system is adapted to allow potential recipients to update their details. This may be done automatically. Typically, potential recipients will update their details using their message sending means.

Preferably, the message pushing system allow messages to be delivered to recipients without the sender of the message knowing who the recipient is.

Typically, the comparison between the details of the potential recipient and member's details on the database does not need to be exact.

The database may also include information about how close a match between details is required for that message to be sent to that potential recipient.

The message sending means and message receiving means may be the same devices.

Typically, the message sending means and message receiving means will be mobile telephones using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

The telecommunications links may comprise the internet.

The message may comprise one of an e-mail, a text message, a visual message or a multi-media message.

When transmitting the message to the message receiving means, the message pushing system may or may not send the description of the intended recipient of the message along with the rest of the message.

The database may be a relational database.

The message may be transmitted to the recipient only on request from the recipient. A web site may be used to display the message.

According to the second aspect of the present invention there is provided a messaging system comprising a message pushing system according to the first aspect of the present invention and a plurality of message sending and message receiving means, adapted to send messages to and receive message from the message pushing system.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of transmitting a message to one or more recipients, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) creating a database of details of the appearance and location of individual potential recipients for messages;

(b) receiving messages including details of the appearance and location of the intended recipient for a message;

(c) comparing the details of the appearance and location of the intended recipient with the details stored in the database, thereby identifying one or more possible intended recipients.

Preferably, the method further comprises the step of sending the message to message receiving means belonging to the possible intended recipients.

Preferably, the details of individual potential recipients include details of the individual's physical appearance. The details may be selected from a list comprising their sex, their hair length and colour, their eye colour, their age, their skin colour, their height, and their clothing.

Preferably, the database will also include the e-mail address, mobile telephone number, name, address or other contact details of individual potential recipients.

Preferably also, the database will also include locations where the potential recipient may be. The database may also maintain a list of previous locations.

The database may also include information about how close a match between details is required for that message to be sent to that potential recipient.

Preferably also, the message pushing system is adapted to allow potential recipients to update their details. This may be done automatically. Typically, potential recipients will update their details using a message sending means.

Preferably, the message pushing system allow messages to be delivered to recipients without the sender of the message knowing who the recipient is.

Typically, the comparison between the details of the potential recipient and member's details on the database does not need to be exact.

The message sending means and message receiving means may be the same devices.

Typically, the message sending means and message receiving means will be mobile telephones using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

The telecommunications links may comprise the internet.

The message may comprise one of an e-mail, a text message, a visual message or a multi-media message.

When transmitting the message to the message receiving means, the message pushing system may or may not send the description of the intended recipient of the message along with the rest of the message.

The database may be a relational database.

Brief description of the several views of the drawings

The present invention will be illustrated with reference to the following Figures in which:

Figure 1 which shows a block diagram of components of the message pushing system; and

Figure 2 shows a flow chart of the message pushing system.

Detailed description of the invention

The system shown in Figure 1 comprises a central message pushing system 1 having a database 2 of personal details. Members of the service would supply the following types of information, although this list is provided purely by way of example and additional information might be added:

- Name
- E-Mail Address
- Mobile phone number (for SMS messages)
- Description Details:

  - Sex - Male/Female

- Hair Colour - Dark, Red, Fair, etc
- Skin Colour - Dark, Fair
- Length of Hair - Short, Long
- Eye Colour
- Age
- Height
- Any other physical attribute
- Clothing details

- User's locale (the city the user lives in)
- Favourite locations (a list of bars, nightclubs, etc., that the person frequents)
- User's current location (as set by the user)

The messaging system can then use this database to identify recipients for messages. An example of how the system would be used is as follows.

For example, a man in a nightclub could send a message to the message pushing system, using their WAP enabled mobile telephone, intended for a particular women he has seen standing at the bar. The sender has their own mobile communication device 3 and the system enables them to send a message to a recipient having a mobile communication device 4 via telecommunications links 5. Recipients need to be members of the service in order to have their details stored on the database 2. The central message pushing system has access to telecommunications links, the internet or other communication means for communicating with mobile communication devices 3,4.

The sender begins by composing their message, which might be a text message, an e-mail or multi-media message

including sound or potentially even video. This message is then sent to the central message pushing system using their communications device. It will be clear to one skilled in the art that many types of communications device could be used, particularly SMS, WAP or I-MODE mobile telephones. The communications devices 3,4 need merely to be message sending means and message receiving means respectively. Mobile communication devices, such as mobile telephones, able to function as both message sending means and message receiving means are preferred. Example mobile communication devices include personal digital assistants and laptop computers.

As well as the message to be sent, the sender would then prepare a description of the person and location and time at which they have seen them, for example: the town, the name of the nightclub, a description, e.g., "tall woman, blond, wearing a red dress" and a time when the intended recipient was seen, which may be a particular day or more specific time.

This sender's message is then transmitted by known technology to the message pushing system. The message pushing system then interrogates the database to establish one, or typically several, potential recipients for the message. The message supplied by the user can then be transmitted directly to mobile communication devices owned by the recipient.

In order to establish which potential recipient may have been intended the system will take into account not just their physical appearance but also the location where they were seen and, usually, the time at which they were

seen, comparing this with potential recipient's descriptions and information about their location or possible location. Only some descriptive terms need to match and appropriate database interrogation and data comparison techniques are apparent to one skilled in the art.

When members of the service set their own personal details, they will indicate how close a match they want before a message is transmitted to them. Some people might like to receive a lot of messages, only a fraction of which might be intended for them. Others would only wish to receive a message only if it was very likely intended for them.

Messages might be sent directly to recipients, alternatively a recipient might simply be informed that there is a message waiting for them at a location from it can be downloaded when they wish, for example a website. Alternatively, the recipient might have to check a website to receive any messages. In the preferred embodiment, they will be notified immediately by their preferred communication method. There is no reason why users could not send and receive messages from fixed terminals but mobile communications devices are preferred.

Further information can be provided by members to help people identify them. Importantly, the database of member details 2 can be updated on demand by members, for example the person might supply information as to where they are going on that evening, which clubs, etc., so as to improve the chances of a match. They might also

supply details of the clothing they are wearing that particular evening or even inform the database they have moved venues. In a further embodiment, it is envisaged that with the advent of mobile telephone positioning technology, such as mobile telephones containing global positioning system units or other mobile telephone locating technologies, it may be possible for member's mobile communications devices to automatically update their current and historic location details on the central database.

The facility by which the database can be rapidly and dynamically updated by members substantially increases the probability of successfully sending the message to the right person.

Once they have received the message, the recipient can, if they wish, then reply to the sender, sending their own message to them. The message pushing system may allocate an alias to each sender or each sending event, enabling messages to be returned to the correct sender.

The simplest type of message would be merely a very general statement of where the person had been seen, for example, a city and details of a particular venue, such as a nightclub. In another embodiment, users might supply a more detailed description, including ideas of hair colour, what the person was wearing, their height and other distinguishing features, in order to gain a more accurate match.

Typically the above details will be stored in a relational database, however any other type of database

known to the art, such as a object orientated database or a file, could be used.

Figure 2 is a flow diagram illustrating the basic procedure for determining recipients for the messages. A sender beings by posting a message to the message pushing system, including location and description information as discussed above. The database then is interrogated for user profiles matching the location and description included with a message. If appropriate records are found, the system sequentially identifies user's contact details and instigates sending the message on to the user or users identified.

It will be seen from the above description that this system provides an highly innovative method of messaging. A method is provided for people to send messages to others whom they come across in a fun, convenient and anonymous way.

Revenues could be generated by asking members to pay a subscription, which is the preferred method. Alternatively, other e-commerce techniques, such as pay-per-message or a linking message sending/receiving to the receipt of advertising could also be used to generate revenue.

As well as the application described above, the underlying technology and method may be used to send messages to unknown recipients in other circumstances, for example, to road users by using a description of their vehicle.

Although the embodiments of the message pushing system and method described with reference to the drawings comprise computer apparatus and process performed in computer apparatus, the invention also extends to computer programs, particularly computer programs on or in a carrier, adapted for putting the invention into practice, particularly when executed on a web server. The program may be in the form of source code, object code, a code intermediate source and object code such as in a partially compiled form, or in any other form suitable for use in the implementation of the processes according to the invention. The carrier may be any entity or device capable of carrying the program.

For example, the carrier may comprise a storage medium, such as a ROM, for example a CD ROM or a semiconductor ROM, or a magnetic recording medium, for example a floppy disc or hard disc. Furthermore, the carrier may be a transmissible carrier such as an electrical or optical signal which may be conveyed via electrical or optical cable or by radio or any other means. When the program is embodies in a signal which may be conveyed directly by a cable or other device or means, the carrier may be constituted by such cable or other device or means. Alternatively, the carrier may be an integrated circuit in which the program is embedded, the integrated circuit being adapted for performing, or for use in the performance of, the relevant processes.

Further improvements and modifications may be made within the scope of the invention herein disclosed.

Claims

1. A message pushing system (1) for sending messages to recipients, the system comprising a database (2) of details of individual potential recipients, telecommunications links (5) for communicating with message sending (3) and message receiving (4) devices, the message pushing system being adapted to receive a message from a message sending means, the message comprising details of the intended recipient of the message, wherein the message pushing system compares the details of the intended recipient of the message with the database (2) of potential recipient's details thereby establishing one or more members who may be the intended recipient, the message pushing system (1) being adapted to transmit said message to the message receiving means of the one or more members who may be the intended recipient.

2. The message pushing system of Claim 1 wherein the details of individual potential recipients include details of the individual's physical appearance.

3. The message pushing system of Claim 2 wherein the details are selected from a list comprising their sex, their hair length and colour, their eye colour, their age, their skin colour, their height, and their clothing.

4. The message pushing system of Claim 1 or Claim 2 wherein the database includes one or more of the e-mail address, mobile telephone number, name, address

or other contact details of individual potential recipients.

5. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein the database also includes information about the location of the recipient.

6. The message pushing system of Claim 5 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes the current location of the recipient.

7. The message pushing system of Claim 5 or Claim 6 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes frequently visited locations.

8. The message pushing system of any of Claims 5 to 7 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes previous locations.

9. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim adapted to allow potential recipients to update their details.

10. The message pushing system of Claim 9 adapted to enable potential recipients to update their details automatically.

11. The message pushing system of Claim 9 or Claim 10 adapted to enable potential recipients to update their details using their message sending means.

12. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim adapted to allow messages to be delivered to

recipients without the sender of the message knowing the identity of the recipient.

13. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein the comparison between the details of the potential recipient and member's details on the database does not need to be exact.

14. The message pushing system of Claim 13 wherein the database also includes information about how close a match between details is required for that message to be sent to that potential recipient.

15. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein one device can function as both a message sending means and a message receiving means.

16. The message pushing system of Claim 15 wherein the message sending means and message receiving means are a mobile telephone using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

17. The message pushing system of Claim 15 wherein the message sending means and message receiving means are a personal digital assistant using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

18. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein the telecommunications links may comprise the internet.

19. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein the message comprises one of an e-mail, a

text message, a visual message or a multi-media message.

20. The message pushing system of any preceding Claim wherein the message is transmitted to the recipient or recipients only on request from the recipient or recipients.

21. The message pushing system of Claim 20 wherein a web site is used to display the message.

22. A messaging system comprising the message pushing system of any preceding Claim and a plurality of message sending and message receiving means, adapted to send messages to and receive message from the message pushing system.

23. A method of transmitting a message to one or more recipients, the method comprising the steps of:
(a) maintaining a database (2) of details of the appearance and location of individual potential recipients for messages;
(b) receiving messages at a central message pushing system (2), the messages including details of the appearance and location of the intended recipient for a message;
(c) comparing the details of the appearance and location of the intended recipient with the details stored in the database, thereby identifying one or more possible intended recipients.

24. The method of Claim 23 further comprising the step of sending the message to message receiving means (4) belonging to the possible intended recipients.

25. The method of Claim 23 or Claim 24 wherein the details of individual potential recipients include details of the individual's physical appearance.

26. The method of Claim 25 wherein the details are selected from a list comprising their sex, their hair length and colour, their eye colour, their age, their skin colour, their height, and their clothing.

26. The method of any of Claims 23 to 25 wherein the database also includes the e-mail address, mobile telephone number, name, address or other contact details of individual potential recipients.

27. The method of any of Claims 23 to 26 wherein the database also includes information about the location of the recipient.

28. The method of Claim 27 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes the current location of the recipient.

29. The method of Claim 27 or Claim 28 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes frequently visited locations.

30. The method of any of Claims 27 to 29 wherein the information about the location of the recipient includes previous locations.

31. The method of any of Claims 23 to 30 wherein the database also includes information about how close a match between details is required for that message to be sent to that potential recipient.

32. The method of any of Claims 23 to 31 adapted to allow potential recipients to update their details.

33. The method of Claim 32 adapted to enable potential recipients to update their details automatically.

34. The method of Claim 32 or Claim 33 adapted to enable potential recipients to update their details using their message sending means.

35. The method of any of Claims 23 to 34 wherein messages are delivered to recipients without the sender of the message knowing who the recipient is.

36. The method of any of Claims 23 to 35 wherein the comparison between the details of the potential recipient and member's details on the database does not need to be exact.

37. The method of Claim 36 wherein the database also includes information about how close a match between details is required for that message to be sent to that potential recipient.

38. The method of any of Claims 23 to 37 wherein one device can function as both a message sending means and a message receiving means.

39. The method of Claim 38 wherein the message sending means and message receiving means are mobile telephones using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

40. The method of Claim 38 wherein the message sending means and message receiving means are personal digital assistants using SMS, WAP or I-MODE.

41. The method of any of Claims 23 to 40 wherein the telecommunications links may comprise the internet.

42. The method of any of Claims 23 to 41 wherein the message is selected from a group consisting of an e-mail, a text message, a visual message or a multi-media message.

43. The method of any of Claims 23 to 42 wherein the message is transmitted to the recipient or recipients only on request from the recipient or recipients.

44. The method of any of Claims 23 to 43 wherein a web site is used to display the message.

45. A computer program comprising program instructions which, when executed on a computer, cause the computer to perform as the message pushing system of any of Claims 1 to 21.

46. A computer program comprising program code instructions for causing a computer to perform the method of any of Claims 23 to 44.

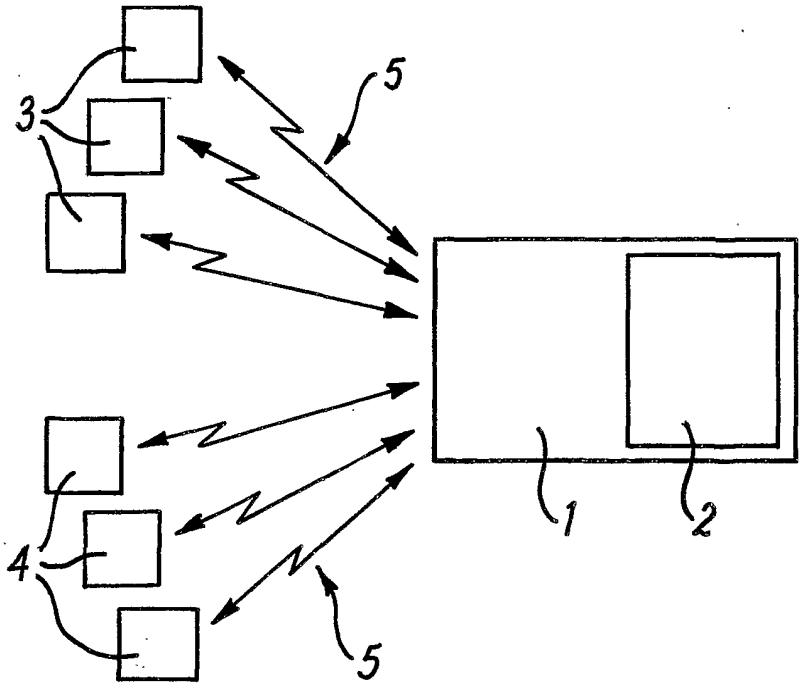

FIG. 1

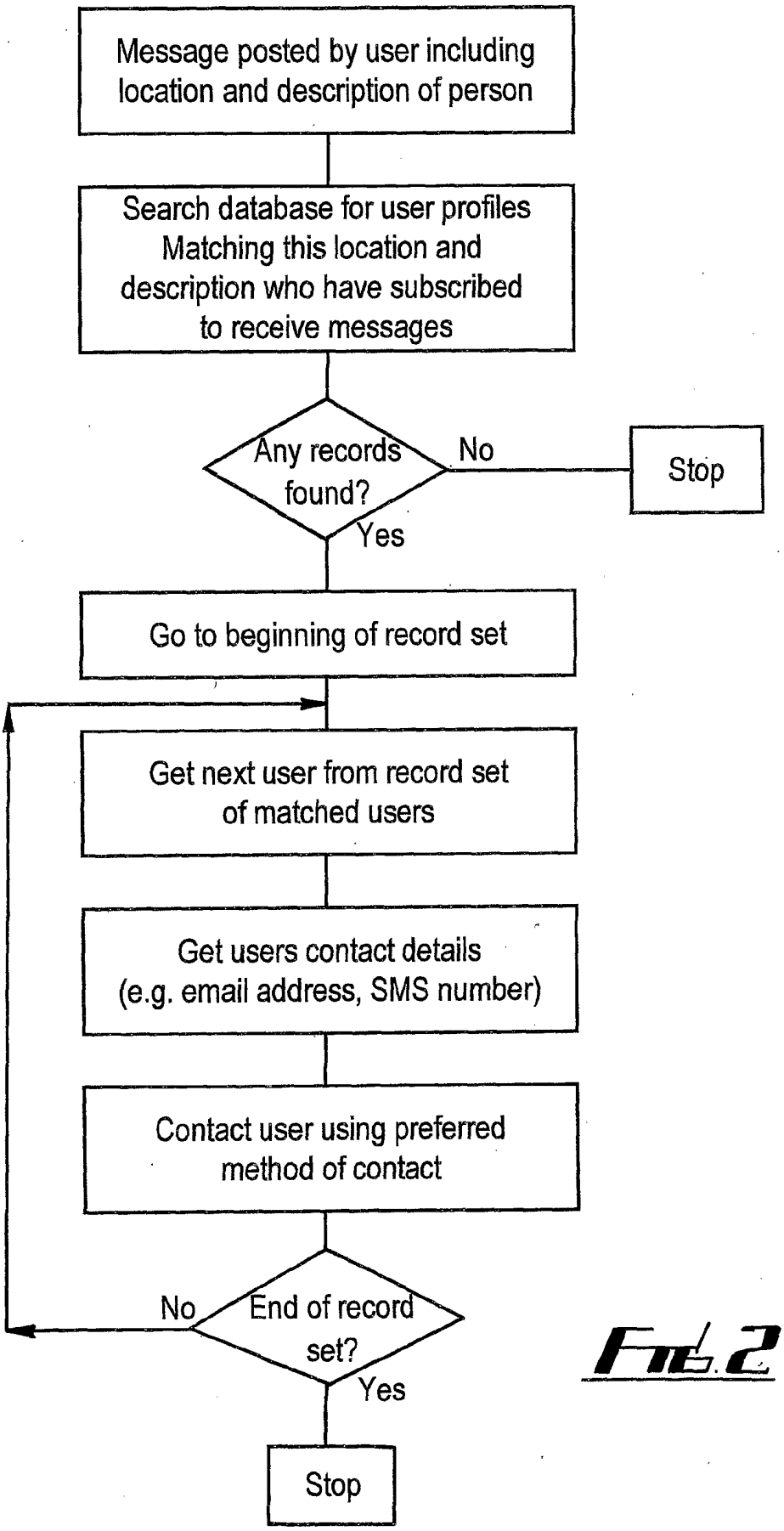
Message posted by user including location and description of person
Search database for user profiles Matching this location and description who have subscribed to receive messages
Any records found?
No
Stop
Yes
Go to beginning of record set
Get next user from record set of matched users
Get users contact details (e.g. email address, SMS number)
Contact user using preferred method of contact
No
End of record set?
Yes
Stop

FIG. 2