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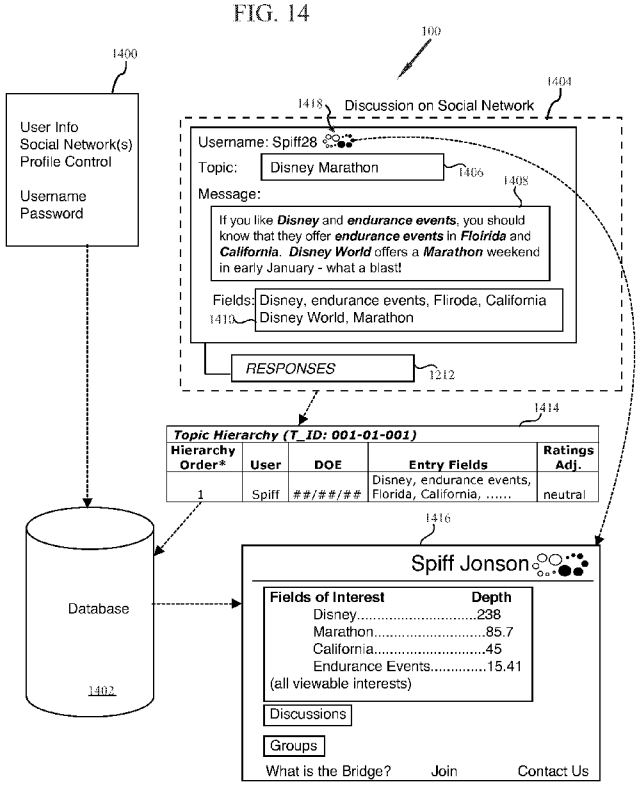
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AUTHENTICATING A USER

FIG. 14



(57) Abstract: Provided are a system (100) and method (200 to authenticate user identities. The method (200) includes gathering metadata (214) from at least one discussion (300) involving at least one pre-defined user identity (104) on a first social network (102). The method (200) evaluates the metadata of at least one third party response (304) related to a posting (302) by the at least one pre-defined user identity (102). The at least one pre-defined user identity is authenticated based on the evaluated third party response. And an indication (324) of authentication for the at least one pre-defined user identity (102) is provided. The system (100) and method (200) may also permit bridging of the established authentication between different social networks.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AUTHENTICATING A USER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) of US Provisional Application No. 61/495,292 filed June 09, 2011, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of the Internet and social networking. It relates to exchange that occurs between a plurality of users and the establishment of credibility that may occur through such exchanges. This credibility as a measure of authentication can be applied to one or across a plurality of community platforms available on the Web.

BACKGROUND

[0003] The Internet is rapidly becoming a global community of information exchange. This growth in connectivity, coinciding with the evolution of hand held devices makes Internet connectivity and socialization a growing part of our immediate, every day lives. Evolving social networks, search engines and the ability to share personal opinion through community platforms are creating an increasing social complexity that is challenged by the dynamics of the Internet's open-source architecture. This requires certain systematic standards that can address the growing concerns with privacy, identity theft, credibility and fraudulent activity, while maintaining Internet effectiveness.

[0004] Within the context of a single social network, most people are familiar with the natural and free flowing exchanges and discussions that tend to develop. Whether the topic of discussion be that of endurance sports, surfing, pets, gardening, cooking, survival tactics, dating, wine & cheese or just about anything, there seem to be no shortage of people willing to offer comment and suggestion.

[0005] Yet the recipients or later readers of such a discussion are left entirely to their own assessment for evaluating who is and is not a valid contributor. More specifically, a comment about surfing locations, boards or wax may well be offered by a life time surfer who truly knows his or her stuff, or a land locked person who has never seen the ocean and despises the surfing culture. Though perhaps an extreme example, the issues of being able to authenticate a user as truly knowledgeable becomes quite important when a parent is looking for safe birthday ideas for children, advice on nut allergies or other issues where misguided responses or even intentionally malicious responses could pose actual harm.

[0006] The frustrations with a single site are appreciated to compound when looking at

multiple sites. A user very qualified for a particular subject, say marathons, may be entirely new to a site and therefore even regular contributors may not recognize him or her.

[0007] In another case, a malicious or unscrupulous user may develop a plurality of different and outwardly distinct user IDs, thus permitting him or her to present a developed discussion that is appears to involve multiple parties when in fact there is only one or very few. Such an apparent discussion may be nothing more than a soap-box podium. While certainly permissible as free speech, it would likely be very helpful to most people to have some guide to inform them that the contributors to such a discussion were unknown and their credibility therefor open to question.

[0008] Moreover, because there are a number of different social networks, each with their own autonomous definitions for users and exchange, social presence throughout the Internet is non-authentic and this is resulting in growing doubt and skepticism over the value and security of socializing the Web. This is due at least in part to two fundamental limitations; 1) centralized social networks generate community response and feedback that is only authentic within the proprietary nature of the system, and therefore, the value of community derived information cannot be integrated or utilized throughout the entire web society; and 2) by failing to support a universal source for defining the authenticity and value of individuals and information, centralized social networks are creating an insecure Internet community that lacks universal integrity.

[0009] This lack of social systematic integrity fosters malicious social intent through false accusations, inappropriate feedback, false identity, fraud, and other abuse to personal information, but also hinders Internet functionality through misinformation.

[0010] Since the Internet is an open-source architecture, Web social organization is beyond the scope of conventional approaches to social organization and this presents an extremely complex situation to network based (e.g., Internet) social networking organization.

[0011] Hence there is a need for a method and system that is capable of overcoming the above identified challenges.

SUMMARY

[0012] Our invention solves the problems of the prior art by providing novel systems and methods for a authenticating a user.

[0013] In particular, and by way of example only, according to one embodiment of the present invention, provided is a method to authenticate user identities including: gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined user identity on a first social network; evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a

posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity; and authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response, and providing an indication of authentication for the at least one pre-defined user identity.

[0014] In yet another embodiment, provided is a method to authenticate user identities on at least one social network including: associating metadata from a posting by a first user identity on a first social network to define at least one associated field; tracking responses to the posting by at least one third party, and in response to the third party using one or more of the associated fields, assigning a value to each associated field used; authenticating the first user identity based on the value of one or more of the associated fields; and providing an indication of the first user authentication.

[0015] Further, in yet another embodiment, provided is a system for authenticating user identities including: at least one user account, the user account identifying at least a first social network and an associated known user identity; a metadata gatherer structured and arranged to gather metadata from at least the first social network regarding each known user identity, the gathered metadata including at least one field obtained from at least one posting by a known user identity and subsequent third party responses to the known user identity; a database structured and arranged to associate the at least one field to the known user identity; and an authenticator structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity by assigning a value to at least a portion of the metadata of each third party response.

[0016] In yet another embodiment, provided is a social networking bridge for authenticating user identities including: a bridge structured and arranged to review a plurality of social networks, the bridge having; at least one user account, the user account identifying at least one social network and an associated known user identity; a metadata generator structured and arranged to gather metadata from each social network regarding each known user identity, the gathered metadata obtained from at least one discussion and subsequent discussions involving each known user identity; a database structured and arranged to correlate the gathered metadata to each known user identity; an identity authenticator structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity based on evaluating metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the known user identity.

[0017] Further still in another embodiment, provided is a non-transitory machine readable medium on which is stored a computer program for authenticating a user, the computer program comprising instructions which when executed by a computer system having at least one processor performs the steps of: gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined user identity on a first social network;

evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity; and authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response, and providing an indication of authentication for the at least one pre-defined user identity

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] At least one method and system for authenticating a user of at least one site will be described, by way of example in the detailed description below with particular reference to the accompanying drawings in which like numerals refer to like elements, and:

[0019] FIG. 1 illustrates a high level conceptual view of the Authentication System in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0020] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram illustrating a method of Authentication in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0021] FIG. 3 is a conceptual illustration of a discussion on a first social network and at least one known user identity participating in the Authentication process in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0022] FIG. 4 illustrates variations in how Authentication and degrees of Authentication can be indicated in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0023] FIG. 5 is a conceptual illustration of a discussion on a second social network and at least one known user identity participating in the authentication process in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0024] FIG. 6 illustrates outlines of the discussions in FIGs. 3 and 5 and associated Fields in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0025] FIG. 7 illustrates exemplary database entries for known User identities, social networks and Fields in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0026] FIG. 8 illustrates exemplary database entries for the Topic and Fields of the discussion shown in FIG. 3 in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0027] FIG. 9 illustrates the hierarchy of Responses for the discussion shown in FIG. 3 in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0028] FIG. 10 illustrates exemplary database entries for the Topic and Fields of the discussion shown in FIG. 5 in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0029] FIG. 11 illustrates the hierarchy of Responses for the discussion shown in FIG. 5 in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0030] FIG. 12 is a conceptual illustration of a discussion wherein the first instance of a Registered User is as a responding party in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0031] FIG. 13 illustrates an outline of the Response hierarchy for the discussion in FIG. 12 in accordance with at least one embodiment;

[0032] FIG. 14 illustrates a conceptual view of the Authentication System in operation in accordance with at least one embodiment; and

[0033] FIG. 15 is a block diagram of a computer system in accordance with certain embodiments of the present invention

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0034] Before proceeding with the detailed description, it is to be appreciated that the present teaching is by way of example only, not by limitation. The concepts herein are not limited to use or application with a specific system or method for authenticating a user. Thus although the instrumentalities described herein are for the convenience of explanation shown and described with respect to exemplary embodiments, it will be understood and appreciated that the principles herein may be applied equally in other types of systems and methods involving the authentication of a user.

[0035] To further assist in the following description, the following defined terms are provided.

[0036] "Entry" / "Response" – The data provided by a user to start a posting or in response to a posting on an Internet based social network site, and/or community platform. For example, but not limited to, a post, article, tweet, like, dislike, rating, product, picture, comment, or other indication or expression of an opinion of any separable entity involved in the Web. Moreover, the data may be textual - as in a written comment, non-textual – as in a "Like" or a "Thumbs Up", or a combination of textual and non-textual elements such as a textual Response that includes a rating scale.

[0037] "User" – He or she who is providing the data in an Entry/Response.

[0038] "Topic" – Topic's form threaded discussions based upon specific topics of interest. They are subjects that draw others users to respond to the data posted by users, and are defined by an initial entry, article, post, blog, tweet, product, or anything that can be responded to, rated, or commented on, that would start a threaded discussion.

[0039] "Metadata" – This is data about data and relates to Tags, or Key Words, that are extracted and recognized within this system and method as Fields. Indeed, the metadata may be the data itself as directly provided by a User in an Entry/Response, an indicator such as a rating (like or dislike, thumbs up or thumbs down, etc…), and data associated with any

form of an Entry/Response, such as but not limited to, the site IP, date, time, author, last editor, etc…

[0040] "Field(s)" – Are relational entities such as Metadata, tags, or "key words" as are commonly understood in searching and organizing data. Fields are defined from an Entry/Response through information generated from the information provided by the source of Entry and all Responses to that Entry. Fields can be generated by the 3rd-party social network, Users, or the Social Network Bridge. These may be one or more terms. Fields create universal Metadata that is specific to the Social Network Bridge and can be utilized across a plurality of social networks in order to recognize User Associations to interests (quantified as Fields) and their Authentication, which is the sum of their Field Value to those Associations.

[0041] "Associations" – Occur between Users and defined Fields and once they are defined they are universal to the Social Network Bridge. This allows User to be associated with other Users through Associations to similar Fields. The number of Associations a User has over the Social Networks bridge, defines a value based on the "span" of Fields, or their scope of interests across the Social Network Bridge.

[0042] "Field Value" – Is the value applied to a Users Association to a Field. Field Value is increased through subsequent responsive posting to a User Entry/Response that generate Field(s). Moreover, a Field in a new original Entry, or a new Field to an existing discussion has no Field Value. As discussed below, for at least one embodiment the value is based on the frequency of Responses overall, the Ratings from those Responses, as well as the frequency of Field usage in subsequent Responses. The overall Field Value applied to a User in Association to a Field is the aggregate of all Field Values defined through discussions that relate to that Field.

[0043] "Field Average" – The percentage associated to a Field for it's subsequent use in one or more responsive postings as compared to the other Fields in subsequent Responses in a discussion.

[0044] "Span" – The value of the number of Associations of Fields to a registered User.

[0045] "Depth" – The aggregate of Field Value to each Associated Field for a registered User.

[0046] "Authentication" – A degree of validation subscribed to a registered User of the Authentication System regarding his or her established Associations to one or more Field(s), and including subsequent defined Field Value, as validated by 3rd party Responses. For at least one embodiment, the Authentication is based at least in part on the Span, the number of associations, and the Depth, the degree of Field Value in relation to each association.

[0047] "Social Network Bridge" – the system or method embodying the invention herein disclosed. Though fully adaptable for application to a single site, the "bridge" nature is most fully appreciated with the cross linking of Users registered with the Social Network Bridge across a plurality of social networks based on Topics, Fields and Field Values as used by the Social Network Bridge to provide an indication of registered Users degree of Authentication.

[0048] "Social Network" as used herein is also understood and appreciated to be any community platform where Users are identified by some form of UserID and make some level of exchange between themselves through Entry/Response. In other words a social network is appreciated to be any Internet based system that provides any form of media (i.e., posts, blogs, articles, products, pictures, audio commentary, music, pictures video, etc…) which can be responded to by identified users of that system. Moreover, in some embodiments the social network may be described as a community platform.

[0049] "Ratings Adjustments" – Ratings adjustments may be involved in defining Field Value because different 3rd party social networks having different styles of ratings. Examples include no rating at all, "star" ratings scales, binary rating scales (such as like/dislike, thumbs up/thumbs down, etc.) single command ratings (such as "Like" "Recommend", "Retweet", etc.), among others. A Ratings Adjustment can be determined and applied to the Field Value for each differing rating scale that accompanies an Entry/Response. Ratings are beneficial in their ability to distinguish positive or negative levels of feedback in order to derive more appropriate Field Value.

[0050] "Entry/Response Hierarchy" – The Entry/Response Hierarchy is defined through Entry's and subsequent Responses that create threaded discussions that relate to ~~a~~ specific Topics of Interest. Every time a new original Entry/Response is made, a new Hierarchy can be created. Every time an Entry/Response is made in relation to an existing Hierarchy, the Hierarchy is adjusted for that Entry/Response. The Entry/Response Hierarchy is used to define the levels of discussion in order to determine appropriate Field Value for branching out discussions.

[0051] To briefly summarize, provided is a system and method for authenticating User identities. This Authentication is in essence based upon 3rd party Responses and not a Users own statements of self worth or Authentication. Moreover, it is a system and method that involves gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined User identity on a first social network. The metadata of at least one third party Response relating to a posting by a pre-defined User is then evaluated. The pre-defined User identity is then authenticated based on the evaluated third party Response, and an indication of the Authentication for the pre-defined User is then provided.

[0052] Moreover, for at least one embodiment, the Authentication System has the ability to receive information and more specifically, information that defines Fields through metadata, tags and key words, including information that defines ratings. In at least one embodiment this information also includes the designation of a Topic, which as stated in the definitions above is the initial Entry/Response that would start a topic of discussion. Indeed a Topic may be truly an initial posting which starts a discussion, or a new Topic may occur in a subsequent Response where a new issue for discussion is introduced. Each topic and the Entry/Response regarding the Topic are arranged in an Entry/Response Hierarchy so as to be associated with at least one known User.

[0053] The Authentication System determines a value, e.g., an Authentication value, for the known User in relation to the Field(s) associated to each Entry/Response. This Field Value is generally determined by the hierarchical order that is created by subsequent Responses, both direct and indirect, to the Users Entry/Response and all subsequent Entry/Responses (as in Responses to other Responses). Authentication for the known User is then based on evaluating the Field Value as collected from at least one 3rd party Response relating to the posting by the known User. In varying embodiments, before the Field Value is applied to achieve User Authentication, the Field Value is adjusted by the Ratings Adjustment and the Field Average.

[0054] FIG. 1 is a high-level block diagram of an embodiment of the Authentication System **100**. As shown the Authentication System is in communication with a first social network **102**, and at least one or more Users, of which Users **104**, **106**, **108** and **110** are exemplary. In at least one embodiment, the Authentication System **100** is a component of the first social network **102**.

[0055] The first social network **102** and the Authentication System **100** are understood and appreciated to be one or more computer systems, (including microprocessors, memory, and the like) adapted at least in part to provide the first social network **102** and the Authentication System **100**. More specifically each may be a general computer system adapted to operate as a social network, such as first social network **102** and/or the Authentication System **100**, or a specialized system that is otherwise controlled by or integrated with a computer system.

[0056] For such embodiments, Users **104**, **106**, **108** and **110** may be identified as known or registered Users on the basis of having established accounts with the first social network **102**. In such embodiments, the Users of the first social network and more specifically the Authentication System **100**, may not need to provide additional information to the Authentication System **100** to permit monitoring and Authentication to occur as their respective associated User identities are already known as are the parameters of the first

social network **102**.

[0057] In varying embodiments, Users **104**, **106**, **108** and **110** may become known or registered Users by establishing users accounts **118** directly with the Authentication System **100**. For embodiments wherein the Authentication System **100** is in communication with a plurality of social networks, e.g., first social network **102** and one or more second social networks **112**, **114**, **116**, additional access information for all of social networks may be provided by the User in his or her User account **118**.

[0058] In addition, each User account **118** may define one or more User identities that are associated with the known User in various different social networks. Moreover, for at least one embodiment, the User accounts **118** define for the Authentication System **100** the User identities to be monitored, evaluated and authenticated upon one or across many social networks.

[0059] In at least one alternative embodiment, the Authentication System **100** is distinct from the social network **102**. Further, whether a component of the first social network or distinct from the first social network, in varying embodiments the Authentication System **100** is also in communication with a plurality of second social networks, of which second social networks **112**, **114** and **116** are exemplary.

[0060] To facilitate this, in at least one embodiment, the Authentication System **100** has a metadata gatherer **120**, an association scheme **122,** an authenticator **124** and a database **126**

[0061] The Metadata Gatherer **120** in connection with the information provided in the User accounts **118** monitors community activity within at least the first social network **102**. When any User established with the Authentication System **100** makes an Entry or Response, the Authentication System **100** gathers, via the metadata gatherer **120**, appropriate data from the Entry or Response and the subsequent Responses. This includes attributes such as date and time, user name, message content, tags, key words, ratings information, etc… Moreover the data from the Entry or Response may be any data associated with the Entry or Response – that which is provided directly as the textual or non-textual Entry or Response or that which is supplementary to the Entry or Response.

[0062] In at least one embodiment, the gathered metadata will include at least one Field obtained from at least one posting by a known User identity and subsequent third party Responses to the known User identity. The database **126** is structured and arranged to record the association of at least one Field to the known User identity. For embodiments where the User account **118** are not specifically maintained by the first social network **102**, the database may further be structured and arranged to maintain the User accounts **118** as well.

[0063] As is further explained below, for at least one embodiment, if the Authentication System **100** determines that the User posting the Response is not a known or registered User, the Authentication System **100** may invite the User to become a registered User and therefore also enjoy the benefit of Authentication.

[0064] Metadata, tags, and "key words" generated from the Topic, and the Entry/Responses to the Topic as text become Fields and permit the Authentication System **100** to establish relationships between other registered Users through Associations to Fields derived from the Entry/Response within the discussion. Data generated from non-registered Users enters the Entry/Response Hierarchy in order to maintain the flow of discussion in relation to Topics. However, in at least one embodiment as the User is not a registered User, the entry of the data does not create Associations or Field Values related to the unregistered User.

[0065] The Association Scheme **122** recognizes the Associations between registered Users and defined Field(s). The Authentication System **100** builds an aggregate of Associations based upon how many times a specific Field has been referenced per unique Topic of Discussion by a User. This builds an Authenticating element known as Span Value, or the scope of different Associations. Each Association acts as a reference between Users and their associated Fields. Where the Authentication System **100** is in communication with a plurality of social networks, this reference of Association is viable across the social networks upon which the User is active.

[0066] In varying embodiments, the metadata gatherer **120** and/or the association scheme **122**, alone or in varying degrees of combination may establish the Entry/Response Hierarchy **128** as a substantially distinct component of the general database **126**.

[0067] The Authenticator **124** determines Field Values for each Entry/Response based on Depth of subsequent User Response. This Field Value is triggered by each subsequent Response, and is adjusted by order in the Entry/Response Hierarchy, Ratings Adjustment, and Field Average.

[0068] The Authentication, or lack thereof, is at least one output from the Authenticator **124** and in varying embodiments can be used in a variety of forms. For example, in at least one embodiment, the Authentication of a registered User is directly evident to all Users of a social media site when the Authenticated registered User offers an Entry/Response containing a Field for which he or she has an associated.

[0069] With respect to FIG. 1, it is understood and appreciated that the elements, e.g., metadata gatherer **120**, the association scheme **122**, the Authenticator **124** and the database **126** are in one embodiment located within a single device, such as for example a computer.

In at least one alternative embodiment, these elements may be distributed over a plurality of interconnected devices. Further, although each of these elements has been shown conceptually as an element, it is understood and appreciated that in varying embodiments, each element may be further subdivided and/or integrated within one or more elements.

[0070] FIGs. 2-9 provide a high level flow diagram with conceptual illustrations for a discussion upon an exemplary social network site, e.g., first social network **102**, and subsequently at least one additional social network site, e.g., second social network **112**. It will be appreciated that the described events and method need not be performed in the order in which it is herein described, but that this description is merely exemplary of one method of implementing a method to achieve the Authentication System **100**, or more specifically a method of authenticating User identities upon one or a plurality of social networks.

[0071] In addition, for ease of illustration and discussion the use of textual discussions have been shown, however it is to be understood and appreciated that other options for media, such as but not limited to one or more pictures, movies, audio files, songs, or even links to other media may be used at least as part of the initial posting. Often, with such media, there is also a clearly identified subject – such as a caption or title. When this exists, the subject is recognized by the Authentication System **100** and method **200** as the Topic. Of course, it is further understood and appreciated that where the posted media is non-textual, metadata may still be collected, such as but not limited to the type of media, time of posting, source of posting, and the Topic itself.

[0072] Moreover, if the nature of the discussion is such that a title, aka Topic, is clearly provided, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** accept that as the Topic. If the nature of the discussion is such that a title, aka Topic, is not clearly provided, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** accept the as one or more of the associated Fields defined within the first level post by a registered User.

[0073] It is also understood and appreciated that the methodology of Authentication may take many forms. The total number of Responses to an initial posting may be simply tallied, direct Responses may be valued differently from indirect Responses, heuristics may be applied to gage a Response as being positive or negative or neutral, (note: a key component of this system is that it does not need, or use, objective user information such as age, sex, etc..). Different methodologies for Authentication may also be established for different embodiments of Authentication System **100**. With respect to the discussion herein, it is understood and appreciated that the description of Authentication is merely exemplary of one method of operation in accordance with the present invention, and not a limitation.

[0074] With respect to FIG. 2, in addition to illustrating the steps of the method **200**, there is an attempt to further illustrate in general which elements of Authentication System

100 are in play at different stages. Accordingly along the left side of the flow diagram is presented a conceptualization of a database, such as database **126**, and the correlated elements within the database.

[0075] The Authentication System **100** is, as noted above for at least one embodiment, implemented to provide User Authentication across a plurality of social networks. In such settings, the Authentication System **100** is more fully appreciated as a Social Network Bridge ("SNB"). It is understood and appreciated that even where multiple social networks are involved, Authentication can and does occur on individual social networks.

[0076] More specifically, when multiple social networks are involved, the SNB accounts for actions on all networks in authenticating User identities. These actions upon different social networks may be contemporaneous, or they may alternate in different time periods. Moreover, for the process of Authentication, concurrent action upon multiple social networks is not required. In addition, it is well within reason to understand that a registered User may only be active on one social network site, and still enjoy the advantageous benefit of Authentication.

[0077] As such, in the following description the methodology for Authentication is presented with respect to one social network, e.g., first social network **102**, before demonstrating how the SNB may be expanded to present Authentication across multiple social networks.

[0078] **AUTHENTICATION FOR A SINGLE SOCIAL NETWORK**

[0079] As shown in FIG. 2, the method **200** commences with affiliating with at least one social network, block **202**. For an embodiment where the Authentication System **100** is implemented directly as a component of a social network, such as first social network **102**, the Users of the first social network may all be identified as known or registered Users with no further action, block **204**.

[0080] For at least one alternative embodiment, whether integrated as a component of the social network or not, a User sets up his or her account and provides at least his or her associated User identity and such other relevant information regarding the social networks he or she uses, block **204**.

[0081] With respect to the database **126**, FIG. 2 illustrates that, for varying embodiments, the database **126** receives and records the basic information, such as affiliated social network(s) (records of affiliated social network(s) **250**), a listing of registered or known Users (records of registered Users **252**), and a listing of each User's social network(s) (records of social networks affiliated with Users **254**). These records may certainly be combined, but have been shown distinctly for ease of discussion.

[0082] FIG. 7 illustrates conceptual database records. Specifically, table of records **700** correlate to the listing of registered Users (records of registered Users **252**) and illustrate the User accounts. A first registered User **702** is shown as Spiff Jones and a second registered User **704** is shown as Dan Mann. Additional registered Users are not shown for ease of illustration.

[0083] Table of records **706** conceptually correlate to the listing of the User's social networks (records of registered Users **252**) and specifically illustrate the social networks with which User Spiff is associated. As shown, for each social network, the registered User, e.g. Spiff, may use a different Username **708**. Moreover, as Authentication is established for User Spiff, the Authentication will be reported across all associated social networks regardless of username, if Spiff Jones is active upon more than one social network that has been registered with the Authentication System **100**.

[0084] Returning to FIG. 2, the Authentication System **100** then commences to monitor the specified social network or networks awaiting action by a registered User, block **206**. For at least one embodiment, there may be Users who are not registered Users of the Authentication System **100**, decision **208**, and if so these initial postings by such unregistered Users are ignored, and the Authentication System remains in a monitoring state, block **206**.

[0085] For at least one optional embodiment, postings by un-registered Users are trapped to initiate an offering for these Users to become registered Users, decision **210**. This may be accomplished by initiating a new pop-up, application or appliance that informs the User of the presence of the Authentication System, its function, features and benefits and how Authentication is achieved.

[0086] If the un-registered User accepts the offer to become a registered User, he or she is then directed to the process of setting up his or her account, block **204**. His or her Entry/Response may also be cached during this account set up process so that upon enrolling in the Authentication System he or she is given immediate credit for his or her Entry/Response. Of course, if he or she opts not to accept the offer to become Authenticated, the method continues and the un-registered User is simply treated as an un-registered User.

[0087] In certain embodiments, Responses by non-registered Users can be used in the Authentication process, if such a Response is related to a prior posting by a registered User, decision **212**. Where the posting is indeed a Response, metadata may be gathered, block **214**, else the Authentication System remains in a monitoring state, block **206**. Moreover, for at least one embodiment, all third party Responses are evaluated in determining Authentication for a User regardless of whether the third party is a registered or unregistered

User. For at least one alternative embodiment only third party Responses from registered Users are in determining Authentication for a User, and for yet still another embodiment, Responses from un-registered users are in determining Authentication for a User, but may be evaluated with less value then Responses from registered Users.

[0088] As is further explained below, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** are adapted in at least one embodiment to act and Authenticate upon the occurrence of non-textual Responses, however for ease of illustration and discussion, textual Response are first considered.

[0089] When activity by a non-registered user is detected, in at least one embodiment, the Authentication System moves to determine if the action is in Response to a posting by a registered User, decision **210**. The unregistered User may also be given an opportunity to become a registered User, decision **212**. In response to accepting this offer, the new User is directed back to the process of setting up a User account, block **204**. The metadata from the Users posting may be cashed as indicated by dotted block **216**.

[0090] When a registered User does initiate an Entry/Response, the Authentication System **100** recognizes that Entry/Response, decision **208**, and moves to the determination of whether the Entry/Response establishes a new Topic, decision **218**. As noted above, a Topic name may be a Field within an initial posting which starts a discussion, or a clearly identified subject provided to identify the posted media. For at least one alternative embodiment, a Topic may be identified when a registered User is a subsequent responder to prior un-registered users. And, for yet another embodiment, a subsequent by a registered user may introduce a new Topic as well as.

[0091] FIG. 3 conceptually illustrates at least a portion of discussion **300** that has evolved on social network site, e.g., first social network **102**. Registered User Spiff28 has posted a new Entry **302** as a Topic for discussion. There are nine (9) subsequent text Responses, **304**, **306**, **308**, **310**, **312**, **314**, **316, 318** and **320** of which Responses **304**, **306**, **308, 310** and **312** are direct Responses to Spiff28's initial Entry **302**, and Responses **314**, **316**, **318** and **320** are indirect in that they are responding to Response **312** by Piper1. There are also non-textual Responses **322** showing that 26 people "like" the discussion initiated by Spiff28. In at least one embodiment, for some Users, such as Spiff28 there is also an indicator **324** of the User's participation in the Authentication System **100**.

[0092] Although shown in FIG. 3 as a generally complete discussion **300**, it is understood and appreciated that discussions such as this evolve over time. For at least one embodiment of the Authentication System **100** it is anticipated that the Authentication System **100** and method **200** will operate in substantially real time – monitoring the social network(s) and Authenticating registered Users as discussions occur. For at least one

alternative embodiment, Authentication System **100** and method **200** are adapted to review historical discussions.

[0093] In the textual Entry/Responses **302**, **304**, **306**, **308**, **310**, **312**, **314**, **316**, **318**, and **320** some words are shown in Bold Italics to indicate they are Fields, of which "***endurance event***" is an exemplary Field **326**. In at least one embodiment the Authentication System **100** and method **200** act automatically, such as by implementing heuristics, to recognize Fields. A registered User may also specifically identify a Field, or un-identify a Field, the subsequent use of that term or phrase in a Response being automatically recognized. The 3rd party social network itself can also recognize these Fields for Each Entry/Response.

[0094] With respect to the initial Entry **302** by Spiff28, in varying embodiments the Authentication System may also use heuristics to identify the Topic, or the registered User may indicate the Topic. In the case of Entry **302**, for ease of discussion and illustration, the exemplary Fields **326** of ***Disney***, ***endurance events***, ***Florida***, ***California***, and ***Marathon*** have been shown in Bold Italics. For the sake of example, the Topic **328** of this Entry by Spiff28 is initially identified as ***Disney***. For further clarification and identification to interested parties, in at least one embodiment, the initiating registered User, e.g., Spiff28 may adjust the Topic as identified. In other words, Spiff28 may further indicate that his specified Topic is "***Disney Marathon***" rather than simply "***Disney***."

[0095] For this example it is assumed that Spiff28 has an established history of past discussions involving ***Disney***. Other users may or may not have established histories as well. Regardless of past history, for purposes of this example, discussion **300** is new and as such the Topic of ***Disney Marathons*** is a new Topic, and therefore a new Topic hierarchy entry is created, block **220**. This is further illustrated by the dotted line reaching the Topic Database **256** within the database **126**. It should be understood and appreciated that over time multiple discussions with substantially the same Topic name may occur. Although the history of Fields may be aggregated in Authenticating the registered User, maintaining the distinction of each as a distinct Topic may be desired in some embodiments, such as for, but not limited to, permitting historical searching and review of Topics that may be of interest to a user.

[0096] In FIG. 8, table of records **800** conceptually illustrates a database entry for the new discussion Topic as initiated by Spiff28. More specifically a record, such as table of records **800** is generated for each new topic of discussion. The information recorded is understood to be adaptable for varying embodiments, and is shown for example to include, but not otherwise be limited to, the topic name, source, date, Metadata to be used as Fields, and whether or not a ratings adjustment is to be applied. The Ratings Adjustment is set to permit different types of rating styles to be compared – e.g., thumbs up and thumbs down to

a range of stars, or even no rating at all, in which a neutral setting of 50% can be applied.

[0097] Metadata from the Entry/Response is also gathered, block **222**, and is correlated in the topic hierarchy **258**, further shown as table of records **900** in FIG. 9. In at least one embodiment, at least one Field, e.g., ***Disney***, is associated with the registered User having the User identity Spiff28, block **224**.

[0098] Other Fields as identified by Spiff28 or the Authentication System **100**, e.g. ***endurance events***, ***Florida***, ***California***, and ***Marathon*** are also associated with the registered User ID of Spiff28, and may in their own right in varying embodiments be treated as Topics, or sub-Topics. Table of records **710** in FIG. 7 conceptually illustrates the Fields associated with User ID Spiff, and as is apparent, includes a total sum of Field Value from discussions other than that shown in FIG. 3. Additional tables of records are also created for each other registered User involved in the discussion, but are not shown. Of course, for some embodiments, certain words or phrases can not be designated as Fields – for example "the" as a Field is generally considered off-limits.

[0099] Table of records **710** is used to recognize a User's overall value for every association with an associated Field. The Field name is the name given to the defined metadata, tags, and or key words generated from discussions, at least a subset being the identified Fields **326** in FIG. 3. The Total Field Associations is the total number of times a User has created an Association to a Field for each unique Topic of discussions, and reflects the Span Value for that User. The total Field Value is the value generated from all discussions for that Field, and reflects the Depth Value for that User.

[00100] With specific reference to table of records **710**, Fields **712** correlate to the Fields identified by Spiff28 in connection with the discussion as shown in FIG. 3 and Fields **714** correlate to Fields identified in other separate discussions. It is understood and appreciated that these other discussions may be discussions within the first social network **102** or other social networks. Of course, additional data regarding the specific social network from which the data in the Entry is being captured, time of day, etc… may also be captured and recorded.

[00101] Having associated at least one Field with the registered User, block **224**, the method returns to monitoring the social network(s) for further Entry/Response, block **206**. As noted above, an advantageous nature of the Authentication System **100** is the fact that a registered Users Authentication is developed at least in part through the actions and postings of 3rd parties.

[00102] Moreover, if Spiff28 posts again and again about Disney, he will not spontaneously generate an Authentication for Disney, rather other Users must respond to his

postings for his credibility to be established. Indeed, with respect to FIG. 3, Response **308** is identified as from Spiff28 – the same registered User who posted initial Entry **302**. This occurrence is detected by the Authentication System **100** and this entry is nullified for User Spiff with respect to Response **308.**

[00103] Responses by third parties to postings are therefore of significant importance. The Authentication System **100** therefore monitors for a Responses to existing postings. In at least one embodiment this is facilitated by identifying the activity by a registered User as being other than an initial posting with a new topic, decision **218**. If no Responses are provided by other Users the Authentication System **100** simply maintains a monitoring state and no Authentication is established or further established with respect to the registered Users posting.

[00104] For at least one embodiment, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** are structured and arranged to authenticate registered User identities based at least in part on determining the number of Responses by 3rd parties and the number of times one or more Fields associated with the registered User are used in those Responses. Non-textual Responses, e.g., a like or dislike, thumbs up thumbs down, happy face or sad face, or the like may also be accounted for and, in certain embodiments even distinguished as being provided by registered or non-registered Users.

[00105] Moreover, for each subsequent Response by another registered User, and in some embodiments non-registered Users, the Authentication System **100** acts to gather information, including Metadata from each Response, block **214**. With respect to textual Responses, a query is performed to check each Response for the use of one or more associated Fields, decision **226**.

[00106] For at least one embodiment, the Authentication value for the exemplary discussion of FIG. 3 is based on at least three factors:

1) the number of subsequent Responses and their type – directly subsequent as in the case of Responses **304**, **306**, **310** and **312**, and indirectly subsequent as in the case of Responses **314**, **316**, **318** and **320**;

2) the Field Average, and

3) the Ratings Adjustment, which is set to neutral (50%) as shown in table of records **800**.

[00107] Where a subsequent Response is determined to have at least one associated Field, the method **200** proceeds to determine a value for each associated Field, block **228** and adjust the Authentication for the registered User based on the value(s) of the associated Field(s), block **230**. These values are then recorded in the Topic/Field value **260**, further

shown as table of records **810** corresponding to the Topic Field Values for all Users, and User Fields Value **262**, further shown as table of records **830** corresponding to the Topic Field Values For User, in FIG. 8.

[00108] It is understood and appreciated that non-textual Response may also occur as are shown in FIG. 3 as Response **322** indicating that 26 people have "Liked" the discussion. As these Responses are non-textual in most embodiments the metadata may not include any associated Fields. Still, these Responses can and in at least one embodiment are detected and accounted for in the determination of Authentication as is further discussed below.

[00109] With respect to FIG. 3, and for the ease of discussion, the evaluation for Authentication can be reviewed in aggregate. And, for at least one embodiment, such as is shown direct Responses are evaluated with a higher value and indirect Responses are evaluated with a lower value. In FIG. 3 there are five 2nd level Responses, **304**, **306**, **308**, **310** and **312**. There are also three 3rd level Responses, **314**, **316** and **320**, and one 4th level Response **318**.

[00110] However, since Jill06, and Alex2, are not registered Users, their Entry/Response's **306**, **314** and **320** do not generate Associations to Fields, nor add to the aggregates that determine Field Value. Their entries may be considered in the Entry/Response Hierarchy structure. For example a Response by an unregistered User may generate subsequent Responses by registered Users.

[00111] It should also be understood and appreciated that in varying embodiments, heuristics, such as for example analytical algorithms may be applied to Responses in an effort to determine a positive or negative nature for the Response which may also be included in evaluating the Response. In other words, trapping "thanks for your help" or "fantastic advise" may in certain embodiments enhance the Authentication valuation, whereas trapping "your clearly clueless" or "inane" may in factor into reducing the Authentication valuation. Further, for at least one embodiment the Authentication System **100** performs a comparison of how many times the designated Field(s) appear relative to other terms or words so that a Response will not skew the Authentication simply by repeating the Field ***Disney*** one-hundred times.

[00112] In FIG. 6, outline **600** conceptually illustrates the Response level **602** and the Fields occurring in each Response. Non-registered Users Jill06 and Alex2 have their Fields shown in brackets so as to note their presence, but also to indicate that for at least one embodiment they are not considered in determining Field Values. In FIG. 9, table of records **900** conceptually illustrates how outline **600** may be internally recorded by the database of Authentication System **100**. Non-registered Users are again shown in Italics.

For at least one embodiment, as shown in table of records **900**, the ratings adjustment variable may be adjusted for each individual Response.

[00113] In at least one embodiment the decreasing value for indirect vs. direct subsequent Responses is assigned in accordance with a Fibonacci scale (a dissipative value scheme divided by 1,2,3,5,8…). For example the threaded discussion outlined in Fig. 6 creates a Response hierarchy for User Spiff's original Entry that can be evaluated as follows:

4 registered User Responses at 2nd level: Evaluation is 1/1 x 4 = 4

1 registered User Responses at 3rd level: Evaluation is ½ x 1 = .5

1 registered User Response at 4th level: Evaluation is 1/3 x 1 = 0.33

TOTAL = 4.83

[00114] It may be noticed that in the tally of 2nd level Responses that Spiff28 was also counted. As noted above, in at least one embodiment a subsequent Response by the original registered User is ignored, such that an adjusted total would appear as TOTAL = 3.83.

[00115] The Authentication System **100** also accounts for adjustments made from Field Averages, and again in at least one embodiment, the subsequent posting by Spiff28 is ignored along with Responses from non-registered Users, e.g., Jill06 offering Response **306** and Alex 2 offering Responses **314** ad **320**. With respect to the example of FIG. 3, the Field Average is based on the Field Disney being the Field of highest frequency – 5 instances.

Disney – 5/5 = 100%

Marathon – 3/5 = 60%

Endurance events – 1/5 = 20%

Florida – 1/5 = 20%

California – 0/5 = 0%

[00116] As expressed above, because there is no rating, the Ratings Adjustment for this example is set to 50% - a neutral percentage between 0 and 100. This percentage is to applied to the Field Value.

[00117] Each respective Field Value for the Fields set forth by Spiff28 is derived based on the adjusted TOTAL = 3.83 as noted above, * Field Average, * Ratings Adjustment. More specifically:

Disney – 3.83 x 1.00 x .50 = 1.915

Marathon – 3.83 x 0.60 x .50 = 1.49

Endurance events – 3.83 x 0.20 x .50 = 0.383

Florida – 3.83 x 0.20 x .50 = 0.383

California – 3.83 x 0 x .50 = 0.0

[00118] These values are further shown in the table of records **810** in FIG. 8, in column **812** corresponding to the User ID of Spiff28. As shown in FIG. 2, for at least one embodiment, Responses by registered Users are optionally processed to associate at least one Field with the responding registered User. This involves a determination of whether there are new Fields, and or whether the existing Fields are to be associated with the responding user, decision **232**. Associating new Fields and/or instances of existing Fields with the responding user permits the reposing user to also develop Authentication for these Fields. Moreover, the Associated Fields and their Values derived from this Topic of discussion permits registered Users to develop their own Authentication that can be recognized and applied throughout all affiliated 3rd-party social networks with the SNB.

[00119] As shown in the table of records **810**, there are entries for Field Values for Fields used by the other registered User Mark2 in column **814**, Tom12 in Column **816**, Piper1 in column **818** and Teah4 in column **820**. As there have been no direct Responses to Mark2 – Response **302**, or Tom12 – Response **308**, the associated Field Values recorded for them are shown to be zero.

[00120] Whereas table of records **810** illustrates all Fields associated by Users that occur in connection with the Topic, table of records **830** illustrates the Fields associated with a specific User, in this case Spiff28, and the total value for each Field as generated through the specific discussion, presently identified as "***Disney Marathon***."

[00121] With respect to discussion **300**, it is also noted that there are non-textual Responses **322**, e.g. the twenty six people who indicated they "Like" Entry **302**. As the non-textual Responses **322** are direct to Entry **302**, in varying embodiments each Field identified in Entry **302** is increased in value by an adjustable percentage. For example, as there are eight Responses, not including Spiff28, 26/8 = 3.25. The initial Fields **326** of ***Disney***, ***endurance events***, ***Florida***, ***California***, and ***Marathon*** can each receive an additional 0.0325 valuation, not shown in the tables.

[00122] As noted above, a User's participation with the Authentication System **100** may be indicated by an indicator **324**, such as an icon, to other Users. FIG. 4 illustrates at least three variations for such indicators **324**. More specifically, in FIG. 4 there are shown three reproductions of User Spiff28's initial Entry **302**, shown as Entry **302**, **400** and **402**. There are also shown three reproductions of User Mark2's Response **304**, shown as Response **304**, **404** and **406**.

[00123] In Entry **400** and Response **404** the base indicator **324** has been replaced with a value indicator **408**. The value indicator **408** can be established to illustrate a value along a pre-defined scale or pre-defined range, such as from no Authentication represented by a Circle, to a high Authentication represented by three solid dots. User Mark2 has yet to

establish an Authentication level (Authentication level 0) so his associated value indicator **408** is a Circle, whereas Spiff28 has established a high Authentication level (Authentication Level 10) so his associated value indicator **408** is three solid dots.

[00124] In Entry **402** and Response **406** the User name is displayed in a specific value color **410**, e.g., bold black for Spiff28 and Grey for Mark2. Indicator **324** may also be provided as an audible indicator, not shown. Moreover, the type and nature of the indicator **324** may be selected from a group consisting of, but not specifically limited to, an icon, graphic, photo, luminance intensity, color, value, audio element, or other element as may be suitable for different environments and Users.

[00125] Placing a cursor over the User name or otherwise selecting a User name may in varying embodiments, provide a viewing party with a popup or other display providing greater information regarding the selected Users Authentication levels, such as is shown in pop-up **412** for Spiff28 and pop-up **414** for Mark2. Indeed, in varying embodiments the Fields reported within the pop-ups may be links permitting the viewing party to jump to other discussions involving the authenticated Fields as well as a listing of at least a subset of all authenticated Fields associated with the selected User.

[00126] For at least one embodiment, the indications of participation in Authentication System **100**, as well as the indication of Authentication are provided directly by the first social network site **102**. In alternative embodiments, these indications are achieved with the use of browser plugins – such as for example, but not limited to, ActiveX components. In yet still other embodiments enhanced browsers or other applications used to interact with the social network site are provided. Such plugins or enhanced applications may independently communicate with the Authentication System **100** so as to independently recognize and respond to the presence of a registered User in a currently displayed discussion.

[00127] With respect to the above discussion and described figures, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** may be appreciated for the advantageous ability to provide an indication of a Users Authentication with respect to at least a first social network. This Authentication is maintained and can be provided whenever a registered User is active upon the first social network.

[00128] **AUTHENTICATION EXPANDED TO A SECOND SOCIAL NETWORK**

[00129] With respect to the above discussion, it is clear that Authentication of a User identity is achieved by gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined User identity on a first social network. The metadata of at least one 3rd party Response related to a posting by the pre-defined User is evaluated and based on this evaluation the pre-defined User is authenticated and an indication of the Authentication is

provided.

[00130] For yet another embodiment, the Authentication System is operable across at least two social networks. More specifically, in addition to the methodology as applied to a first social network **102**, for at least one embodiment the Authentication of a User identity includes gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving the pre-defined User identity on a second social network **112**. The metadata of at least one 3rd party Response related to a posting by the pre-defined User on the second social network **112** is evaluated. The pre-defined User is authenticated based on the evaluations occurring on both the first social network **102** and the second social network **112**, and an indication of the Authentication is provided to both first social network **102** and the second social network **112**.

[00131] Moreover, it should be further understood and appreciated that in at least one embodiment, the User's Authentication is entirely portable to other social networks where he or she is a member, whether identified by the same User Identity or another User Identity that is associated to him or her as a registered User of the Authentication System **100**. As noted above, where Authentication is implemented for a plurality of social networks, the Authentication System **100** may be aptly identified as a social network bridge, as it is providing a bridge to port Authentication from one arena to another.

[00132] Variations of the methodology for implementation are of course possible for different embodiments, and indeed implementation of method **200** upon different social networks may be different as well. Moreover, for one social network all User Responses may be considered whereas for a different social network only Responses by registered Users are considered. One social network may have one or more ratings systems and another social network may offer none. Further, for one social network the Authentication System may provide an indicator that is ever present, such as is shown in FIG. 3, whereas for another social network, the indicator may be evident upon User selection, or as a sub-window. Indeed, even where the methodology is the same, differences in how social network sites are presented may result in different visual presentation of how a User's Authentication is presented. See Fig. 12 as it provides a description of how a graphical user interface can be used to recognize User Authentication.

[00133] FIG. 5 illustrates a conceptual method of implementation for a second social network **112** that is distinct from the first social network **102** and discussion shown in FIG. 3. Again it will be appreciated that this description is merely exemplary of at least one method of implementing the Authentication System **100** with respect to at least one second social network **112**.

[00134] The Authentication System **100** is flexible enough to function on a variety of Social Networks, or more specifically, a Community Platform comprised of the following elements, one or more recognizable Users, an ability to form Entries and Responses in order to form a threaded discussion around a specific Topic. Even the ability to "suggest", "like", "thumbs up/down", can be viewed as an entry and a part of a threaded discussion.

[00135] It is to be appreciated that absent the advantageous nature of the Authentication System **100**, actions by Users on the first social network **102** exampled by FIG. 3 would be unknown to User on the second social network **112** exampled by FIG. 5 – and vis-a-versa.

[00136] Returning to FIG. 7, table of records **716** provides the User names **718** associated with registered User Dan Mann and at least two social network sites. As with table of records **710** associated to User Spiff, table of records **720** illustrates the Fields associated with User Dan Mann, and specifically with the discussion **500** as illustrated in FIG. 5.

[00137] With respect to FIG. 5 it is to be understood and appreciated that discussion **500** is occurring in response to an article **502** that has been posted. It is further understood and appreciated that for purposes of the present example it is assumed that article **502** has been posted by the User Spiff_73 – though it is further understood and appreciated that User Spiff_73 need not be the original author. In other words the media giving rise to the discussion **500** is understood and appreciated to be of varying forms and origins. Moreover, article **502** may be a blog, new article, or other writing that has been offered in the online community. With respect to the Authentication System **100**, and method **200** this article **502** is received and treated as an initial Entry to a thread, and more specifically the Topic. As shown, metadata Fields **504** of ***Surfing***, ***California***, ***Titus Kukamunga***, ***Tube Rider*** and ***Extreme Sports*** have been shown in Bold Italics.

[00138] For the present example it is assumed that Users are included in the Authentication System **100** regardless of registration. It is also assumed that User Spiff_73 has posted the article **502**, but also that Spiff_73 is not the author of the article **502**. As with the discussion shown in FIG. 3, it is of course understood and appreciated that the discussion in FIG. 5 is generally understood to occur over time, but has been illustrated as substantially complete for ease of illustration and discussion.

[00139] There are also nine (9) subsequent Responses, **506**, **508**, **510**, **512**, **514**, **516**, **518**, **520** and **522** of which Responses **506** and **520** are non-textual Responses and **508**, **510**, **512**, **514**, **516**, **518** and **520** are textual. In the textual Responses **508**, **510**, **512**, **514**, **516**, **518** and **520** some words are again shown in Bold Italics to indicate they are Fields **504**. In addition, shown within brackets for each Response is an indication of how the Fields **504** have been identified – e.g., by the User posting the Response, or by the Authentication System **100** recognizing the use of a previously identified Field **504**.

[00140] Discussion **500** is monitored by the Authentication System **100** in substantially the same way as described above with respect to discussion **300**. At block **206** the Authentication System **100** is monitoring the second social network **112** for an Entry/Response.

[00141] In response to the posting of the article and initial comments by Spiff_73, (activity by a Registered User, decision **208**), the Authentication System **100** instantiates a new table of records **1000** shown in FIG. 10, by following the method as described above with respect to blocks **220**, **222** and **224**. Similar to FIG. 8, in FIG. 10, table of records **1000** conceptually illustrate a database entry for the new discussion Topic as initiated by Spiff_73, showing the topic name, source, date and whether or not a ratings adjustment is to be applied.

[00142] For the purposes of this example, it is presumed that Spiff_73 has identified directly or with the aid of the Authentication System **100** the Fields **504** of ***Surfing***, ***California***, ***Titus Kukamunga***, ***Tube Rider*** and ***Extreme Sports***, such that these Fields are associated with the Authentication System **100** User Spiff as records **714** as shown in table of records **710** as described above.

[00143] For the second social network **112** and discussion **500**, the Users Authentication level is indicated in a different form from that illustrated with respect to the first social network **102** and discussion **300**. In FIG. 5, presented is an active area identified as the SNB Score Chart **524**. The SNB Score Chart **524** shows the aggregate Field Value derived from the Users Accounts that relate to the current Topic.

[00144] Upon the initial Entry of the Topic **502** and the Responses **506** and **508** by Spiff_73, the SNB Score Chart **524** would contain no listing of Users or aggregate Field Values as the only User at that point would be Spiff_73, and Authentication within this thread is only established by third party Responses.

[00145] From the above discussion with respect to the discussion **300** shown in FIG. 3, it is understood and appreciated that Spiff Jones, aka, Spiff28 for the first social network **102** and here Spiff_73 for the second social network **112** has previously established a level of Authentication with respect to quite a number of different Fields. However, Authentication for one specific Field does not necessarily imply Authentication for another Field.

[00146] Moreover, as the Authentication System continues to monitor the second social network, block **206**, it will detect the activity by Piper, decision **208**, and as a Response, metadata will be gathered, block **214**, and for associated Field(s) values will be determined and Authentication levels will be adjusted, blocks **226** and **228**.

[00147] As the Response **510** by Piper indicates, the Authentication System **100** has permitted her to ascertain that Spiff_73 has little, if any Authentication with respect to the Field ***surfing***. In his Response **512**, Spiff_73 openly admits this, but now also introduces the Field ***Marathon***, a Field for which he does indeed have Authentication, and thereby may bolster his credibility.

[00148] The SNB Score Chart **524** now updates the listing of Authenticated Users to show that indeed Spiff_73 is Authenticated for the Field ***Marathon***, and shows his level of Authentication. Piper, apparently having no Authentication for the Fields ***Marathon*** or ***Surfing*** is not displayed in the SNB Score Chart **524**.

[00149] Once the discussion **500** reaches the Response **518** by registered User Dan_Man06, the Authentication System **100** recognizes the Field ***paddle boarding***. As this is his first Response to discussion **500** he is only now added to the SNB Score Chart **524**. However, because Dan_Man06 has a previously established Authentication with respect to the Field ***Surfing***, his Authentication for that Field as a component of the current discussion **500** is also displayed along with his Authentication for ***paddle boarding*** in the SNB Score Chart **524**. Also, as his Authentication levels are greater than what Spiff_72 has established with respect to the Field ***Marathon***, Dan_Man06 is shown first in the listing.

[00150] Whereas discussion **300** evolved with multiple Responses occurring at the same level, discussion **500** illustrates that most of the Responses are indeed Responses to Responses. This provides an alternative view for how Field Values can be applied to the Associations that are made at each nested level of the hierarchical discussion through subsequent Response to those levels. Outline **610** in FIG. 6 conceptually illustrates the Response levels **602** and Fields **504** that are occurring in each Response. Table of records **1100** conceptually illustrates how the Authentication System **100** may record this hierarchy as well.

[00151] As with the discussion **300** and table of records **810**, the Authentication System **100** establishes a table of records **1010** to associate each User with respective Fields **504** in discussion **500**, and the associated Field values.

[00152] More specifically, in accordance with the example of discussion **300** in FIG. 3, the Response hierarchy for User Spiff's original Entry is evaluated as follows:

2 registered User Responses at the 2nd level: Evaluation is 1/1 x 2 = 2

2 registered User Responses at the 3rd level: Evaluation is 1/2 x 2 = 1

1 registered User Response at the 4th level: Evaluation is 1/3 x 1 = 0.33

1 registered User Response at the 5th level: Evaluation is 1/4 x 1 = 0.25

TOTAL = 3.58

[00153] It may be noticed that in the tally Spiff_73 was counted for both of the 3rd level Responses and for the one 5th level Response. As noted above, in at least one embodiment a subsequent Response by the original registered User is ignored, such that an adjusted Total would appear as TOTAL = 2.33

[00154] Accounting again for adjustments made from the Field Averages, and again ignoring the subsequent postings by Spiff_78, the Field Average is based on the Field ***surfing*** being the Field of highest frequency 2 instances other than those by Spiff_73. This Field Average relates to all subsequent Responses to Spiff's original Entry.

Surfing – 2/2 = 100%

Paddle boarding – 1/2 = 50%

Endurance – 1/2 = 50%

Marathon – 1/2 = 50%

Titus Kukamunga – 0/2 = 0%

Tube rider – 0/2 = 0%

Extreme Sports – 0/2 = 0%

California – 0/2 = 0%

[00155] Each respective Field Value for the Fields set forth by Spiff_73's original entry is derived based on the adjusted TOTAL = 2.33 as noted above, * Field Average, * Ratings Adjustment. More specifically:

Surfing – 2.33 x 1.00 X .50 = 1.165

Titus Kukamunga – 2.33 x 0 X .50 = 0

[00156] It should also be noted that with respect to discussion **500** Spiff_73's creates a subsequent entry **612**, FIG 6, that creates an Association to the Field ***Marathon***. From this level of the hierarchy ***Marathon*** is used one more time by User Jill along with ***Surfing***, while subsequently Spiff_73 makes reference to the Field **endurance**. From this level of the Hierarchy the Field Average for ***Marathon*** is 100% since ***Marathon***, ***surfing***, and ***endurance*** are all subsequently used once, or a ratio of 1/1. Since this Entry/Response generated one 1st level Response from User Jill (e.g., Response **614**), and a 2nd level Response from Spiff_73 which is nullified, the Field Value Spiff_73 generates for ***Marathon*** from this Entry/Response is 1.0 x 1.00 X .50 = .50. Since there are no Responses to Spiff_73's other two Responses, Spiff_73 generates no values to the Fields Associated within those Responses.

[00157] With respect to discussion **500**, it is also noted that there are 5 "Likes" in Response to Response **518** by User Dan_Man. These are simple, non-textual Responses

that provide no additional information beyond the indicated preference, e.g., like or dislike, thumbs up or thumbs down, happy face or sad face, etc…, and perhaps the User's ID. In discussion **300** there were also non-textual Responses, but they were direct to the initial Entry **302**. Because Responses to Responses are indirect Responses, they are evaluated differently.

[00158] When the Authentication System **100** is configured for affiliation with at least one social network, settings for the type of non-textual Responses that may be present are entered as well. Of course an administrator or other authorized party can adjust the configuration settings of the Authentication System **100** at a later time so as to accommodate changes that may occur both with registered Users as well as affiliated social networks.

[00159] With respect to the discussion **500**, once the non-textual Responses **520** occur, the Authentication System **100** acts to recognize them and evaluate them for proper Authentication adjustment of the related Fields **504** in the parent Response **518**, in this case ***paddle boarding*** and ***endurance***.

[00160] For User Dan_Man's Response **518** Associations to the Fields ***endurance*** and ***paddle boarding*** are created. Since this generates the Responses "5 Likes", and a 1st level Response from Spiff_73 the following Field Averages and Field Values are created. For this embodiment, the predetermined value of 0.20 is set for each non-textual Response "Like",. As such, the 5 "Likes" generate a value of 1.0. The 1st level Response from Sipff_73 coincidently also generates a value of 1. The non-textual Responses (5 Likes) and the Response from Spiff_73 are then combined for a base value Total = 2. Therefore, from this Entry/Response User Dan_Man generates a Field Value of 2 x 1.0 (Field Average) X .5 (Ratings Adjustment) = 1, for the Field ***paddle boarding***, and Field Value of 2 x 0 (Field Average) X .5 (Ratings Adjustment) = 0 for the Field ***endurance.***

[00161] These values are combined with the Field Values as determined above and shown in the table of records **1010** in FIG. 10, in column **1012** corresponding to the User ID of Spiff_73. As with the table of records **810**, table of records **1010** tracks the use of each Field corresponding with each registered User. Moreover, there are entries for Field Values for the Fields used by other registered User Piper in column **1014**, Jill in Column **1016**, and Dan_Man in column **1018**.

[00162] Whereas table of records **1010** illustrates all Fields associated by Users that occur in connection with the Topic of discussion **500** table of records **1030** illustrates the Total Field Value that is derived from the Topic "***Aloha Comes to California***." This table is derived from all Associations to Fields, and all Field Values that where generated through this Topic. This allows for an additional benefit of the SNB, in which threaded discussions

can be Authenticated based upon the Fields and their Values that are generated through discussions. It is further appreciated that the Authentication System **100** has information establishing the fact that Spiff_73 and Spiff28 are one and the same User and as such, his Authentication as developed/augmented on the one social network is portable to another social network and vis-a-versa.

[00163] To summarize, for at least one embodiment, the Authentication System **100** is operable to authenticate User identities between a plurality of social networks. Such operation is achieved by implementing a method of associating metadata from a posting by a pre-defined User identity on a first social network to define at least one associated Field. The method continues by tracking Responses to the posting by at least one third party, and in Response to the third party using the at least one associated Field, assigning a value to the associated Field used. The pre-defined User is then authenticated based on the value of at least one associated Field. An indication of the pre-defined Users Authentication is then provided on the first social network and any second social networks wherein the pre-defined User is engaged in discussion involving the at least one associated Field.

[00164] **AUTHENTICATION IN AN EXISTING DISCUSSION**

[00165] As noted above, the Authentication System **100** and method **200** are responsive to Authenticate a User in Response to subsequent postings by one or more 3rd parties. With respect to both of the above example discussion **300** and **500**, the initial posting and Topic have been established by a registered User initiating the entire discussion. FIGs. 12 and 13 illustrate how Authentication is still achieved for registered Users when the registered Users are not the originating parties.

[00166] More specifically, FIG. 12 presents discussion **1200** which is recognized to closely parallel discussion **300** above as Responses **302'**, **304'**, **306'**, **308'**, **310'**, **312'**, **314'**, **316', 318,' 320'** and **322'** are substantially identical to Entry **302** and Responses **304**, **306**, **308**, **310**, **312**, **314**, **316, 318, 320** and **322** as described above. The difference of course is that Responses **302'~322'** are occurring in Response to prior postings by other users who are not registered Users known to the Authentication System **100**.

[00167] Discussion **1200** has been initiated by the posting of a video by User Allen12, who further adds commentary about an ongoing blog. As shown, there are also four Responses **1204**, **1206**, **1208** and **1210** by other Users which occur before Response **302'** by Spiff28 is shown to occur. However, the original Entry **1202** and Responses **1204**, **1206**, **1208** and **1210** were provided by un-registered Users, Authentication System **100** and method **200** as described above have not been triggered.

[00168] Upon the action of Spiff28 to offer Response **302'** the Authentication System **100** and method **200** commence with the Authentication process as Spiff28 is indeed a registered User. With respect to this example discussion **1200**, for at least one embodiment the metadata from the original entry **1202** should reviewed as the Topic is generally understood to be set by the initial entry, and in this case would appear to be "***Endurance Sports – Running a Marathon is Fun***." Spiff28 may in certain embodiments amend this Topic or add an addendum to the Topic as "***Disney Marathons***."

[00169] With respect to FIG. 12 and the initial Entry **1200**, the terms "Endurance Sports – Running a Marathon is Fun," "Florida," and "Disney World" are not shown in Bold Italics as was done in FIGs. 3 and 6 to indicate Fields. This is because at the time of the posting by Allen, an un-registered User, they were not recognized to the Authentication System **100** and method **200** as Fields. Moreover, they may become Fields upon the posting of Response **302'** by Spiff28 who is a registered User.

[00170] In addition, as is shown in FIG. 13, paralleling FIG. 6 the hierarchy **1300** of discussion **1200** is slightly different as the Reponses by Spiff28 is not a first level Response. The Fields ***endurance sports*** and ***Marathon*** define the Topic as the first node in the hierarchy. However, as the Response by Spiff28 is the first instance of a Response by a registered User, the intervening Responses and even the original Entry by Allen12 are discounted as they do not affect the Authentication as it transpires for Spiff28 and the subsequent other registered Users.

[00171] Moreover, for at least one embodiment the hierarchy **1300** is relative with respect to the perspective of User Spiff28, and thus shown in bold italics as hierarchy **1302**. As Spiff28 cannot receive Authentication from his own Response, his Response may be equated to a 1st level Response, though it does not replace the Topic as recorded in the Topic Hierarchy. In the event that Allen12, Sue08, Tina6, Carl2, or Mike 88 should become registered Users, the designation of the Topic will still remain as the first node in the hierarchy.

[00172] In summary of the above descriptions, FIG. 14 presents a conceptual view of the Authentication System **100** in operation. Basic information **1400** regarding the registered User's information (User IDs, social networks, etc..) are provided to the database **1402** of the Authentication System **100**.

[00173] As a discussion **1404** evolves on at least one social network, the involvement of a registered User, such as the exemplary Spiff28, triggers the Authentication System **100** to collect metadata. For the initial posting, this metadata may well include a Topic **1406** as well as metadata from the textual posting **1408**, including but not limited to, at least one Field **1410**.

[00174] Responses **1412** by 3rd parties, are trapped by the Authentication System and based on the metadata gathered from those Responses the Users Authentication is established, and/or augmented. The Authentication System **100** maintains record **1414** of the Topic and the evolving discussion **1404**. A varying degree of information **1416** regarding a registered User can be provided.

[00175] For example, registered User Spiff28 is shown to have an indicator icon **1418** demonstrating his participation in the Authentication System **100**. In varying embodiments, a click, cursor over, or other selection operation can provide a window to display information **1416**.

[00176] It should also be understood and appreciated that as the method **200** of Authentication bridges the registered Users identity across multiple social networks, it is advantageously possible for an inquisitive party to learn of other discussions and or information upon other social networks that he or she may have been previously unaware of. For example, a person looking for information in caring for an elderly parent may discover a social network and support group that is entirely dedicated to that cause. Likewise, a universe of valuable information regarding nut allergies, ideas for safe birthday ideas for children, or other issues may be easily identified and accessed in ways that are not currently provided by traditional search engines.

[00177] With respect to the above description of Authentication System **100** and method **200** it is understood and appreciated that the method may be rendered in a variety of different forms of code and instruction as may be used for different computer systems and environments. To expand upon the initial suggestion of a computer implementation above, FIG. 15 is a high level block diagram of an exemplary computer system **1500**. Computer system **1500** has a case **1502**, enclosing a main board **1504**. The main board **1504** has a system bus **1506**, connection ports **1508**, a processing unit, such as Central Processing Unit (CPU) **1510** with at least one macroprocessor (not shown) and a memory storage device, such as main memory **1512**, hard drive **1514** and CD/DVD ROM drive **1516**.

[00178] Memory bus **1518** couples main memory **1512** to the CPU **1510**. A system bus **1506** couples the hard disc drive **1514**, CD/DVD ROM drive **1516** and connection ports **1508** to the CPU **1510**. Multiple input devices may be provided, such as, for example, a mouse **1520** and keyboard **1522**. Multiple output devices may also be provided, such as, for example, a video monitor **1524** and a printer (not shown).

[00179] Computer system **1500** may be a commercially available system, such as a desktop workstation unit provided by IBM, Dell Computers, Gateway, Apple, or other computer system provider. Computer system **1500** may also be a networked computer system, wherein memory storage components such as hard drive **1514,** additional CPUs

1510 and output devices such as printers are provided by physically separate computer systems commonly connected together in the network. Those skilled in the art will understand and appreciate that the physical composition of components and component interconnections are comprised by the computer system **1500**, and select a computer system **1500** suitable for the establishing the Authentication System **100**.

[00180] When computer system **1500** is activated, preferably an operating system **1526** will load into main memory **1512** as part of the boot strap startup sequence and ready the computer system **1500** for operation. At the simplest level, and in the most general sense, the tasks of an operating system fall into specific categories, such as, process management, device management (including application and User interface management) and memory management, for example. The form of the computer-readable medium **1528** and language of the program **1530** are understood to be appropriate for and functionally cooperate with the computer system **1500**.

[00181] Changes may be made in the above methods, systems and structures without departing from the scope hereof. It should thus be noted that the matter contained in the above description and/or shown in the accompanying drawings should be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. The following claims are intended to cover all generic and specific features described herein, as well as all statements of the scope of the present method, system and structure, which, as a matter of language, might be said to fall there between.

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method to authenticate user identities comprising:
   gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined user identity on a first social network;
   evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity; and
   authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response, and
   providing an indication of authentication for the at least one pre-defined user identity.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein evaluating metadata of at least one third party response includes non-textual responses.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein all third party responses are evaluated.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein direct responses are evaluated with a higher value and indirect responses are evaluated with a lower value.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
   gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving the at least one pre-defined user identity on a second social network;
   evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity on the second social network;
   authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response; and
   providing an indication of the at least one pre-defined user's authentication to the first social network and the second social network.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein gathering metadata further comprises defining at least one field associated to the at least one pre-defined user identity; and evaluating the metadata further comprises, in response to the third party using at least one associated field, assigning a value to the associated field used.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the method bridges the at least one pre-defined user identity authentication across a plurality of social networks.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein authenticating the user identity includes providing a degree of authentication across a pre-defined range.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one third party providing a response has a user identity that has been authenticated.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the indication is provided in the form selected from the group consisting of an icon, graphic, picture, color, luminance intensity, value, and audible element.

11. A method to authenticate user identities on at least one social network comprising:
associating metadata from a posting by a first user identity on a first social network to define at least one associated field;
tracking responses to the posting by at least one third party, and in response to the third party using one or more of the associated fields, assigning a value to each associated field used;
authenticating the first user identity based on the value of one or more of the associated fields; and
providing an indication of the first user authentication.

12. The method of claim 11, further including tracking at least one non-textual response to postings by at least one third party and authenticating the first user identity based at least in part on the at least one non-textual response.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the non-textual response is selected from the group consisting of a rating scale, like/dislike, and thumbs-up thumbs-down.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein an indication of the first user identity authentication is provided to at least one second social network where the first user identity is engaged in discussion involving the at least one associated field.

15. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving the first user identity on a second social network;
evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the first user identity on the second social network;
authenticating the first user identity based on the evaluated third party response; and
providing an indication of the first user identity authentication to the first social network and the second social network.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein direct responses are evaluated with a higher value and indirect responses are evaluated with a lower value.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein the method bridges the first users authentication across a plurality of social networks.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein the authenticating process is based at least in part on determining the number of responses by third parties, the number of times the at least one associated field is used, and non-textual third party responses.

19. The method of claim 11, wherein the indication is provided in the form selected from the group consisting of an icon, graphic, picture, color, luminance intensity, value, and audible element.

20. A system for authenticating user identities comprising:

at least one user account, the user account identifying at least a first social network and an associated known user identity;

a metadata gatherer structured and arranged to gather metadata from at least the first social network regarding each known user identity, the gathered metadata including at least one field obtained from at least one posting by a known user identity and subsequent third party responses to the known user identity;

a database structured and arranged to associate the at least one field to the known user identity; and

an authenticator structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity by assigning a value to at least a portion of the metadata of each third party response.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the authenticator is further structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity based at least in part on determining the number of responses by third parties, the number of times the at least one associated field is used in responses, and non-textual third party responses.

22. The system of claim 20, wherein the authenticator is structured and arranged to, in response to at least one third party response using the at least one associated field, assigning a value to the associated field used.

23. The system of claim 20, wherein the system for authentication is a component of the first social network.

24. The system of claim 20, wherein the system for authentication is distinct from the first social network.

25. The system of claim 20, wherein the authenticator is further structured and arranged to assign a first value to direct responses and second value to indirect responses, the second value being less then the first value.

26. The system of claim 20, wherein the metadata gatherer further gathers metadata from non-textual responses.

27. The system of claim 20, wherein at least one user account identifies at least a second social network and a second associated known user identity.

28. The system of claim 20, wherein a third party response on the second social network site involving the at least one field associated to the known user affects the authentication of the known user on both the first and second social network sites.

29. The system of claim 20, wherein the system is structured and arranged to provide an indication of authentication, the indication is provided in the form selected from the group consisting of an icon, graphic, picture, color, luminance intensity, value, and audible element.

30. A social networking bridge for authenticating user identities comprising:

a bridge structured and arranged to review a plurality of social networks, the bridge having;

at least one user account, the user account identifying at least one social network and an associated known user identity;

a metadata generator structured and arranged to gather metadata from each social network regarding each known user identity, the gathered metadata obtained from at least one discussion and subsequent discussions involving each known user identity;

a database structured and arranged to correlate the gathered metadata to each known user identity;

an identity authenticator structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity based on evaluating metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the known user identity.

31. The system of claim 30, wherein the metadata generator is further structured and arranged to identify at least one field associated to the at least one known user identity.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein the identity authenticator is further structured and arranged to authenticate each known user identity based at least in part on determining the number of responses by third parties, the number of times the at least one associated field is used in responses, and non-textual third party responses.

33. The system of claim 30, wherein the metadata gatherer further gathers metadata from non-textual responses.

34. The system of claim 30, wherein the system is structured and arranged to provide an indication of authentication, the indication is provided in the form selected from the group consisting of an icon, graphic, picture, color, luminance intensity, value, and audible element.

35. A non-transitory machine readable medium on which is stored a computer program for authenticating a user, the computer program comprising instructions which when executed by a computer system having at least one processor performs the steps of:

gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving at least one pre-defined user identity on a first social network;

evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity; and

authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response, and

providing an indication of authentication for the at least one pre-defined user identity.

36. The non-transitory machine readable medium of claim 35, further comprising computer program instructions to perform the steps of:

gathering metadata from at least one discussion involving the at least one pre-defined user identity on a second social network;

evaluating the metadata of at least one third party response related to a posting by the at least one pre-defined user identity on the second social network;

authenticating the at least one pre-defined user identity based on the evaluated third party response; and

providing an indication of the at least one pre-defined user's authentication to the first social network and the second social network.

37. The non-transitory machine readable medium of claim 35, wherein direct responses are evaluated with a higher value and indirect responses are evaluated with a lower value.

38. The non-transitory machine readable medium of claim 35, wherein gathering metadata further comprises defining at least one field associated to the at least one pre-defined user identity; and evaluating the metadata further comprises, in response to the third party using at least one associated field, assigning a value to the associated field used.

FIG. 1

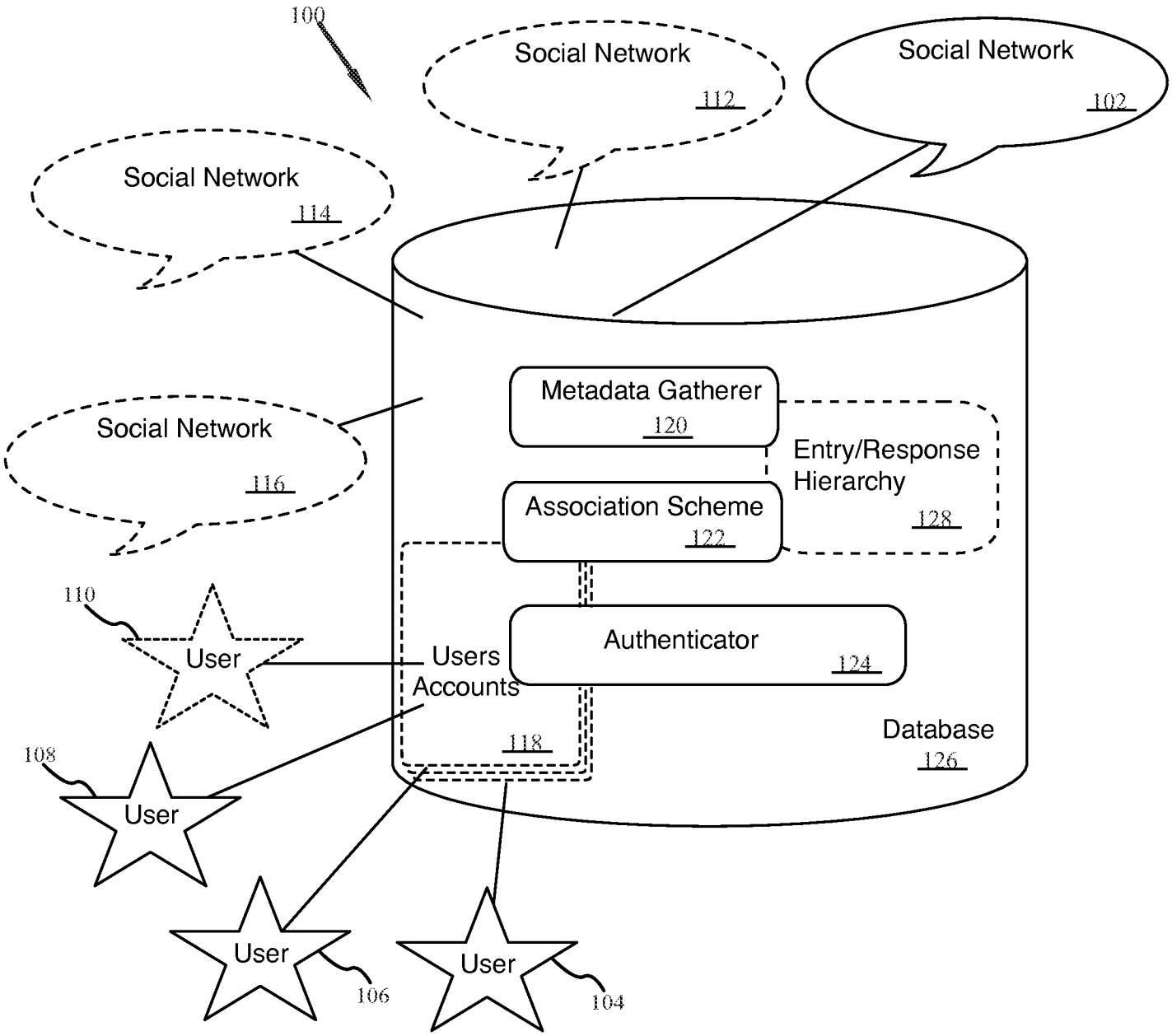

100
Social Network
112
Social Network
102
Social Network
114
Social Network
116
Metadata Gatherer
120
Entry/Response
Hierarchy
128
Association Scheme
122
Authenticator
124
Database
126
Users
Accounts
118
110
User
108
User
User
106
User
104

FIG. 2

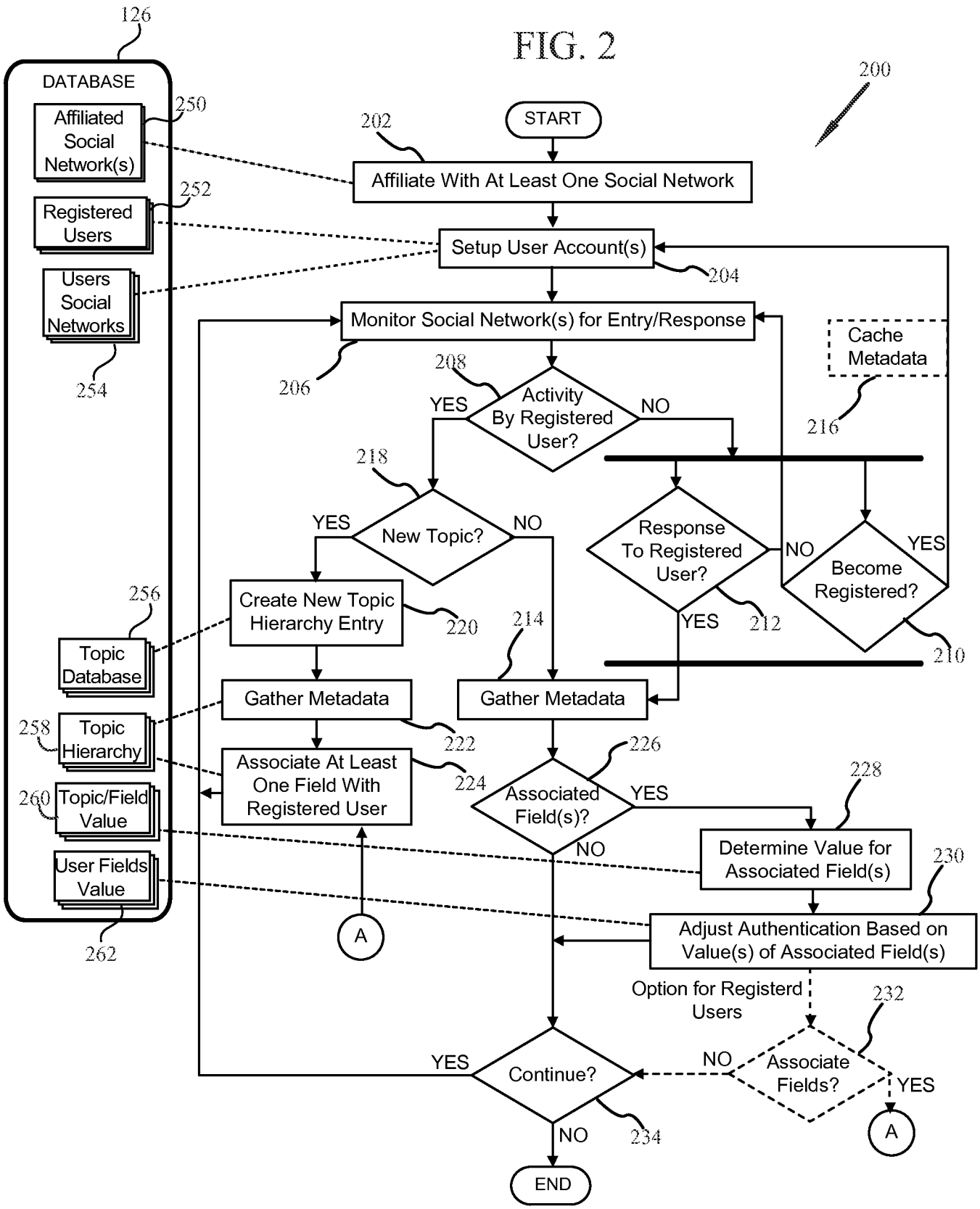
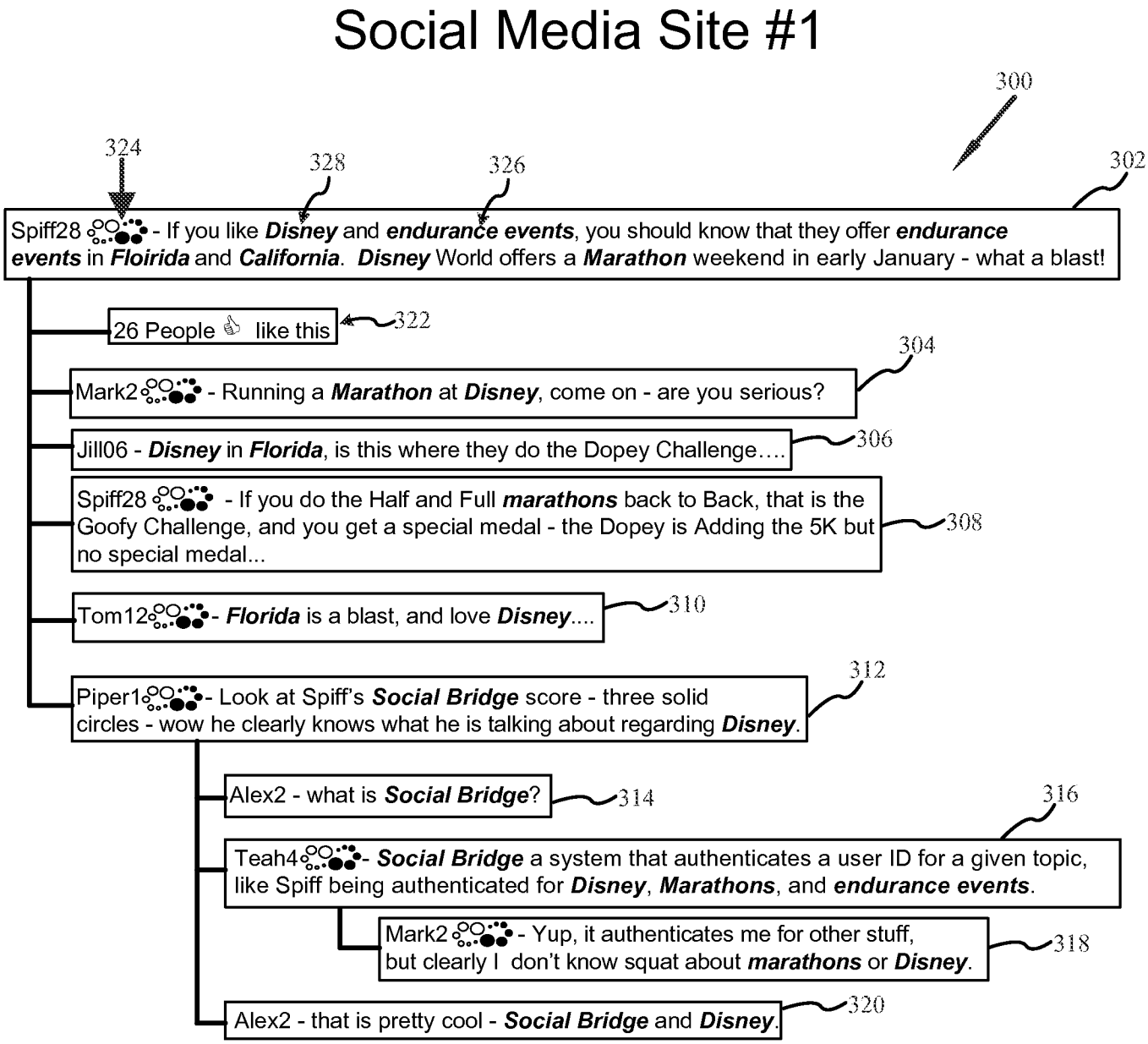

126
DATABASE
Affiliated Social Network(s)
250
Registered Users
252
Users Social Networks
254
Topic Database
256
Topic Hierarchy
258
Topic/Field Value
260
User Fields Value
262
200
START
202
Affiliate With At Least One Social Network
Setup User Account(s)
204
Monitor Social Network(s) for Entry/Response
206
Cache Metadata
216
208
Activity By Registered User?
YES
NO
218
New Topic?
YES
NO
Create New Topic Hierarchy Entry
220
Response To Registered User?
NO
YES
212
Become Registered?
YES
NO
210
214
Gather Metadata
222
Gather Metadata
Associate At Least One Field With Registered User
224
226
Associated Field(s)?
YES
NO
228
Determine Value for Associated Field(s)
230
Adjust Authentication Based on Value(s) of Associated Field(s)
A
Option for Registerd Users
232
Associate Fields?
NO
YES
A
Continue?
YES
NO
234
END

FIG. 3



TAG	USE
Disney (World)	6
endurance events	1
Florida	1
California	0
Marathon	4
Social Bridge	2

FIG. 4

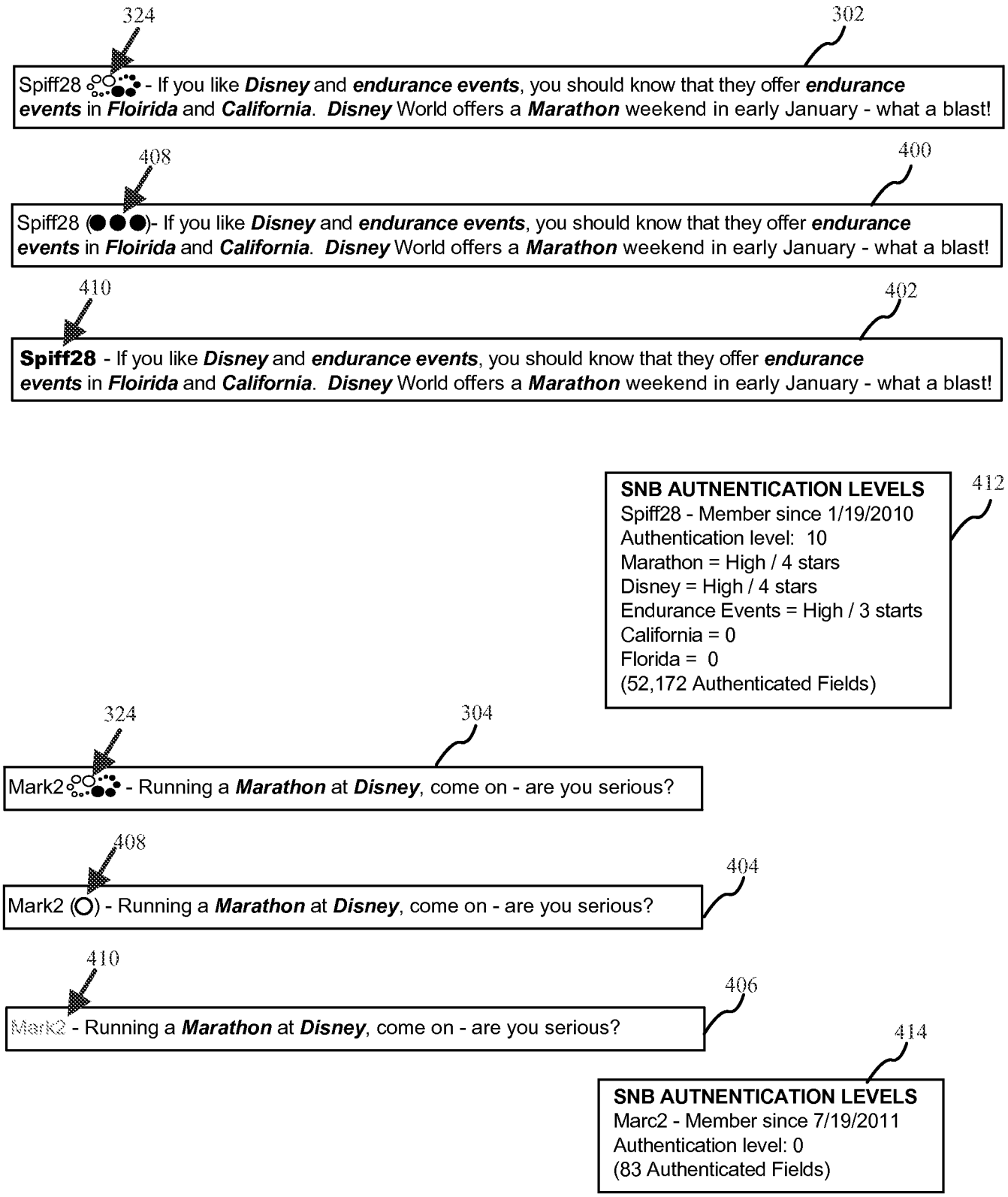

324
302
Spiff28 - If you like Disney and endurance events, you should know that they offer endurance events in Floirida and California. Disney World offers a Marathon weekend in early January - what a blast!
408
400
Spiff28 (●●●)- If you like Disney and endurance events, you should know that they offer endurance events in Floirida and California. Disney World offers a Marathon weekend in early January - what a blast!
410
402
Spiff28 - If you like Disney and endurance events, you should know that they offer endurance events in Floirida and California. Disney World offers a Marathon weekend in early January - what a blast!
SNB AUTNENTICATION LEVELS
Spiff28 - Member since 1/19/2010
Authentication level: 10
Marathon = High / 4 stars
Disney = High / 4 stars
Endurance Events = High / 3 starts
California = 0
Florida = 0
(52,172 Authenticated Fields)
412
324
304
Mark2 - Running a Marathon at Disney, come on - are you serious?
408
404
Mark2 (○) - Running a Marathon at Disney, come on - are you serious?
410
406
Mark2 - Running a Marathon at Disney, come on - are you serious?
414
SNB AUTNENTICATION LEVELS
Marc2 - Member since 7/19/2011
Authentication level: 0
(83 Authenticated Fields)

FIG. 5

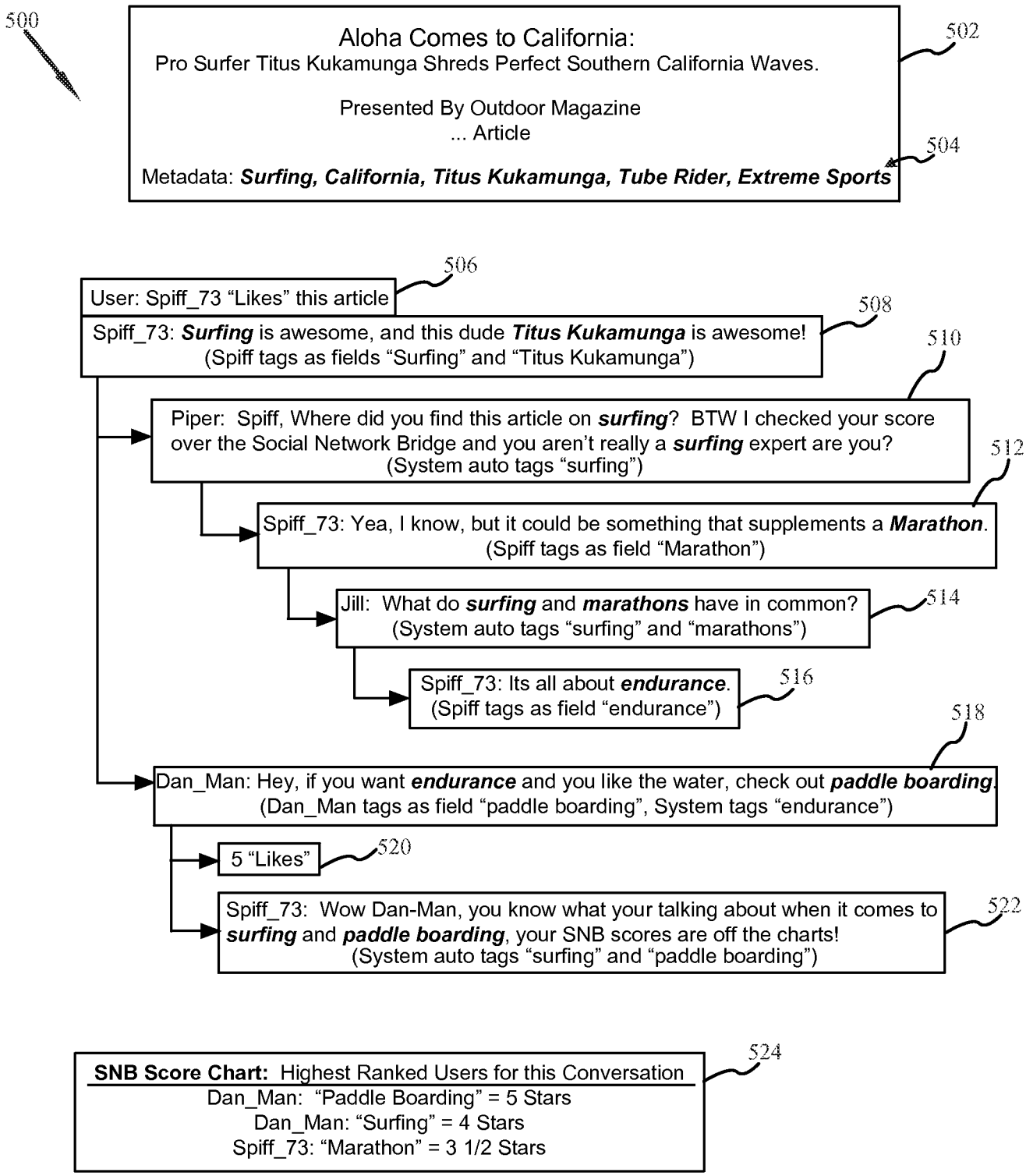

500
Aloha Comes to California:
Pro Surfer Titus Kukamunga Shreds Perfect Southern California Waves.
Presented By Outdoor Magazine
... Article
Metadata: Surfing, California, Titus Kukamunga, Tube Rider, Extreme Sports
502
504
User: Spiff_73 "Likes" this article
506
Spiff_73: Surfing is awesome, and this dude Titus Kukamunga is awesome!
(Spiff tags as fields "Surfing" and "Titus Kukamunga")
508
Piper: Spiff, Where did you find this article on surfing? BTW I checked your score over the Social Network Bridge and you aren't really a surfing expert are you?
(System auto tags "surfing")
510
Spiff_73: Yea, I know, but it could be something that supplements a Marathon.
(Spiff tags as field "Marathon")
512
Jill: What do surfing and marathons have in common?
(System auto tags "surfing" and "marathons")
514
Spiff_73: Its all about endurance.
(Spiff tags as field "endurance")
516
Dan_Man: Hey, if you want endurance and you like the water, check out paddle boarding.
(Dan_Man tags as field "paddle boarding", System tags "endurance")
518
5 "Likes"
520
Spiff_73: Wow Dan-Man, you know what your talking about when it comes to surfing and paddle boarding, your SNB scores are off the charts!
(System auto tags "surfing" and "paddle boarding")
522
SNB Score Chart: Highest Ranked Users for this Conversation
Dan_Man: "Paddle Boarding" = 5 Stars
Dan_Man: "Surfing" = 4 Stars
Spiff_73: "Marathon" = 3 1/2 Stars
524

FIG. 6

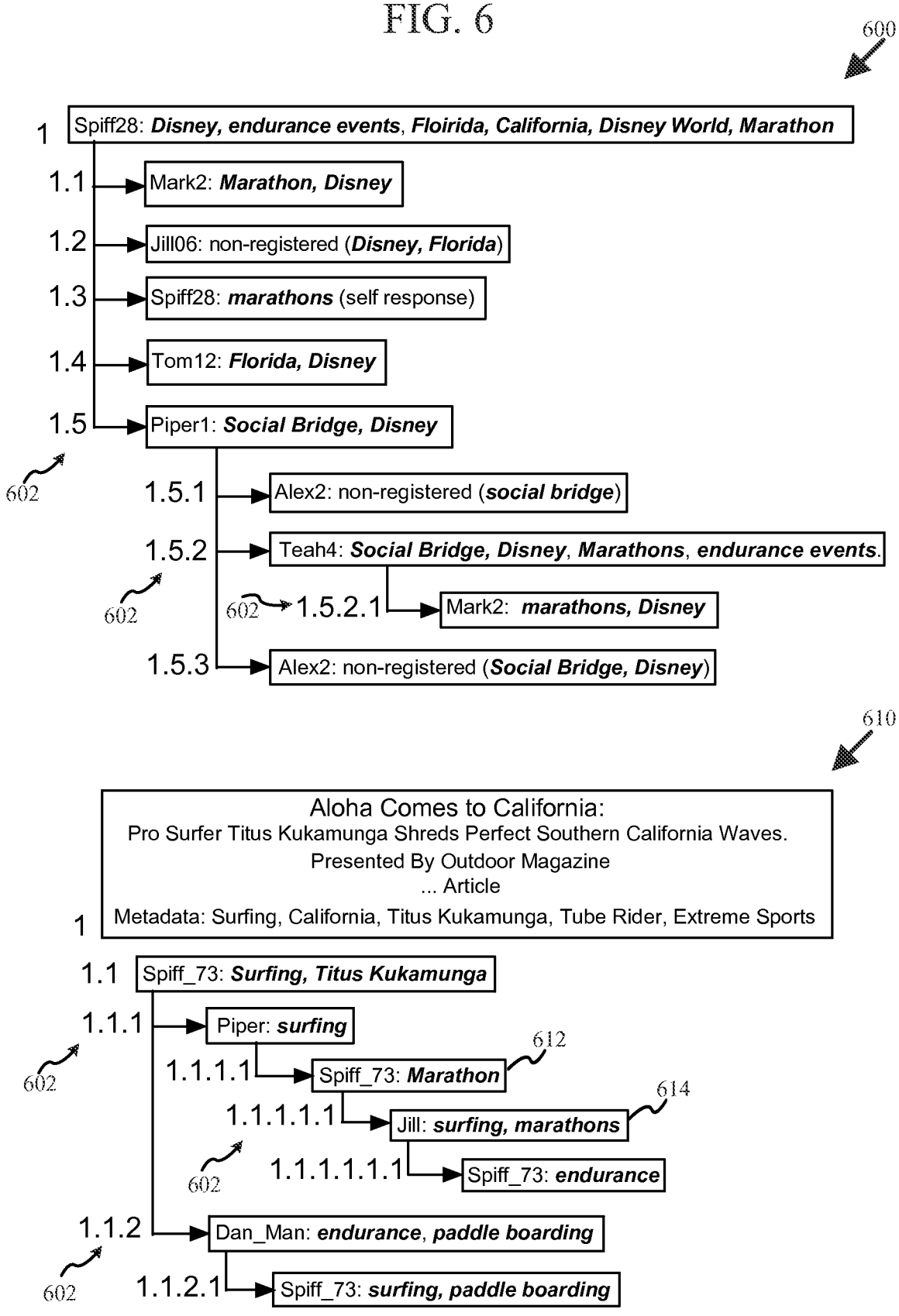

600
1
Spiff28: Disney, endurance events, Floirida, California, Disney World, Marathon
1.1
Mark2: Marathon, Disney
1.2
Jill06: non-registered (Disney, Florida)
1.3
Spiff28: marathons (self response)
1.4
Tom12: Florida, Disney
1.5
Piper1: Social Bridge, Disney
602
1.5.1
Alex2: non-registered (social bridge)
1.5.2
Teah4: Social Bridge, Disney, Marathons, endurance events.
602
602
1.5.2.1
Mark2: marathons, Disney
1.5.3
Alex2: non-registered (Social Bridge, Disney)
610
Aloha Comes to California:
Pro Surfer Titus Kukamunga Shreds Perfect Southern California Waves.
Presented By Outdoor Magazine
... Article
1
Metadata: Surfing, California, Titus Kukamunga, Tube Rider, Extreme Sports
1.1
Spiff_73: Surfing, Titus Kukamunga
1.1.1
Piper: surfing
602
612
1.1.1.1
Spiff_73: Marathon
614
1.1.1.1.1
Jill: surfing, marathons
602
1.1.1.1.1.1
Spiff_73: endurance
1.1.2
Dan_Man: endurance, paddle boarding
602
1.1.2.1
Spiff_73: surfing, paddle boarding

FIG. 7

700

User Authentication Database			
User ID	**User Name(optional)**	**User Password**	**Date of Entry**
Spiff	Spiff Jones	*****	8/23/10
Dan_Man	Dan Mann	*****	9/15/10
…			

702 704

708 706

User Social Networks (User ID:Spiff)			
SN Name	**SN IP Address**	**Username**	**Password**
Social Media Site 1	…	Spiff28	*****
Social Media Site 2	…	Spiff_73	*****
Social Media Site 3	…	Spiff_jones_73	*****

102 112

710

User Field values (User ID:Spiff)		
Field Name	**Total Field Associations**	**Total Field Value**
Disney	75	290
marathons	68	128
California	22	60
Florida	4	2.5
endurance events	12	23
surfing	1.165	3.015
endurance	8	13
paddle boarding	1	0
Italian food	…	…
bikes	…	…
etc…	…	…

712 714

718 716

User Social Networks (User ID:Dan_Man)			
SN Name	**SN IP Address**	**Username**	**Password**
Social Media Site 1	…	Dan_Man	*****
Social Media Site 2	…	Dan_Man06	*****

102 112

720

User Field values (User ID:Dan_Man)		
Field Name	**Total Field Associations**	**Total Field Value**
surfing	32	120
paddle boarding	24	23
endurance	5	10
Italian food	…	…
bikes	…	…
etc…	…	…

800

Topic Record						
Topic Name	"Disney Marathons"					
Source	www.disneyreviews.com/Article/disney_marathons					
Date Of Origin	2/25/11					
Users	Spiff28	Mark2	Tom12	Piper1	Teah4	
Fields	Disney	Marathon	Endurance	California	Florida	Social Bridge
Ratings Adjustment	neutral					

FIG. 8

810

Topic Field Values For All Users (Topic Name: "Disney Marathons")

User ID: Spiff28		**User ID: Mark2**		**User ID: Tom12**		**User ID: Piper1**		**User ID: Teah4**	
Field	**Field Value**	**Field**	**Field Value**	**Field**	**Field Value**	**Field**	**Field Value**	**Field**	**Field Value**
Disney	1.915	Marathon	0	Florida	0	Social Bridge	0.375	Marathon	0.5
Marathon	1.49	Disney	0	Disney	0	Disney	0.75	Disney	0.5
Endurance Events	0.383							Endurance Events	0
Florida	0.383							Social Bridge	0
California	0								

812 814 816 818 820

830

Topic Field Values For Topic (Topic Name: "Disney Marathon")	
Field	**Total Values**
Disney	3.165
Marathon	1.99
Social Bridge	0.375
Endurance Events	0.383
Florida	0.383

FIG. 9

900

Topic Hierarchy (Topic_Name: "Disney Marathon")				
Hierarchy Order*	**User**	**DOE**	**Entry Fields**	**Ratings Adj.**
1	Spiff28	##/##/##	Disney, Endurance events, Florida, California, Marathon	neutral
1.1	Mark2	##/##/##	Marathon, Disney	neutral
1.2	*Jill06*	##/##/##	*non-registered*	*neutral*
1.3	Spiff28	##/##/##		neutral
1.4	Tom12	##/##/##	Disney	neutral
1.5	Piper1	##/##/##	Social Bridge, Disney	neutral
1.5.1	*Alex2*	##/##/##	*non-registered*	*neutral*
1.5.2	Teah4	##/##/##	*Social Bridge, Disney, Marathon, Endurance Events*	neutral
1.5.2.1	Mark2	##/##/##	*Marathons, Disney*	neutral
1.5.3	*Alex2*	##/##/##	*non-registered*	*neutral*

FIG. 11

1100

Topic Field Values For User (Topic Name: "Aloha comes to...")				
Hierarchy Order	**User**	**DOE**	**Entry Field**	**Rating Adj.**
1	Spiff_73	##/##/##	Surfing, Endurance, Marathon, Paddle Boarding, California, Titus Kukamunga, Tube Rider Extreme Sports	neutral
1.1	Piper	##/##/##	Surfing	neutral
1.1.1	Spiff_73	##/##/##	Marathon	neutral
1.1.1.1	Jill	##/##/##	Surfing, Marathon	neutral
1.1.1.1.1	Spiff_73	##/##/##	Endurance	neutral
1.2	Dan_Man	##/##/##	Endurance, Paddle Boarding	neutral
1.2.1	Spiff_73	##/##/##	Paddle Boarding	neutral

1000

Topic Record						
Topic Name	"Aloha Comes to California"					
Source	www.outdoormagazine.com/Article/surfing_california					
Date Of Origin	3/5/11	Spiff_73	Piper	Jill	Dan_Man	
Users	Surfing					
Fields	Surfing	California	Titus Kukamunga	Tube rider	Extreme Sports	Paddle Boarding
Ratings Adjustment	neutral					

1010

Topic Field Values For All Users(Topic Name: "Aloha comes to...")							
User ID: Spiff_73		**User ID: Piper**		**User ID: Jill**		**User ID: Dan_Man**	
Field	**Value**	**Field**	**Value**	**Field**	**Value**	**Field**	**Value**
Surfing	1.165	Surfing	0.94	Surfing	0	Paddle Boarding	1.0
Endurance	0			Marathon	0	endurance	0
Marathon	0.5						
Paddle Boarding	0						
California	0						
Titus Kukamunga	0						
Tube Rider	0						
Extreme Sports	0						

1012 1014 1016 1018

FIG. 10

1030

Topic Field Values For Topic(Topic Name: "Aloha comes to...")	
Field	**Total Values**
Surfing	2.105
Paddle Boarding	1.0
Endurance	0
Marathon	0.5
California	0
Titus Kukamunga	0
Tube Rider	0
Extreme Sports	0

11/14

FIG. 12

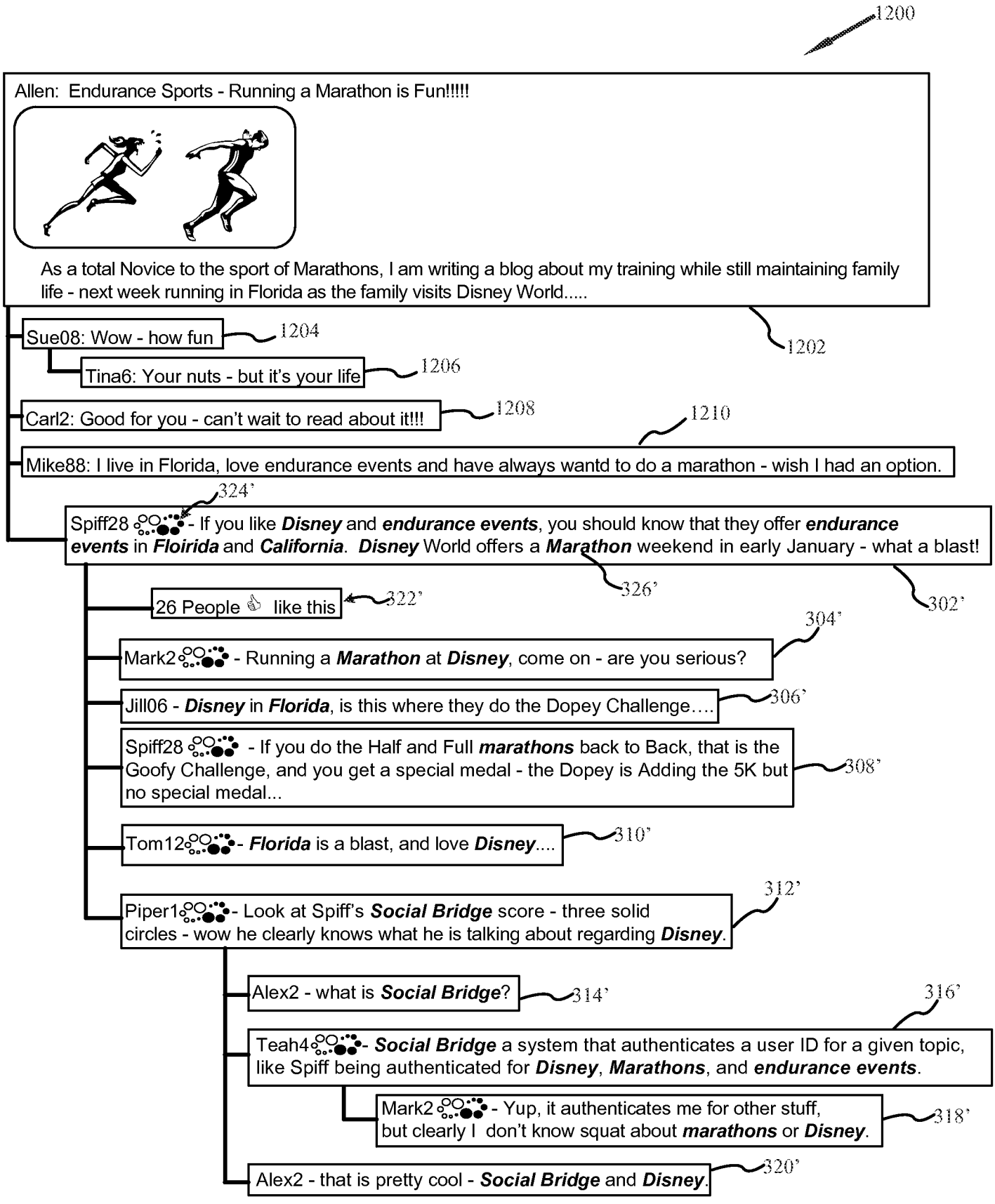

1200
Allen: Endurance Sports - Running a Marathon is Fun!!!!!
As a total Novice to the sport of Marathons, I am writing a blog about my training while still maintaining family life - next week running in Florida as the family visits Disney World.....
1202
Sue08: Wow - how fun
1204
Tina6: Your nuts - but it's your life
1206
Carl2: Good for you - can't wait to read about it!!!
1208
1210
Mike88: I live in Florida, love endurance events and have always wantd to do a marathon - wish I had an option.
324'
Spiff28 - If you like Disney and endurance events, you should know that they offer endurance events in Floirida and California. Disney World offers a Marathon weekend in early January - what a blast!
326'
302'
26 People like this
322'
304'
Mark2 - Running a Marathon at Disney, come on - are you serious?
Jill06 - Disney in Florida, is this where they do the Dopey Challenge....
306'
Spiff28 - If you do the Half and Full marathons back to Back, that is the Goofy Challenge, and you get a special medal - the Dopey is Adding the 5K but no special medal...
308'
Tom12 - Florida is a blast, and love Disney....
310'
312'
Piper1 - Look at Spiff's Social Bridge score - three solid circles - wow he clearly knows what he is talking about regarding Disney.
Alex2 - what is Social Bridge?
314'
316'
Teah4 - Social Bridge a system that authenticates a user ID for a given topic, like Spiff being authenticated for Disney, Marathons, and endurance events.
Mark2 - Yup, it authenticates me for other stuff, but clearly I don't know squat about marathons or Disney.
318'
Alex2 - that is pretty cool - Social Bridge and Disney.
320'

FIG. 13

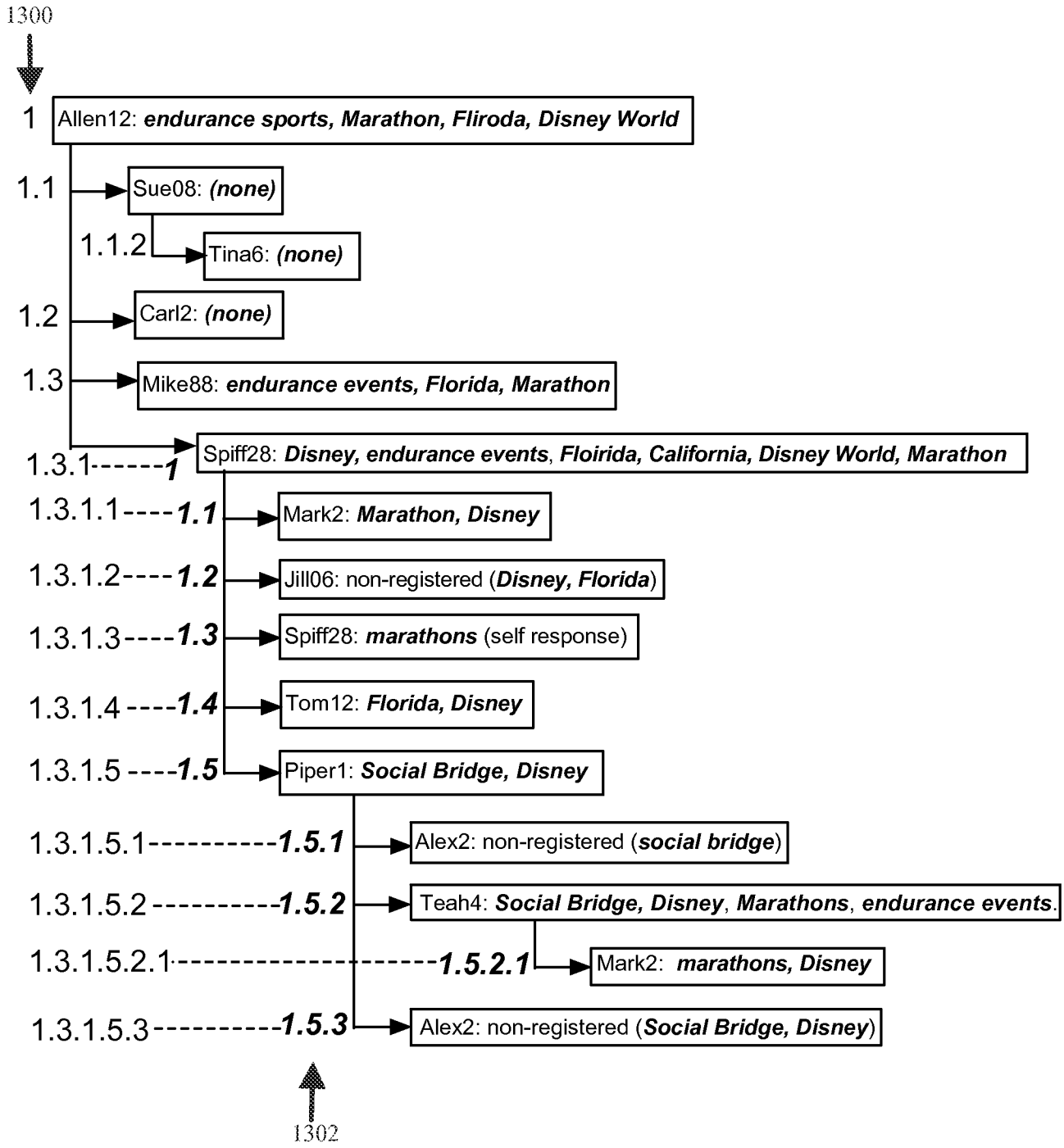

1300
1
Allen12: endurance sports, Marathon, Fliroda, Disney World
1.1
Sue08: (none)
1.1.2
Tina6: (none)
1.2
Carl2: (none)
1.3
Mike88: endurance events, Florida, Marathon
1.3.1------1
Spiff28: Disney, endurance events, Floirida, California, Disney World, Marathon
1.3.1.1----1.1
Mark2: Marathon, Disney
1.3.1.2----1.2
Jill06: non-registered (Disney, Florida)
1.3.1.3----1.3
Spiff28: marathons (self response)
1.3.1.4----1.4
Tom12: Florida, Disney
1.3.1.5----1.5
Piper1: Social Bridge, Disney
1.3.1.5.1----------1.5.1
Alex2: non-registered (social bridge)
1.3.1.5.2----------1.5.2
Teah4: Social Bridge, Disney, Marathons, endurance events.
1.3.1.5.2.1----------1.5.2.1
Mark2: marathons, Disney
1.3.1.5.3----------1.5.3
Alex2: non-registered (Social Bridge, Disney)
1302

FIG. 14

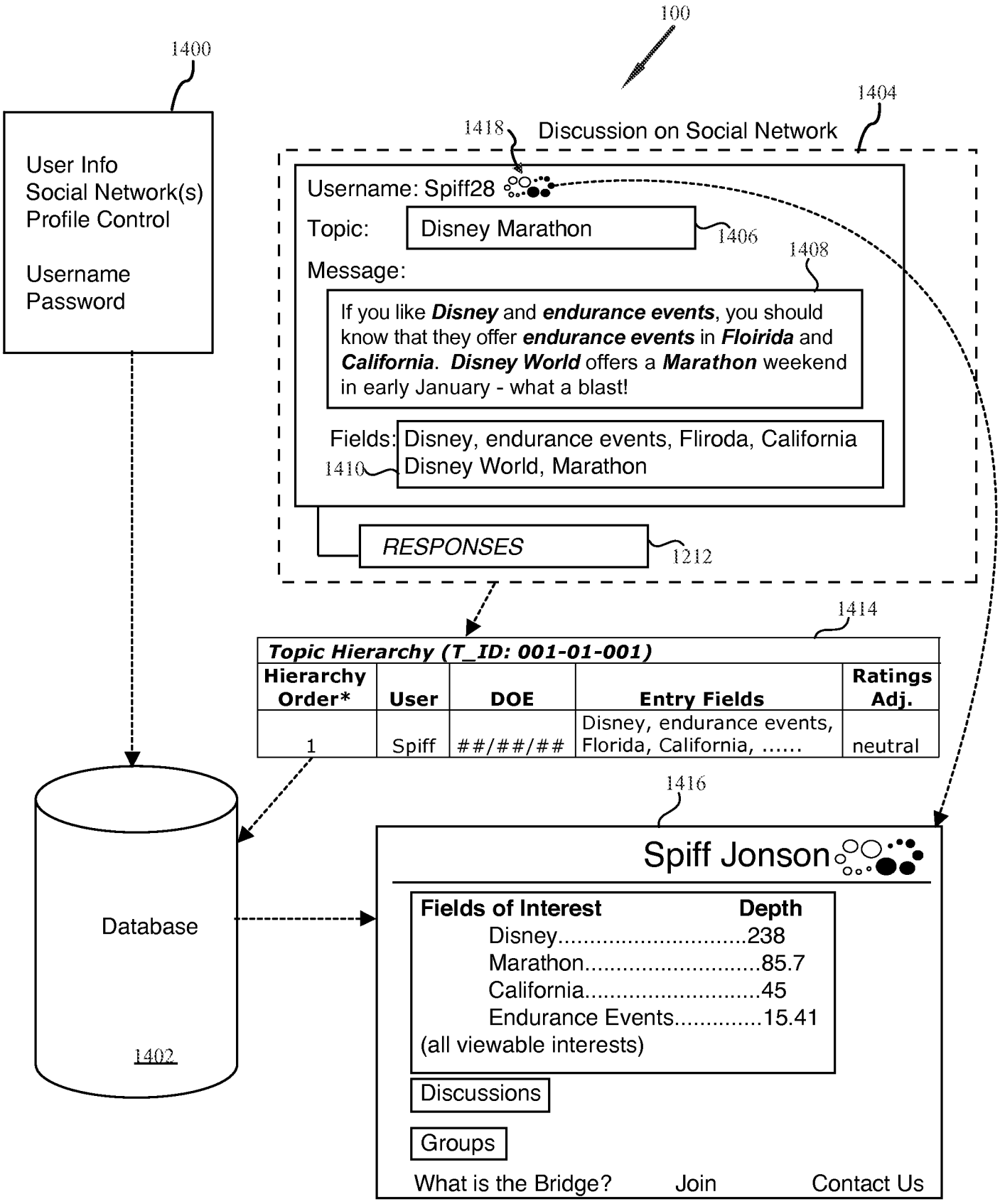
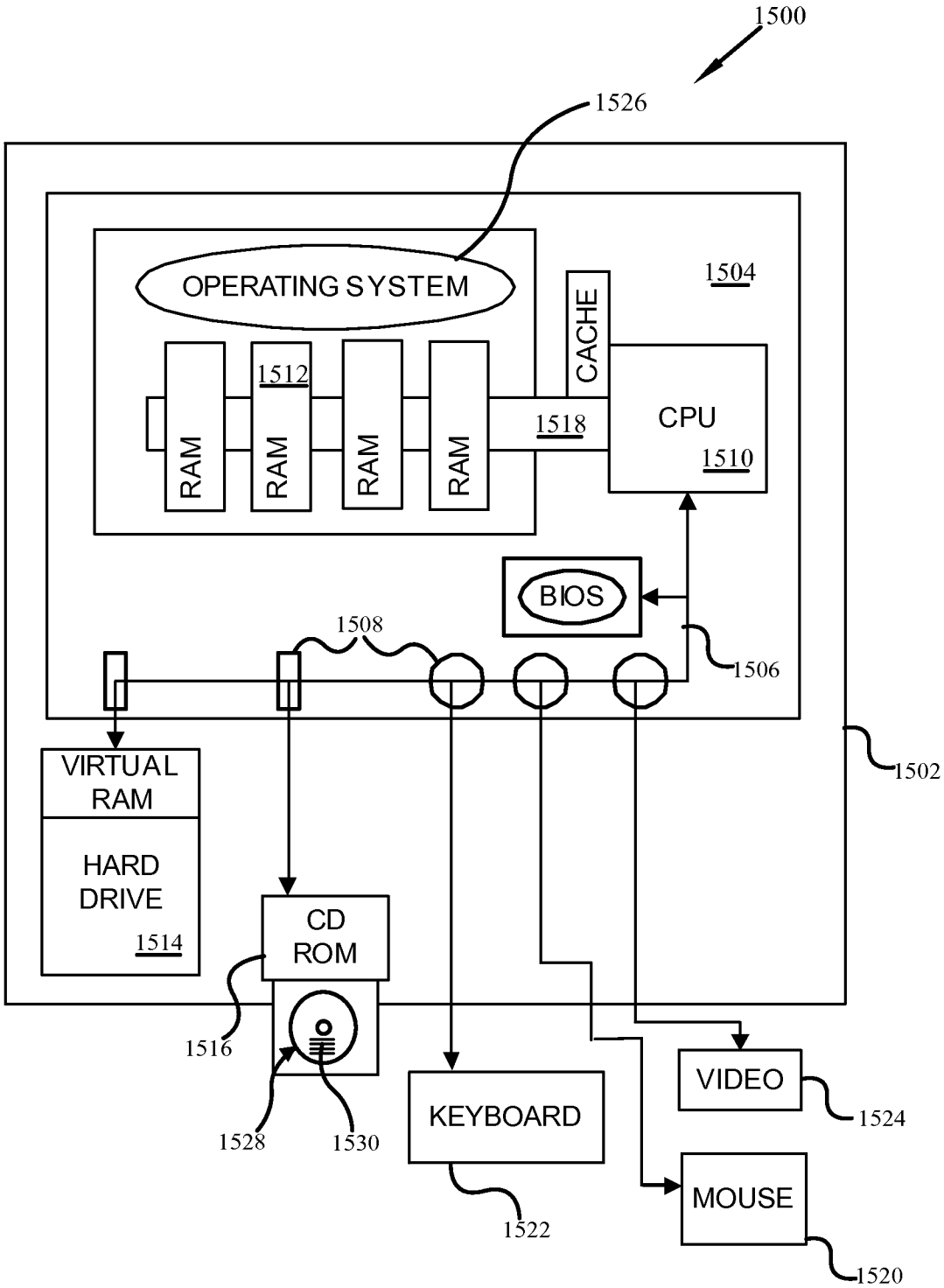

100
1400
User Info
Social Network(s)
Profile Control
Username
Password
1404
1418
Discussion on Social Network
Username: Spiff28
Topic:
Disney Marathon
1406
1408
Message:
If you like Disney and endurance events, you should know that they offer endurance events in Floirida and California. Disney World offers a Marathon weekend in early January - what a blast!
Fields:
Disney, endurance events, Fliroda, California
Disney World, Marathon
1410
RESPONSES
1212
1414
Topic Hierarchy (T_ID: 001-01-001)
Hierarchy Order*
User
DOE
Entry Fields
Ratings Adj.
1
Spiff
##/##/##
Disney, endurance events, Florida, California, ...
neutral
1416
Spiff Jonson
Fields of Interest
Depth
Disney.....238
Marathon.....85.7
California.....45
Endurance Events.....15.41
(all viewable interests)
Discussions
Groups
What is the Bridge?
Join
Contact Us
Database
1402

FIG. 15


1500
1526
OPERATING SYSTEM
1504
CACHE
1512
RAM
RAM
RAM
RAM
1518
CPU
1510
BIOS
1508
1506
1502
VIRTUAL RAM
HARD DRIVE
1514
CD ROM
1516
1528
1530
KEYBOARD
1522
VIDEO
1524
MOUSE
1520