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- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **REAL-TYPASS CORPORATION** [CA/CA]; 1100 Main Street West, Suite 208, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 1B3 (CA).
- (72) Inventors; and
- (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **JOHNSON, Glen** [CA/CA]; 1046, Hwy #6 N, R.R. #2, Hamilton, Ontario L8N 2Z7 (CA). **TUINSTR, Devin** [CA/CA]; 193 Weirs Lane, Box 61 R.R #1, Dundas, Ontario L9H 5E1 (CA). **HAUSER, Bruce William** [CA/CA]; 141 Highway 8, Dundas, Ontario L9H 4V8 (CA).
- (74) Agent: **DEETH WILLIAMS WALL LLP**; 150 York Street, Suite 400, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3S5 (CA).

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(54) Title: OPEN HOUSE ATTENDEE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

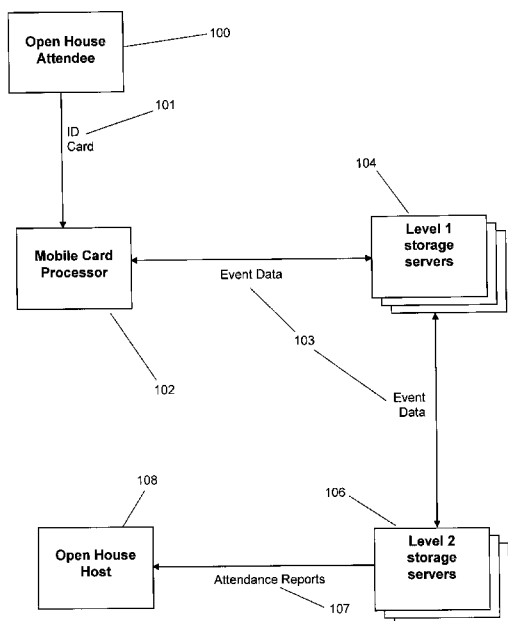


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: The present invention is a mobile electronic open house attendee registration system that uses ID cards, such as drivers' licences or credit cards, as identification of the attendee. The system includes a mobile card processor that transmits event data to a storage server. The mobile card processor may be a mobile phone running a software application to perform the card processing and a card reader that may be connected to the mobile phone. The application generates event data that includes the information taken from the cards and open house-identifying information. A reporting module generates open house attendance reports, which may include trend reports, usage reports, and proactive capacity reports.



OPEN HOUSE ATTENDEE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to systems for registering attendees at
5 events, and more particularly to mobile systems for registering attendees at open
house events and private showings of real estate.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the level of theft
10 occurring during open houses and private showings of real estate. There has also
been an increase in the amount of press coverage of such thefts. This trend has led
to many realty firms establishing a policy of no longer holding open houses and only
providing private showings where the potential buyer is required to produce
identification.

15 [0003] Open houses have been a common tool to allow prospective buyers to view
homes in the past. It is standard industry practice to encourage the homeowners to
leave their homes during an open house, leaving the security of their homes in the
hands of their real estate agent. The agent then typically hosts a large number of
strangers, and often leaves these people unattended, at least for part of the time, in
20 the home while they privately discuss various aspects of the home. In general, the
real estate agent has little or no control over security, and as a result some
dishonest attendees may take advantage of the opportunity to remove valuable
items from the home. Real estate agents and realty firms may have to reimburse
customers when items are stolen, or carry insurance for this risk.

25 [0004] In general, electronic registration systems including registration systems
which gather attendee information are becoming increasingly prominent at medium
to large sized events where potential buyers or their agents of a particular
commodity meet with sellers or their agents. These registration systems are

typically proprietary solutions designed to work with a barcode or some other paired technology which is distributed to attendees in advance of the event.

[0005] Typical existing electronic registration systems provide event registration and check-in services, and in some cases may also provide registration for specific
5 aspects of events after the attendee has arrived. These are generally aimed at large scale events, such as conferences. There is a range of electronic registration systems available in the current market; however, these solutions are costly to implement and so are expensive and cost-prohibitive in many situations such as a typical open house, and they typically lack adequate security and have a need for
10 the use of paired technology.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] There is provided a system for tracking attendees at open houses or private showing sessions, each attendee having an ID card containing identification data,
15 the system comprising:

- a. a mobile card processor for receiving the identification data from the ID card and for creating event data for secure transmission to a storage server, the event data including the received identification data and information identifying the open house or private showing session; and
- 20 b. a reporting module running on a computer processor in electronic communication with the storage server for producing reports from the event data summarizing the attendance of attendees at the open houses or private showing sessions.

[0007] The ID card may include a magnetic stripe may contain encoded identification
25 data and the mobile card processor include a magnetic stripe reader.

[0008] The ID card may include a barcode that encodes identification data and the mobile card processor may include a barcode reader. The mobile card processor may include a mobile device having a camera, the mobile device having a software application running thereon for controlling the camera to take a photograph of the

barcode, for decoding identification data encoded in the barcode, and for creating event data. The mobile card processor may further include a card reader capable of reading magnetic stripes that encode identification data, and the software application may then receive identification data from the card reader. The software application
5 may permit a photograph of an attendee to be taken and include the photograph in the event data.

[0009] The ID card may include an RFID tag that contains encoded identification data, and the mobile card processor may include an RFID tag reader.

[0010] The ID card may include a magnetic stripe or barcode that encodes
10 identification data, and the mobile card processor include a magnetic stripe reader and barcode reader for reading identification data from the ID card.

[0011] The ID card may be a driver's licence.

[0012] The mobile card processor may include a mobile telephone with a software application running thereon for receiving identification data from the ID cards and for
15 creating event data, and a card reader wherein the mobile telephone communicates wirelessly with the card reader. The mobile telephone may communicate wirelessly with the card reader using Bluetooth.

[0013] The mobile card processor may include an interactive panel to permit reports to be requested.

20 [0014] The mobile card processor may accept information entered manually and include that information in the event data.

[0015] The reports generated by the reporting module may include reports that identify house buyer trends. The reports generated by the reporting module may also include reports that identify migratory patterns, closing rates, economic trends,
25 housing market trends and timeline trends.

[0016] The mobile card processor may display the identification data to the attendee and allow the attendee to approve collection of the identification data prior to transmitting the identification data to the storage server.

[0017] The mobile card processor may include a GPS receiver and during a private showing session the mobile card processor may automatically determine the times that an attendee arrives at a house and departs from the house and include the arrival and departure times in the event data.

- 5 [0018] The report may summarize the attendance of attendees at both open houses and private showing sessions.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] Figure 1 is a functional diagram of an embodiment of the invention.

- 10 [0020] Figure 2 shows an example visitor check-in screen generated by a software application running on a mobile telephone.

[0021] Figure 3 shows an example open house listing generated by a software application running on a mobile telephone.

- 15 [0022] Figure 4 shows an example private showing session screen generated by a software application running on a mobile telephone.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- [0023] According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, an electronic open house attendee registration system using ID cards as identification of the attendees is described herein. The system does not require attendees to bring
20 additional paired technology for registration, and only requires identification (ID cards) that they normally carry on their persons.

- [0024] An ID card, as used herein, may be a government-issued identification card, such as a valid driver's licence, or it may be, for example, a credit or debit card. Any
25 item having machine-readable identification data encoded on it that uniquely identifies the attendee such that it permits the attendee to be found after the completion of the open house may be employed as an ID card. Such a card may employ, for example, a barcode, a magnetic stripe, or near field communication

(NFC) technology such as an embedded passive RFID tag or other contactless technology. An ID card having such identification data printed on it may also be used.

[0025] According to additional aspects of the present invention, the system may
5 read, decrypt or decode information provided on the ID cards presented by the attendee, and display the portions of the information that will be collected to the attendee so that the attendee may consent to the collection of the information before the system transmits that information securely to a storage facility. A proprietary wireless connection is not required for this technology as the system may utilize
10 encryption over an existing internet connection using standard protocols, such as public key encryption using a public key associated with, for example, the open house host, the host's firm, the individual open house event or the storage facility.

[0026] According to further aspects of the present invention, the system provides the
15 ability for open house hosts to request and obtain reports summarizing the attendance at one or more open houses, which may be produced in real time, based on certain portions of the information. Additionally, hosts may request anonymous reporting for overall attendee trends based on some or all of the stored event data.

[0027] The foregoing aspects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention
20 will become more readily appreciated as they become better understood by reference to this detailed description, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

[0028] One embodiment of the invention is shown in Figure 1 which provides a
25 diagram of the key elements and data flows. The embodiment pertains to an open house, which is any open house that is attended by potential real estate purchasers (or buyers), referred to as open house attendees 100, as well as one or more representatives, referred to as the open house host 108, of the seller of the house. The open house host 108 may be the real estate agent of the owner of the house, with the open house being conducted at the house, or other real estate, that is being offered for sale.

[0029] The system includes a mobile card processor 102 that transmits event data 103 to at least one storage server. It may include a number of level 1 storage servers 104 and level 2 storage servers 106. It is not necessary to use multiple levels of storage servers, but this may be done to improve data security. The level 1 storage servers 104 may provide temporary storage, and they may perform certain calculations. All information may then be transmitted to level 2 storage servers 106 for storage, and long term trend reporting may also be performed by the level 2 storage servers 106.

[0030] The mobile card processor 102 may be implemented using a wide variety of mobile devices, such as a smart phone, PDA or tablet, and utilize a wide variety of stable and dependable modes of recognition, such as magnetic stripes, barcodes, or NFC technology. Where sufficient identification data is printed on the ID card 101, a photograph of the ID card 101 may also be used, taken by a camera in the mobile card processor 102.

[0031] The functionality described herein is preferably implemented as a software application running on, for example, a smart phone with an attached card reader. The card reader may be a magnetic stripe reader through which an ID card 101 having a magnetic stripe may be swiped, the identification data encoded on the stripe read and then passed to the software application running on the phone. The phone may have a barcode reader consisting of software and a camera built into the phone that may be used to capture an image of a barcode on the ID card 101 under the control of the software application so that the photograph of the barcode may then be decoded by the software application to retrieve the encoded identification data. Alternatively, an external barcode reader, in electronic communication with the phone, may be used.

[0032] The ID card 101 may alternatively be a contactless smart card or may contain an RFID tag, and the mobile card processor 102 include a contactless smart card reader or RFID tag reader. Other NFC technology may also be employed. Such a reader may be detachably attached to a smart phone for example, as described for a magnetic stripe reader, or it may be built into the phone.

[0033] The software application running on the phone uses the identification data received from the ID card 101 to generate event data 103, and controls the transmission of the event data 103 to the storage servers. The card reader may connect to the phone using a standard interface, which may be a wireless interface such as Bluetooth. Alternatively the card reader may be physically attached to the mobile device when in use, using a phone-specific cable or a standard cable, such as a mini-USB cable, or using the phone's universal audio jack outlet, and be designed so that it is detachable.

[0034] The mobile card processor 102 may employ an interactive panel to permit open house hosts 108 to request specific reports 107 and specify associated parameters. For example, such a panel may be displayed on the display of a phone with a touch screen.

[0035] An open house attendee 100 at an open house may register upon arriving at the open house by swiping an ID Card 101 having a magnetic stripe with stored identification data, such as a driver's licence, through the mobile card processor 102, or by having a portion of the attendee's ID photographed to read a barcode thereon. An example of a display screen 200 generated by the software running on the phone for visitor check-in is shown in Figure 2. This screen gives the open house host 108 four alternatives for identifying the open house attendee 100. The first 201 is to swipe an ID card 101 with a magnetic stripe on it through a magnetic stripe reader in electronic communication with the phone. The second 202 is to take a photograph of a barcode on the attendee's ID card 101. The third 203 is to take one or more photographs of one or more identification items possessed by the open house attendee 100 that collectively contain sufficient identification data. For example, photographs of the front and back of a driver's licence may suffice. This option may be useful if the open house attendee 100 does not have an ID card 101 that contains machine-readable identification data. This may occur, for example, because the magnetic stripe has been de-magnetized, or the ID card 101 does not contain identification data in an electronic form that can be read directly by the system. The software may ask the open house host 108 to verify that the quality of the

photographs are adequate and, if not, allow the open house host 108 to take replacement photographs.

[0036] The fourth option 204 is to take a photograph of the open house attendee 100 and then manually enter the name and other information such as the gender, address and telephone number of the open house attendee 100 using a keypad on the phone or displayed on the phone's touch-screen display. In this case, the software may ask the open house host 108 to verify that the quality of the photograph is adequate and, if not, allow the open house host 108 to take another photograph. The software application may then prompt the open house host 108 to enter identification data, such as the name, address and telephone number of the open house attendee 100. Such a photograph of the open house attendee 100 and the entered identification data are then stored as part of the event data 103.

[0037] By using the option of taking photographs, the system may then operate without the use of an attached card reader, by relaying on reading barcodes, photographing ID cards 101 and/or taking a photograph of the open house attendee 100.

[0038] After having read an attendee's identification data on the supplied ID card 101, the open house attendee 100 may then be provided the option of viewing the information that is being collected, and approving its collection or allowing the open house attendee 100 to approve its collection. After receiving approval, the event data 103 may be securely transmitted to the level 1 storage servers 104, so that no personal information remains resident on the mobile card processor 102.

Alternatively event data 103 may be stored on the mobile card processor 102 until a connection to a storage server is available.

[0039] An open house attendee 100 may be requested to provide additional information by the software application that is not available on the ID card 101, such as information about the attendee's buying preferences, which may include, for example, price ranges and preferred locations. Such information may be entered into and accepted by the mobile card processor 102 and included in the event data 103 that is recorded. Such information may be entered manually using a keypad on

the mobile card processor 102, for example by typing information on an alphanumeric keypad, or by responding to prompts that provide numbered responses from which to choose.

5 [0040] The information obtained from an open house attendee 100 may include the attendee's name and address, including postal code. Such information may be time-stamped, and event-specific information (including event-identifying information such as the location and time of the open house, and identification of the open house seller) is added to form event data 103 that is transmitted to the storage servers.

10 [0041] Figure 3 shows an example screen 300 identifying the open house, including the address 301 and list price 302, which information may be stored as part of the event data 103. The user interface may also provide controls to update the open house event information, such as by selecting a button named "Update Property Details" 303. The screen 300 identifying the open house may also provide a button to start the registration process for an open house attendee 100, such as the
15 "Capture Visitor ID" button 304 shown in Figure 3.

[0042] A regularly scheduled process may be resident on the level 1 storage servers 104, to transmit all collected event data 103 to level 2 storage servers 106, and this process would have no external communication.

20 [0043] The system includes an open house attendee reporting module consisting of software that runs on a computer processor and generates attendance reports 107 from event data 103 summarizing and analyzing the attendance of attendees at open houses, which reports 107 may be provided to the open house host 108. The reporting module may run on level 2 storage servers 106 or on a separate computer processor, such as a PC, that is in electronic communication with the level 2 storage
25 servers 106.

[0044] Reports 107 may be generated on a scheduled basis. Reports 107 may include trend reporting, usage reporting, and proactive capacity reporting based on the accumulated event data 103.

[0045] Reports 107 may include summary reports that remove all identifying information about individuals so that the reports may be sold to third parties.

[0046] Reports may also be generated on an on-demand basis and may be designed to identify and report buyer migratory patterns, house buyer trends, closing rates, economic trends, housing market trends and timeline trends, and overall levels of interest in comparison to significant dates/events in those areas.

[0047] The system may also be used to track the attendance of a potential buyer, or attendee, at viewings of one or more properties (houses) in one or more private showing sessions. An example screen 400 showing the plan for a private showing session for three properties 401 for a potential buyer identified as John Doe Party 402 is shown in Figure 4. The agent may be able to add additional properties to view to a private showing session by selecting a control titled "Add New Location" 403, and then entering information on the new location using the keypad.

[0048] The potential buyer may present his or her ID card 101 either before a series of viewings (a private showing session), or at the first viewing site. The mobile card processor 102 may be carried by the presenter, or host, who may be the potential buyer's real estate agent. In an embodiment where the mobile card processor 102 is a mobile phone with an attached card reader, the attached card reader may be detached after the ID card 101 has been read so that the agent only needs to bring the phone to each viewing. In this case, the event data 103 includes the attendee's identification data and information identifying the private showing session. The latter may contain, for example, the address of each house being viewed in the session and a start and end time for each viewing.

[0049] When the agent and buyer arrive at each property to be viewed, the agent may then hit a key on the phone running the software application that informs the application that the buyer is at a viewing, and the phone may automatically determine the location using a GPS receiver built into the phone. A second button may be hit to indicate that the buyer is leaving the property so that the application may include the duration of the viewing in the event data 103. Alternatively the software may automatically determine, using GPS, when the potential buyer arrives

at and leaves each house and record the arrival and departure times. The agent may then later access and edit the event data 103, for example to add information about the buyer's response to each viewing, or the application may permit the agent to do this at each viewing using the keypad on the agent's phone.

- 5 [0050] The reporting module may then produce reports 107 summarizing the attendance of attendees at both open houses and private showing sessions, including include reports that identify migratory patterns, house buyer trends, closing rates, economic trends, housing market trends and timeline trends.

[0051] The foregoing description illustrates only certain preferred embodiments of
10 the invention. The invention is not limited to the foregoing examples. That is, persons skilled in the art will appreciate and understand that modifications and variations are, or will be, possible to utilize and carry out the teachings of the invention described herein. Accordingly, all suitable modifications, variations and
15 equivalents may be resorted to, and such modifications, variations and equivalents are intended to fall within the scope of the invention as described and within the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for tracking attendees at open houses or private showing sessions, each attendee having an ID card containing identification data, the system
5 comprising:
 - a. a mobile card processor for receiving the identification data from the ID card and for creating event data for secure transmission to a storage server, the event data including the received identification data and information identifying the open house or private showing session; and
 - 10 b. a reporting module running on a computer processor in electronic communication with the storage server for producing reports from the event data summarizing the attendance of attendees at the open houses or private showing sessions.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the ID card comprises a magnetic stripe that
15 contains encoded identification data and the mobile card processor comprises a magnetic stripe reader.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein the ID card comprises a barcode that encodes identification data and the mobile card processor comprises a barcode reader.
- 20 4. The system of claim 1 wherein the ID card comprises an RFID tag that contains encoded identification data, and the mobile card processor comprises an RFID tag reader.
5. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor employs near field communication technology to read the identification data from the ID card.
- 25 6. The system of claim 1 wherein the ID card comprises a magnetic stripe or barcode that encodes identification data, and the mobile card processor comprises a magnetic stripe reader and barcode reader for reading identification data from the ID card.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein the ID card is a driver's licence.
8. The system of claim 3 wherein the mobile card processor comprises a mobile device having a camera, the mobile device having a software application running thereon for controlling the camera to take a photograph of the barcode, for decoding identification data encoded in the barcode, and for creating event data.
9. The system of claim 8 wherein the mobile card processor further comprises a card reader capable of reading magnetic stripes that encode identification data, and wherein the software application receives identification data from the card reader.
10. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor comprises a mobile telephone with a software application running thereon for receiving identification data from the ID cards and for creating event data, and a card reader wherein the mobile telephone communicates wirelessly with the card reader.
11. The system of claim 10 wherein the mobile telephone communicates wirelessly with the card reader using Bluetooth.
12. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor comprises an interactive panel to permit reports to be requested.
13. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor accepts information entered manually and includes that information in the event data.
14. The system of claim 1 wherein the reports generated by the reporting module include reports that identify house buyer trends.
15. The system of claim 14 wherein the reports generated by the reporting module further include reports that identify migratory patterns, closing rates, economic trends, housing market trends and timeline trends.
16. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor displays the identification data to the attendee and allows the attendee to approve

collection of the identification data prior to transmitting the identification data to the storage server.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein the mobile card processor comprises a GPS receiver and during a private showing session the mobile card processor automatically determines the times that an attendee arrives at a house and departs from the house and includes the arrival and departure times in the event data.
- 5
18. The system of claim 8 wherein the software application permits a photograph of an attendee to be taken and includes the photograph in the event data.
- 10
19. The system of claim 1 wherein the reports summarize the attendance of attendees at both open houses and private showing sessions.

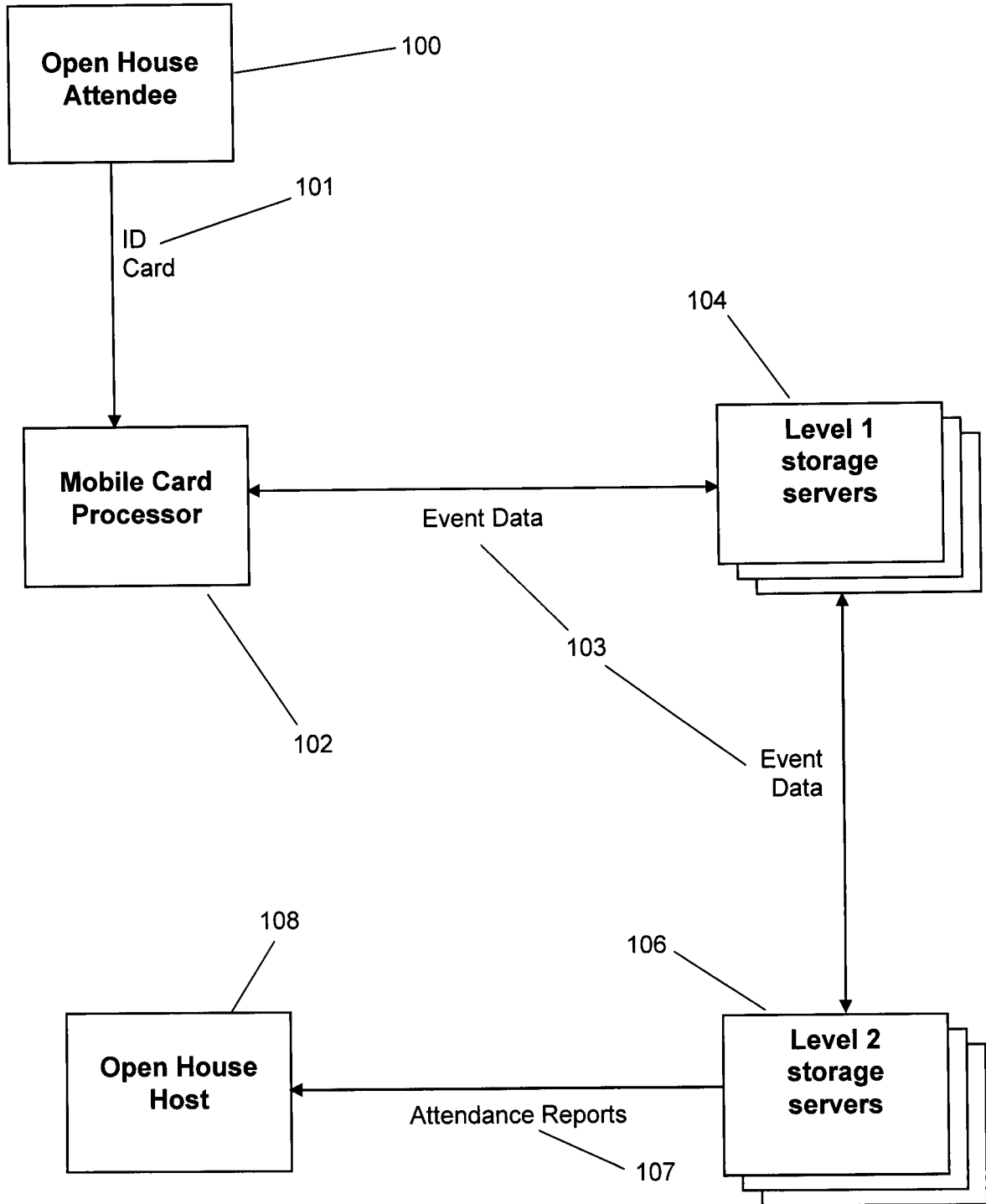


FIG. 1

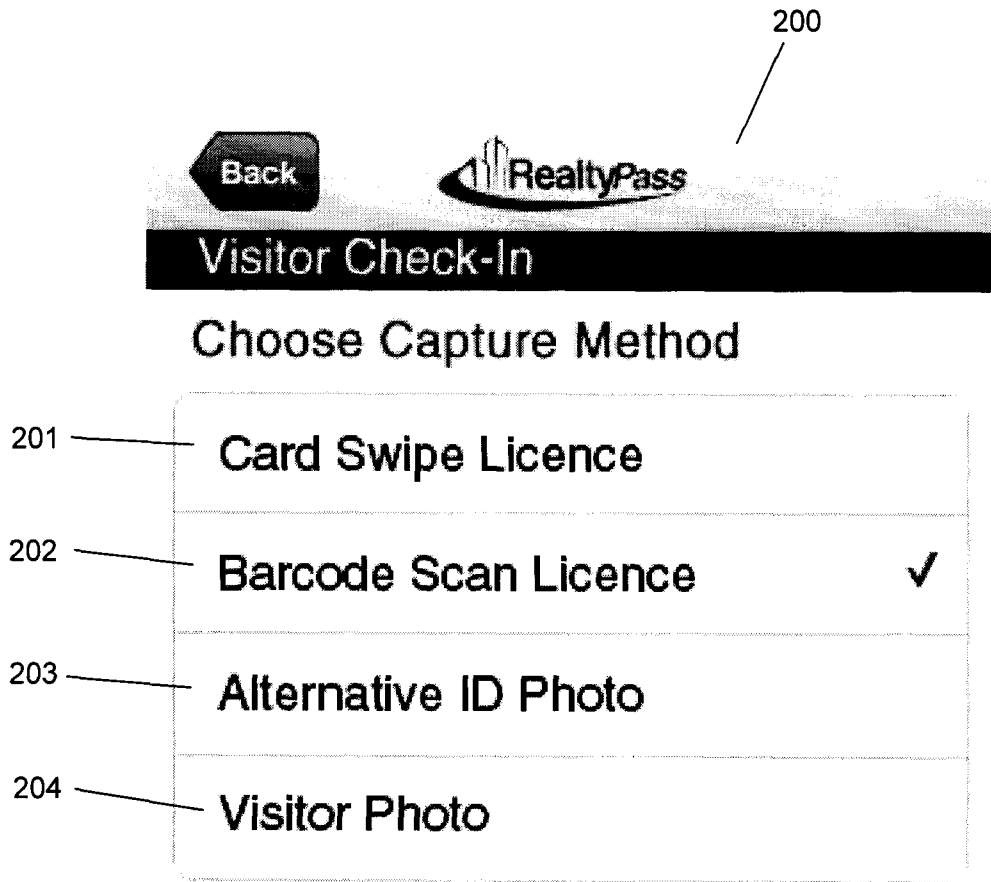


FIG. 2

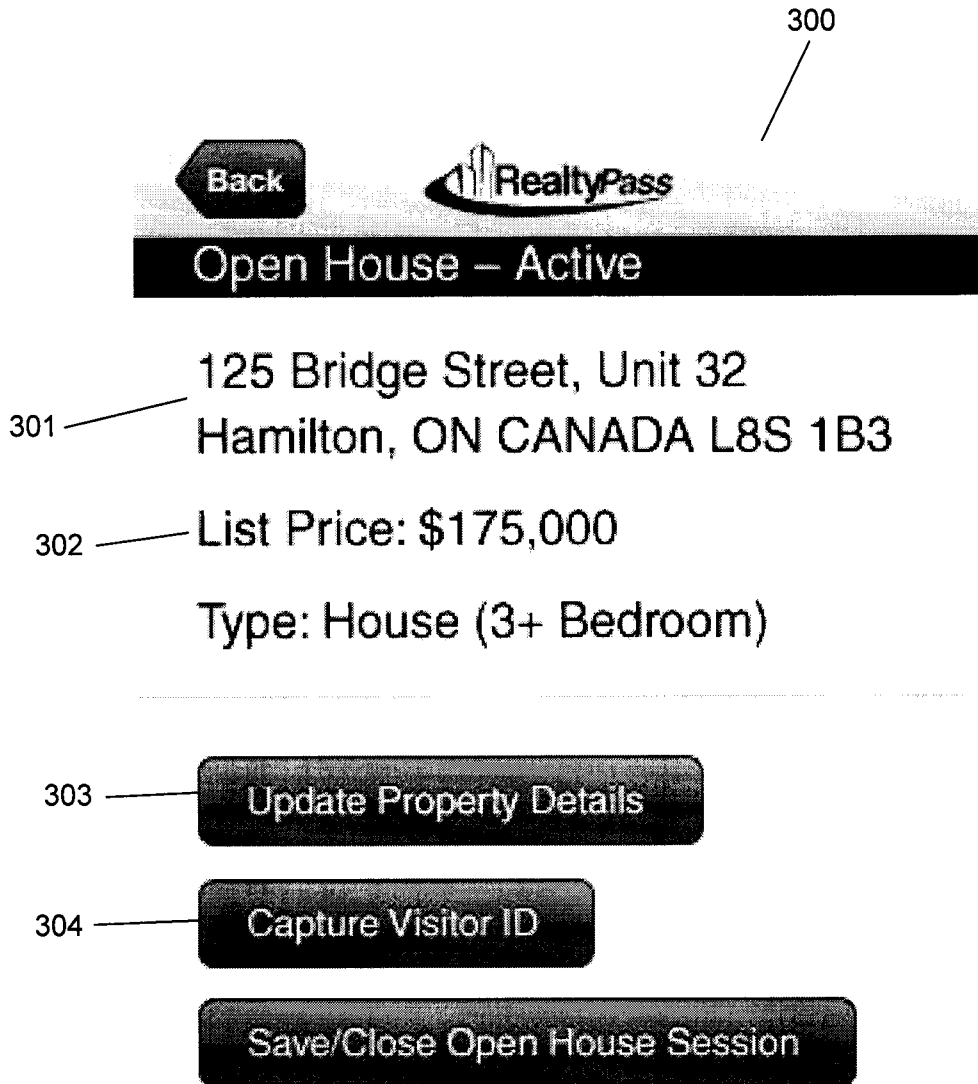


FIG. 3

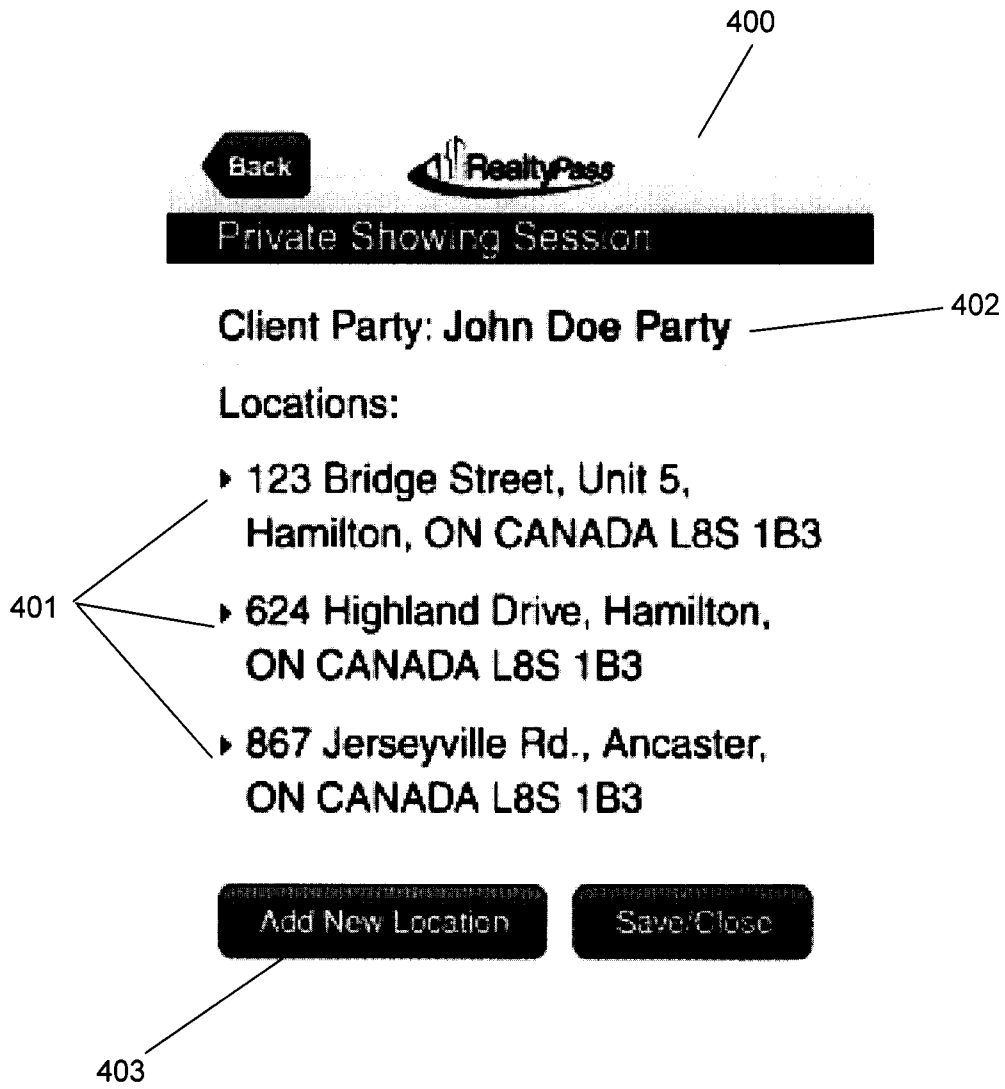


FIG. 4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2011/000381

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC: **G06Q 50/00** (2006.01)
 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED
 Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 IPC: *G06Q** (2006.01)
 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic database(s) consulted during the international search (name of database(s) and, where practicable, search terms used)
 Delphion, USPTO WEST, European patent database, Japanese patent database, Canadian patent database, IEEE, and Google
 Keywords: “open house attend*”, “open house”, “attendee registration”, “”, “house”, “home”, “sale”, “registration”, “event data”, “capacity report”, “information system”, “record”, “camera”, “ID card”, “card”, “mobile”, “database”.

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2006/0178940 A1 10 August 2006 G06Q 30/00 Taylor et al. (abstract; sections 0001 to 0026; and figures 1 to 2)	1 - 19
X	US 2008/0281609 A1 13 November 2008 G06Q 50/00 Marino (abstract; sections 0010 to 0012, 0019 to 0035, 0050 to 0058)	1 - 19

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :	“T” later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
“A” document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	“X” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
“E” earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	“Y” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
“L” document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	“&” document member of the same patent family
“O” document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
“P” document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 28 September 2011 (28.09.2011)	Date of mailing of the international search report 14 October 2011 (14-10-2011)
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/CA Canadian Intellectual Property Office Place du Portage I, C114 - 1st Floor, Box PCT 50 Victoria Street Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0C9 Facsimile No.: 001-819-953-2476	Authorized officer Ali Mian (819) 934-7571
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2011/000381

Patent Document Cited in Search Report	Publication Date	Patent Family Member(s)	Publication Date
US 2006/0178940 A1	10-08-2006	None	
US 2008/0281609 A1	13-11-2008	US 2008/0281829 A1 US 7,991,702 B2 US 2011/0231326 A1	13-11-2008 02-08-2011 22-09-2011