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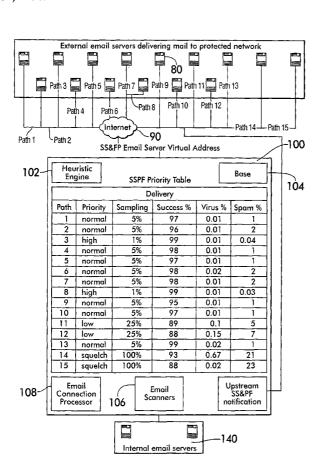
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- (81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CONTROLLING DISTRIBUTION OF NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS



(57) Abstract: A method for controlling distribution of network communications. An incoming message either carries priority information, or is assigned priority information based on a shared characteristic with other messages. The priority information is used to determine how and/or when to deliver the message, e.g. by delaying the message for a fixed time. Preferences for receipt of messages by priority level may be communication to upstream hosts along a network path. Accordingly, an intermediary host between a communication network (90) and a internal e-mail servers (140) may reject and/or delay messages that the intended recipient does not wish to receive. This pushes the burden of low-priority messages back to the sender, thereby reducing or eliminating burdens on network/system resources of the recipient and/or intermediaries between the recipient and the sender. Accordingly, it can "squelch" spam messages at or close to their source. Trusted senders complying with prescribed practices may include priority information allowing for delivery of their messages with higher priority.

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(BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii)) for the following designations AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG)
- as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii)) for the following designations AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV,

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No. PCT/US02/05960

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC(?) Good 15/16 US CL. 1709/200, 207, 226, 289 According to International Patent Classification system followed by classification and IPC B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) US.: 706/200, 207, 226, 289 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) Please See Extra Sheet. C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT Category* Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages 1, 6, 8A, COL. 4, LINES 20-65, COL. 5, LINES 19-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67, COL. 7, LINES 1-67, COL. 8, LINES 1-67, COL. 9, LINES 1-67, COL. 9, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67, COL. 2, LINES 1-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 6,					_			
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FIGURES 1 THRU, 22, COL. 3, LINES 1-67, COL. 4, LINES 1-54, COL. 5, LINES 43-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67, COL. 7, LINES 1-67, COL. 8, LINES 1-67, COL. 9, LINES 1-57. Y US 6,185,603 B1 (HENDERSON et al.) 06 FEBRUARY 2001, ABSTRACT, FIGURES 1, 2, COL. 2, LINES 14-67, COL. 2, LINES 39-67, COL. 5, LINES 1-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-59. V		LINES 1-67, COL. 7, LINES 1-67, C	OL. 17, LINES	19-35				
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date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention amount be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken abone "It" document which may threw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "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 12 AUGUST 2002 Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3250 Telephone No. (703) 305-4815	X Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.							
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US02/05960

			
C (Continua	tion). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages Relevant to claim		
Y	US 5,377,354 A (SCANNELL et al)27 DECEMBER 1994, ABSTRACT, COL. 2, LINES 34-67, COL. 3, LINES 1-11, COL. 4, LINES 6-67, COL. 1-67, COL. 6, LINES 1-67.		

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No. PCT/US02/05960

B. FIELDS SEARCHED Electronic data bases consulted (Name of data base and where practicable terms used):					
EAST, NPL AND INTERNET search terms: email, priority, levels, preference, profile, rules, message, controlling distribution, controlling access, servers					