Title: PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION OF SEARCH CRITERIA

Abstract:
An information search mechanism provides control over the relaxation of search queries to users that are requesting searches. Through this mechanism, users can specify a sequence of sub-queries that is associated with variations of the main search criteria, and specify a progression in which to execute the sub-queries. Hence, users can impart their priorities with respect to search term variations used in relaxing the main search criteria, which further allows the users to impart their notion of the relevance of results that may be returned by particular sub-queries. A query that includes a sequence of sub-queries is received and the sub-queries are executed, if at all, by a database server in an order based on the progression specified by the user. Response time and network loading are improved through reduction of unnecessary work by the database server and through reduction of costly communications between client and server and associated processing.
before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of
amendments

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(88) Date of publication of the international search report:
6 January 2005
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7  G06F17/30

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 7  G06F

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 practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, INSPEC, IBM-TDB, COMPENDEX

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category *</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patient family members are listed in annex.

Date of the actual completion of the international search 18 November 2004

Date of mailing of the international search report 30/11/2004

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5816 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31–70) 940-2040, Tx. 31 851 epo.nl Fax: (+31–70) 340-3016

Authorized officer Barieux, M

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (January 2004)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>GAASTERLAND T: &quot;Cooperative Answering through Controlled Query Relaxation&quot; IEEE EXPERT, IEEE INC. NEW YORK, US, vol. 12, no. 5, 1 September 1997 (1997-09-01), pages 48-59, XP000739143 ISSN: 0885-9000 page 49, left-hand column, paragraph 3 page 52, right-hand column, paragraph 3 - page 53, left-hand column, paragraph 2 section titled &quot;An algorithm for processing queries&quot;</td>
<td>1-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>LI W-S ET AL: &quot;Facilitating complex Web queries through visual user interfaces and query relaxation&quot; COMPUTER NETWORKS AND ISDN SYSTEMS, NORTH HOLLAND PUBLISHING, AMSTERDAM, NL, vol. 30, no. 1-7, April 1998 (1998-04), pages 149-159, XP004121431 ISSN: 0169-7552 abstract page 154, left-hand column, line 11 - page 156, left-hand column, line 10</td>
<td>1-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>