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(54) Titre : INTERFACE UTILISATEUR AMELIOREE POUR L'AFFICHAGE DE COMMANDES DE FONCTIONNALITES
LOGICIELLES CONTEXTUELLES SELECTIONNABLES POUR UN OBJET SELECTIONNE

(54) Title: AN IMPROVED USER INTERFACE FOR DISPLAYING SELECTABLE SOFTWARE FUNCTIONALITY
CONTROLS THAT ARE CONTEXTUALLY RELEVANT TO A SELECTED OBJECT

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

An improved user interface is provided for displaying selectable functionality controls that identifies the context of the object to which the user interface is relevant, which contains rich functionality controls for applying contextually relevant functionality to a selected object, and which may be efficiently switched to a different context for applying a different set of functionalities to a different or neighboring editable object. A context menu of functionalities is displayed adjacent to a selected object where the menu of functionalities includes functionalities associated with editing the selected object. The context menu includes an identification of the object context and a control for selectively changing the context and associated functionalities of the menu to a different object context for displaying a different set of functionalities associated with the different context.

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**AN IMPROVED USER INTERFACE FOR DISPLAYING SELECTABLE
SOFTWARE FUNCTIONALITY CONTROLS THAT ARE CONTEXTUALLY
RELEVANT TO A SELECTED OBJECT**

Abstract

5 An improved user interface is provided for displaying selectable functionality
controls that identifies the context of the object to which the user interface is relevant,
which contains rich functionality controls for applying contextually relevant functionality
to a selected object, and which may be efficiently switched to a different context for
applying a different set of functionalities to a different or neighboring editable object. A
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**AN IMPROVED USER INTERFACE FOR DISPLAYING SELECTABLE
5 SOFTWARE FUNCTIONALITY CONTROLS THAT ARE CONTEXTUALLY
RELEVANT TO A SELECTED OBJECT**

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No.
10 60/601,815, Attorney Matter No. 60001.0407USP1, Applicant Matter No. 309417.1,
filed August 16, 2004, entitled "Improved User Interfaces for Computer Software
Applications."

Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to software application user interfaces.
15 More particularly, the present invention relates to an improved user interface for
displaying selectable software controls that are contextually relevant to a selected
object.

Background of the Invention

With the advent of the computer age, computer and software users have grown
20 accustomed to user-friendly software applications that help them write, calculate,
organize, prepare presentations, send and receive electronic mail, make music, and the
like. For example, modern electronic word processing applications allow users to
prepare a variety of useful documents. Modern spreadsheet applications allow users to
enter, manipulate, and organize data. Modern electronic slide presentation applications
25 allow users to create a variety of slide presentations containing text, pictures, data or
other useful objects.

To assist users to locate and utilize functionality of a given software application,
a user interface containing a plurality of generic functionality controls is typically
provided along an upper, lower or side edge of a displayed workspace in which the user

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may enter, copy, manipulate and format text or data. Such functionality controls often include selectable buttons with such names as “file,” “edit,” “view,” “insert,” “format,” and the like. Typically, selection of one of these top-level functionality buttons, for example “format,” causes a drop-down menu to be deployed to expose one or more selectable functionality controls associated with the top-level functionality, for example “font” under a top-level functionality of “format.”

Prior user interface systems provide pop-up menus for displaying a set of selectable functionality controls that would deploy onto a user’s display screen adjacent to a selected object (e.g., text selection, data object, picture object, etc.) for allowing the user to apply a selected functionality of a software application to the selected object. Such context menus are typically deployed upon a user action such as right-clicking a mouse when the mouse cursor is focused on the selected object. Unfortunately, prior context menus have been limited to a small set of selectable controls, and it is typically difficult to identify the editing context of the menu (e.g., text selection, picture object, etc.). Moreover, if a given document being edited by a user contains different (and distinctly editable) objects, it is often difficult to switch the context of such a context menu from one editing context to another (e.g., text selection to picture object).

Accordingly, there is a need in the art for an improved user interface for displaying a menu of selectable functionality controls that identifies the context of the object to which the menu is relevant, that contains rich functionality controls for applying contextually relevant functionality to a selected object, and that may be efficiently switched to a different context for applying a different set of functionalities to a different or neighboring editable object. It is with respect to these and other considerations that the present invention has been made.

Summary of the Invention

Embodiments of the present invention solve the above and other problems by providing an improved user interface for displaying selectable functionality controls that identifies the context of the object to which the user interface is relevant, which contains rich functionality controls for applying contextually relevant functionality to a

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selected object, and which may be efficiently switched to a different context for applying a different set of functionalities to a different or neighboring editable object. Generally, according to aspects of the present invention, a menu of functionalities is displayed adjacent to a selected object where the menu of functionalities includes
5 functionalities associated with editing the selected object. The context menu includes an identification of the object context and a control for selectively changing the context and associated functionalities of the menu to a different object context for displaying a different set of functionalities associated with the different context.

According to another aspect of the invention, methods and systems provide a
10 user interface that is contextually relevant to an edited object. A plurality of functionalities available from a software application is provided. Upon receiving a selection of an object for editing via the software application, the contextually relevant user interface is displayed adjacent to the selected object. One or more selectable functionality controls representing a subset of the plurality of functionalities is
15 displayed in the user interface, and the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprise one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of the same type as the selected object.

According to other aspects of the invention, the one or more selectable functionality controls may be displayed in the user interface hierarchically based on
20 frequency of previous use. A control may be displayed in the user interface for changing a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing. Upon changing a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing, one or more selectable controls representing a second subset of the plurality of functionalities may be displayed in the user interface, and the second
25 subset of the plurality of functionalities may comprise one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing a second attribute of the object selected for editing. A control may be displayed in the user interface for causing a display in a second user interface of all selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

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These and other features and advantages, which characterize the present invention, will be apparent from a reading of the following detailed description and a review of the associated drawings. It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only
5 and are not restrictive of the invention as claimed.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing the architecture of a personal computer that provides an illustrative operating environment for embodiments of the present
10 invention.

Fig. 2 is an illustration of a computer screen display showing a ribbon-shaped user interface for displaying task-based top-level functionality tabs and for displaying a plurality of functionalities available under a selected top-level functionality tab.

Fig. 3 illustrates a computer screen display showing a context menu according to
15 embodiments of the present invention displayed adjacent to a selected object.

Fig. 4 illustrates the screen display of Fig. 3 showing an expanded version of the context menu for providing a menu of formatting options combinations.

Fig. 5 illustrates the computer screen display of Fig. 3 showing the display of a different set of functionality controls available from the displayed context menu.

20 Fig. 6 illustrates the computer screen display of Fig. 5 showing expansion of the displayed context menu to provide a gallery of images associated with different formatting options combinations that may be applied to an associated document object.

Fig. 7 illustrates a computer screen display showing a context menu according to embodiments of the present invention displayed adjacent to a selected object.

25 Fig. 8 illustrates the computer screen display of Fig. 7 showing the context menu selectively changed to a different editing context.

Fig. 9 illustrates the computer screen display of Fig. 7 showing the context menu selectively changed to a different editing context.

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Detailed Description

As briefly described above, embodiments of the present invention are directed to an improved user interface for displaying a menu of selectable functionality controls adjacent to or overlaying a selected document or object that identifies the context of the object to which the selectable functionality controls are relevant, which contains rich functionality controls for applying contextually relevant functionality to the selected object, and which may be efficiently switched to a different context for applying a different set of functionalities to a different or neighboring editable object.

In the following detailed description, references are made to the accompanying drawings that form a part hereof, and in which are shown by way of illustrations specific embodiments or examples. These embodiments may be combined, other embodiments may be utilized, and structural changes may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention. The following detailed description is therefore not to be taken in a limiting sense and the scope of the present invention is defined by the appended claims and their equivalents.

Referring now to the drawings, in which like numerals represent like elements through the several figures, aspects of the present invention and the exemplary operating environment will be described. Fig. 1 and the following discussion are intended to provide a brief, general description of a suitable computing environment in which the invention may be implemented. While the invention will be described in the general context of program modules that execute in conjunction with an application program that runs on an operating system on a personal computer, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention may also be implemented in combination with other program modules.

Generally, program modules include routines, programs, components, data structures, and other types of structures that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Moreover, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention may be practiced with other computer system configurations, including handheld devices, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable

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consumer electronics, minicomputers, mainframe computers, and the like. The invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by remote processing devices that are linked through a communications network. In a distributed computing environment, program modules may be located in
5 both local and remote memory storage devices.

Turning now to Fig. 1, an illustrative computer architecture for a personal computer 2 for practicing the various embodiments of the invention will be described. The computer architecture shown in Fig. 1 illustrates a conventional personal computer, including a central processing unit 4 ("CPU"), a system memory 6, including a random
10 access memory 8 ("RAM") and a read-only memory ("ROM") 10, and a system bus 12 that couples the memory to the CPU 4. A basic input/output system containing the basic routines that help to transfer information between elements within the computer, such as during startup, is stored in the ROM 10. The personal computer 2 further includes a mass storage device 14 for storing an operating system 16, application
15 programs, such as the application program 205, and data.

The mass storage device 14 is connected to the CPU 4 through a mass storage controller (not shown) connected to the bus 12. The mass storage device 14 and its associated computer-readable media, provide non-volatile storage for the personal computer 2. Although the description of computer-readable media contained herein
20 refers to a mass storage device, such as a hard disk or CD-ROM drive, it should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that computer-readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by the personal computer 2.

By way of example, and not limitation, computer-readable media may comprise computer storage media and communication media. Computer storage media includes
25 volatile and non-volatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Computer storage media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EPROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other solid state memory technology, CD-ROM, DVD, or other optical storage, magnetic
30 cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or

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any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by the computer.

According to various embodiments of the invention, the personal computer 2 may operate in a networked environment using logical connections to remote computers through a TCP/IP network 18, such as the Internet. The personal computer 2 may connect to the TCP/IP network 18 through a network interface unit 20 connected to the bus 12. It should be appreciated that the network interface unit 20 may also be utilized to connect to other types of networks and remote computer systems. The personal computer 2 may also include an input/output controller 22 for receiving and processing input from a number of devices, including a keyboard or mouse (not shown). Similarly, an input/output controller 22 may provide output to a display screen, a printer, or other type of output device.

As mentioned briefly above, a number of program modules and data files may be stored in the mass storage device 14 and RAM 8 of the personal computer 2, including an operating system 16 suitable for controlling the operation of a networked personal computer, such as the WINDOWS operating systems from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington. The mass storage device 14 and RAM 8 may also store one or more application programs. In particular, the mass storage device 14 and RAM 8 may store an application program 105 for providing a variety of functionalities to a user. For instance, the application program 105 may comprise many types of programs such as a word processing application, a spreadsheet application, a desktop publishing application, and the like. According to an embodiment of the present invention, the application program 105 comprises a multiple functionality software application for providing word processing functionality, slide presentation functionality, spreadsheet functionality, database functionality and the like. Some of the individual program modules comprising the multiple functionality application 105 include a word processing application 125, a slide presentation application 135, a spreadsheet application 140 and a database application 145. An example of such a multiple functionality application 105 is OFFICE manufactured by Microsoft

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Corporation. Other software applications illustrated in Fig. 1 include an electronic mail application 130.

Fig. 2 is an illustration of a computer screen display showing a ribbon-shaped user interface for displaying task-based top-level functionality tabs and for displaying a plurality of functionalities available under a selected top-level functionality tab. As briefly described above, the improved user interface of the present invention includes a ribbon-shaped user interface for displaying selectable controls associated with task-based functionality available under a given software application, such as the software application 105 illustrated in Fig. 1. A first section 210 of the user interface 200 includes generic selectable controls for functionality not associated with a particular task, such as word processing versus spreadsheet data analysis. For example, the section 210 includes selectable controls for general file commands such as "file open," "file save" and "print." According to one embodiment of the present invention, the selectable controls included in the first section 210 are controls that may be utilized by a variety of software applications comprising a multiple functionality application 105. That is, the selectable controls included in the first section 210 may be controls that are generally found and used across a number of different software applications.

Selectable controls included in the first section 210 may be utilized for all such applications comprising such a multiple functionality application, but other selectable controls presented in the user interface 200 described below, may be tailored to particular tasks which may be performed by particular software applications comprising the multiple functionality application. On the other hand, it should be appreciated that the user interface 200 described herein may be utilized for a single software application such as a word processing application 125, a slide presentation application 135, a spreadsheet application 140, a database application 145, or any other software application which may utilize a user interface for allowing users to apply functionality of the associated application.

Referring still to Fig. 2, adjacent to the first section 210 of the user interface 200 is a task-based tab section. The tab section includes selectable tabs associated with task-based functionality provided by a given software application. For purposes of

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example, the task-based tabs illustrated in Fig. 2 are associated with tasks that may be performed using a word processing application 125. For example, a “Writing” tab 215 is associated with functionality that may be utilized for performing writing tasks. An “Insert” tab 220 is associated with functionality associated with performing insert
5 operations or tasks. A “Page Layout” tab 230 is associated with functionality provided by the associated application for performing or editing page layout attributes of a given document.

As should be appreciated, many other task-based tabs or selectable controls may be added to the tab section of the user interface for calling functionality associated with
10 other tasks. For example, task tabs may be added for text effects, document styles, review and comment, and the like. And, as described above, the user interface 200 may be utilized for a variety of different software applications. For example, if the user interface 200 is utilized for a slide presentation application, tabs contained in the tab section may include such tabs as “Create Slides,” “Insert,” “Format,” “Drawing,”
15 “Effects,” and the like associated with a variety of tasks that may be performed by a slide presentation application. Similarly, tabs that may be utilized in the tab section of the user interface 200 for a spreadsheet application 140 may include such tabs as “Data” or “Data Entry,” “Lists,” “Pivot Tables,” “Analysis,” “Formulas,” “Pages and Printing,” and the like associated with tasks that may be performed using a spreadsheet
20 application.

Immediately beneath the generic controls section 210 and the task-based tab section is a selectable functionality control section for displaying selectable functionality controls associated with a selected tab 215, 220, 230 from the task-based tab section. According to embodiments of the present invention, when a particular tab,
25 such as the “Writing” tab 215 is selected, selectable functionality available from the associated software application for performing the selected task, for example a writing task, is displayed in logical groupings. For example, referring to Fig. 2, a first logical grouping 240 is displayed under a heading “Clipboard.” According to embodiments of the present invention, the clipboard section 240 includes selectable functionality
30 controls logically grouped together and associated with clipboard actions underneath the

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general task of writing. For example, the clipboard section 240 may include such selectable controls as a cut control, a copy control, a paste control, a select all control, etc. Adjacent to the clipboard section 240, a second logical grouping 250 is presented under the heading "Formatting."

5 Selectable controls presented in the "Formatting" section 250 may include such selectable controls as text justification, text type, font size, line spacing, boldface, italics, underline, etc. Accordingly, functionalities associated with formatting operations are logically grouped together underneath the overall task of "Writing." A third logical grouping 260 is presented under the heading "Writing Tools." The writing
10 tools section 260 includes such writing tools as find/replace, autocorrect, etc. According to embodiments of the present invention, upon selection of a different task-based tab from the tab section, a different set of selectable functionality controls in different logical groupings is presented in the user interface 200 associated with the selected task-based tab. For example, if the "Insert" task tab 220 is selected, the
15 selectable functionality controls presented in the user interface 200 are changed from those illustrated in Fig. 2 to include selectable functionality controls associated with the insert task. For detailed information regarding the user interface 200, illustrated in Fig. 2, see United States Patent Application, Attorney Matter No. 60001.0410USU1, Applicant Matter No. 309411.01, entitled "Command User Interface for Displaying
20 Selectable Software Functionality Controls," which is incorporated herein by reference as if fully set out herein.

Referring to Fig. 3, an improved context menu according to embodiments of the present invention is illustrated. A document including an embedded picture object 310 is illustrated in a word processing application workspace. According to embodiments
25 of the present invention, the context menu 320 may be launched adjacent to or near a selected object through a variety of methods. One method of launching the context menu 320 is by focusing the mouse cursor on the desired object followed by right-clicking the mouse right-click button. Other methods may be used for launching the context menu 320, including focusing on the selected object for more than a set amount
30 of time, or by selecting a button from the user interface 200 programmed for launching

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the context menu 320, or by selecting keyboard keys (for example F1) programmed for launching the context menu. The modality of the context menu allows the menu to stay visible while changes are made to an underlying object or to the software application enabling the context menu. That is, display of the context menu of the present invention does not block execution of the application with which an associated object is edited and with which the menu is displayed.

The context menu 320 includes selectable functionality controls that are relevant to editing the selected object in the selected document. That is, the context menu 320 is populated with one or more selectable functionality controls that may be utilized for editing a particular selected object in a selected document. For example, referring to the context menu 320 illustrated in Fig. 3, the context menu is launched in the context of a selected picture object 310. Accordingly, the selectable functionality controls, such as the paste control, copy control, position control, reset picture control, and the like provide functionality to a user for editing attributes of the selected picture object 310. As should be understood by those skilled in the art, if the context menu 320 is launched in the context of another type of object, then the selectable functionality controls populated in the context menu 320 will be related to the other type of object. For example, a context menu 320 launched in the context of a text object will be populated with functionality controls utilized for editing a text selection.

The one or more selectable controls displayed in the context menu represent a subset of a plurality of functionalities available for use with a selected object. According to an embodiment, the subset of functionalities represented by the one or more controls are selected based on likelihood of immediate usefulness to end users based on historical use. The subset of the plurality of functionalities may comprise one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object. Additionally, the one or more selectable functionality controls may be displayed in the user interface hierarchically based on frequency of previous use or according to other ordering criteria.

According to embodiments of the present invention, the improved context menu 320 includes rich functionality controls such as the paste control, the copy control, the

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cut control, and the picture orientation controls illustrated in the upper portion of the context menu 320. In addition, a button 325 is illustrated along a bottom edge of the context menu 320 for allowing a user to selectively display an enhanced listing of tools available for editing the selected object. According to one aspect, the button 325 may
5 be colored differently from other controls in the menu 320 to distinguish the button 325 from other controls. As should be understood, the “Show Picture Tools” button 325 is illustrative of a similar button that may be used in other context menus 320 associated with other editing contexts such as text objects, table objects, spreadsheet objects, and the like.

10 A context identification and selection tab 328 is illustrated along an upper edge of the context menu 320. The context identification and selection tab 328 both identifies the current context of the context menu 320 and allows the user to change the context of the context menu 320 to provide selectable functionality controls associated with a different editing context in the selected document. For example, referring to Fig.
15 3, the selected document includes both a picture object and a text object. According to the context identification and selection tab 328, the present context of the context menu 320 is a “Picture” context meaning that the selectable functionality controls displayed in the context menu 320 are associated with functionality for editing a selected picture object. If the user desires to change the context of the context menu 320 to a text
20 editing context, for example, the user may select the context identification and selection tab 328 to drop down a list of available contexts that may be applied to the context menu 320. The user may then select a text context to change the context of the context menu 320 so that selectable functionality controls that may be utilized for text editing will be displayed in the context menu 320.

25 Referring now to Fig. 4, a pop-out visual picker gallery of images is illustrated adjacent to the context menu 320. According to embodiments of the present invention, selection of certain selectable functionality controls results in a pop-out menu, such as the menu 330, for providing additional selectable functionality controls to the user. The visual picker display 330 provides a gallery of images showing the result of applying a
30 variety of formatting options combinations to the selected object. For example, an

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image 335 illustrates the way the document will look if the picture object 310 is centered and enlarged. The image 340 illustrates how the document will look if the picture object is moved to a top-left position in the document, and the image 345 illustrates how the document will look if text is positioned both above and below a centered picture object 310. According to embodiments of the present invention, all commands necessary for formatting the selected document according to one of the displayed images 335, 340, 345 are associated with the individual images so that selecting a given image automatically causes the formatting options combination illustrated thereby to be executed on the selected document. For detailed information regarding the gallery of images 330, see United States Patent Application, Attorney Matter No. 60001.0411USU1, Applicant Matter No. 309412.01, entitled "An Improved User Interface For Displaying A Gallery Of Formatting Options Applicable To A Selected Object," which is incorporated herein by reference as if fully set out herein.

Referring now to Fig. 5, presentation of an additional menu of selectable functionality controls is illustrated adjacent to the context menu 320 in response to selecting a functionality control from the context menu 320. As should be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the pop-out menu 520 contains additional selectable functionality controls that may be selected by the user to apply identified functionality to a selected document or object. As shown in Fig. 6, upon selection of a given functionality control from the pop-out menu 520, for example the "3D" functionality control, an additional pop-out menu 640 is provided for displaying additional functionality associated with the selected control from the pop-out menu 520. As illustrated in Fig. 6, the "3D" control 630 is selected, which causes a pop-out gallery of images 640 to be displayed. As described above with reference to Fig. 4, each of the gallery of images 640 illustrates how the selected picture object will look if a formatting options combination associated with a selected image from the gallery of images 640 is applied to the selected object 310.

Referring now to Fig. 7, the context menu 320 is illustrated adjacent to the selected picture object 310 and over a text object where the picture object 310 and the text object are placed in a table structure. Because the context menu 320 is launched in

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the context of the selected picture object 310, the context menu 320 is still in a picture context and still has selectable functionality controls relevant to editing a picture object 310. However, referring to Fig. 8, if the user elects to apply functionality from the context menu 320 to the text object contained in the table object 700, the user may
5 change the context of the context menu 320 from a picture context to a text context. By selecting the context identification and selection tab 328, as described above with reference to Fig. 3 and by selecting a text context, the context menu 320 is changed so that the selectable functionality controls displayed in the context menu 320 are in the context of a text selection, as illustrated in Fig. 8. That is, the context menu 320
10 illustrated in Fig. 8 includes such text oriented selectable functionality controls as font, paragraph, bullets and numbering, boldfacing, italics, underlining, and the like.

Referring now to Fig. 9, if the user now elects to change the context of the context menu 320 once again so that the functionality controls displayed in the context menu 320 are associated with yet another context, for example the table object 700, the
15 user may once again select the context identification and selection tab 328 to change the context of the context menu 320 from a text context illustrated in Fig. 8 to a table or row context illustrated in Fig. 9. Upon changing the context of the context menu 320 to a table or row context for editing rows of the table object 700, the selectable functionality displayed in the context menu 320 is changed as illustrated in Fig. 9. For
20 example, after changing the context of the context menu 320 to a row context, such selectable functionality controls as "Insert Rows," "Delete Rows," "Merge Cells," "Distribute Rows Evenly," and the like are displayed in the context menu 320. As should be understood, the example functionality controls illustrated in the context menus 320 described herein and the example picture and text objects illustrated herein
25 are for purposes of example only and are not restrictive of the invention as claimed herein. That is, the context menu 320 may be displayed according to a variety of different editing contexts, and a variety of different selectable functionality controls may be displayed in the context menu 320 according to the associated editing context.

As described herein, an improved user interface for displaying selectable
30 functionality controls in a context menu is provided. It will be apparent to those skilled

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in the art that various modifications or variations may be made in the present invention without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein.

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WE CLAIM:

1. A method for providing a user interface that is contextually relevant to one or more objects, comprising:
 - upon receiving a selection of an object for editing, displaying a contextually relevant user interface adjacent to the selected object;
 - displaying in the user interface a control for identifying a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing; and
 - displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a subset of a plurality of functionalities, whereby the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object.
2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying the one or more selectable controls in the user interface hierarchically based on frequency of previous use.
3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for changing a context of the user interface for editing a different object, whereby upon selection of the control for changing a context of the user interface, displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a different subset of the plurality of functionalities, whereby the different subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the different object.
4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for causing a display in a second user interface of all selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

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5. The method of Claim 1, further comprising displaying in the user interface a selectable control representing a group of additional selectable controls where each of the additional selectable controls represents functionality of the software application that may be used for editing the selected object.

6. The method of Claim 1, whereby in response to a selection of one or more of the selectable controls, providing a gallery of formatting images, whereby each formatting image contained in the gallery of formatting images is associated with one or more formatting attributes that may be applied to the selected object; and whereby in response to a selection of one of the formatting images, automatically applying the one or more formatting attributes associated with the selected formatting image to the selected object.

7. The method of Claim 6, whereby providing a gallery of formatting images includes providing the gallery of formatting images within a second user interface deployed adjacent to the contextually relevant user interface.

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8. An improved user interface that is contextually relevant to a selected object, comprising

a menu of one or more selectable controls deployed adjacent to a selected object, the one or more selectable controls representing a subset of a plurality of functionalities, whereby the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object; and

a control disposed above the menu for identifying a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected.

9. The user interface of Claim 8, further comprising a control disposed below the menu for selectively causing a display in a second user interface of additional selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

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10. A computer readable medium containing computer executable instructions which when executed by a computer perform a method for providing a user interface that is contextually relevant to a selected object, comprising:

upon receiving a selection of an object for editing, displaying a contextually relevant user interface adjacent to the selected object;

displaying in the user interface a control for identifying a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing; and

displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a subset of a plurality of functionalities, whereby the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object.

11. The computer readable medium of Claim 10, further comprising displaying the one or more selectable controls in the user interface hierarchically based on frequency of previous use.

12. The computer readable medium of Claim 10, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for changing a context of the user interface for editing a second object, whereby upon selection of the control for changing a context of the user interface, displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a second subset of the plurality of functionalities, whereby the second subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the second object.

13. The computer readable medium of Claim 10, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for causing a display in a second user interface of all selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

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14. The computer readable medium of Claim 10, further comprising displaying in the user interface a selectable control representing a group of additional selectable controls where each of the additional selectable controls represents functionality of the software application that may be used for editing the selectable object.

15. The computer readable medium of Claim 10, whereby in response to a selection of one or more of the selectable controls, providing a gallery of formatting images, whereby each formatting image contained in the gallery of formatting images is associated with one or more formatting attributes that may be applied to the selected object; and whereby in response to a selection of one of the formatting images, automatically applying the one or more formatting attributes associated with the selected formatting image to the selected object.

16. The computer readable medium of Claim 15, whereby providing a gallery of formatting images includes providing the gallery of formatting images within a second user interface deployed adjacent to the contextually relevant user interface.

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17. A method for providing a user interface that is contextually relevant to a selected object, comprising:

upon receiving a selection of an object for editing, displaying a contextually relevant user interface near the selected object in a software application workspace;

displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a subset of a plurality of functionalities, whereby the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object;

displaying in the user interface a control for changing a context of the user interface for editing a second object, whereby upon selection of the control for changing a context of the user interface, displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a second subset of the plurality of functionalities, whereby the second subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the second object; and

displaying in the user interface a control for causing a display in a second user interface of additional selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

18. The method of Claim 17, further comprising displaying the one or more selectable controls in the user interface hierarchically based on frequency of previous use.

19. The method of Claim 17, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for identifying a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing.

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20. The method of Claim 17, further comprising displaying in the user interface a selectable control representing a group of additional selectable controls where each of the additional selectable controls represents functionality of the software application that may be used for editing the selectable object.

21. The method of Claim 17, whereby in response to a selection of one or more of the selectable controls, providing a gallery of formatting images, whereby each formatting image contained in the gallery of formatting images is associated with one or more formatting attributes that may be applied to the selected object; and whereby in response to a selection of one of the formatting images, automatically applying the one or more formatting attributes associated with the selected formatting image to the selected object.

22. The method of Claim 21, whereby providing a gallery of formatting images includes providing the gallery of formatting images within a second user interface deployed adjacent to the contextually relevant user interface.

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23. A computer readable medium containing computer executable instructions which when executed by a computer perform a method for providing a user interface that is contextually relevant to a selected object, comprising:

upon receiving a selection of an object for editing, displaying a contextually relevant user interface near the selected object in a software application workspace;

displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a subset of a plurality of functionalities, whereby the subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the selected object;

displaying in the user interface a control for changing a context of the user interface for editing a second object, whereby upon selection of the control for changing a context of the user interface, displaying in the user interface one or more selectable controls representing a second subset of the plurality of functionalities, whereby the second subset of the plurality of functionalities comprises one or more of the plurality of functionalities that are at least substantially the most used in editing an object of a same type as the second object; and

displaying in the user interface a control for causing a display in a second user interface of additional selectable controls that may be used for editing the selected object.

24. The computer readable medium of Claim 23, further comprising displaying the one or more selectable controls in the user interface hierarchically based on frequency of previous use.

25. The computer readable medium of Claim 23, further comprising displaying in the user interface a control for identifying a context of the user interface based on an attribute of the object selected for editing.

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26. The computer readable medium of Claim 23, further comprising displaying in the user interface a selectable control representing a group of additional selectable controls where each of the additional selectable controls represents functionality of the software application that may be used for editing the selectable object.

27. The computer readable medium of Claim 23, whereby in response to a selection of one or more of the selectable controls, providing a gallery of formatting images, whereby each formatting image contained in the gallery of formatting images is associated with one or more formatting attributes that may be applied to the selected object; and whereby in response to a selection of one of the formatting images, automatically applying the one or more formatting attributes associated with the selected formatting image to the selected object.

28. The computer readable medium of Claim 27, whereby providing a gallery of formatting images includes providing the gallery of formatting images within a second user interface deployed adjacent to the contextually relevant user interface.

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Figures: 2-9

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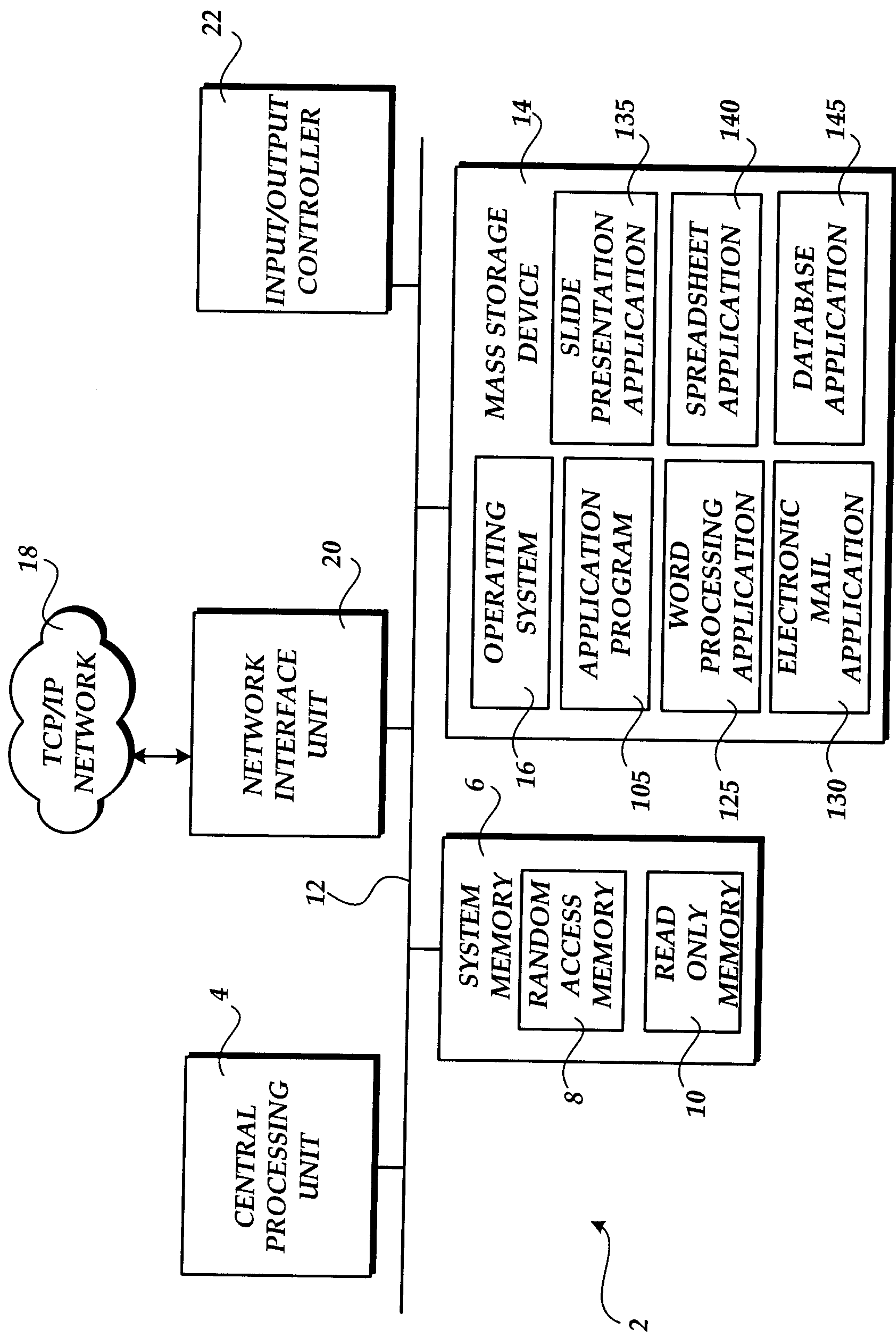


Fig. 1