

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
13 September 2001 (13.09.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/67357 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F 17/60**
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/US01/07302
- (22) International Filing Date: 5 March 2001 (05.03.2001)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
60/187,662 7 March 2000 (07.03.2000) US
09/540,668 31 March 2000 (31.03.2000) US
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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, 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, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, 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, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:**
— *without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report*
- 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.*



WO 01/67357 A2

(54) Title: SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR POLLING

(57) **Abstract:** Systems and methods for conducting polls, rating and categorizing content, and presenting advertisements in an interactive environment implemented across multiple computers and servers on a computer network, such as the Internet, are provided. Through these systems and methods, a user of wide area computer network is enabled to submit his or her own polling questions to online communities. In order to prevent users from submitting inappropriate questions, or questions that do not belong in the rating or category that is assigned to them by the author, the present invention also provides a peer review mechanism and a rating and categorizing mechanism. A targeted advertisement presentation mechanism is also provided to facilitate targeting, bidding, and distribution of advertisements in connection with online content, such as polling questions.

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR POLLINGCross Reference to Related Application

This application claims the benefit of
5 United States provisional patent application number
60/187,662, filed March 7, 2000.

Background of the Invention

The present invention relates to systems
10 and methods for polling. More particularly, the
present invention relates to systems and methods for
conducting polls, rating and categorizing content,
and presenting advertisements in an interactive
environment implemented across multiple computers and
15 servers on a computer network, such as the Internet.

With the recent explosion in computer and
communication technology, particularly that related
to wide area networks such as the Internet, a new
means for determining public sentiment has been made
20 available in the form of online polling. Through
online polling, any computer user connected to a wide
area network can review a polling question, submit an
answer to that question, and see the results of all
answers to that question. For example, in an online
25 news web site that is currently posting an article
about a school shooting incident, the site may also
post a polling question asking "Should parents be
held responsible for acts committed by their children

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with their guns?" In response to such a question, a news reader could then check a "Yes," "No," or "Don't Know" check box and then be provided with the results of the survey across all respondents. Not only is
5 such a capability interesting to the average news reader, but such a capability may also be useful to law makers, news reporters, and others interested in public opinion.

In the known systems and methods for online
10 polling, however, the polling questions available on web sites are typically controlled by the web site operator. Thus, in the example above, the news web site operator would have control over the question being asked. Although this may still provide useful
15 and interesting information, it does not necessarily enable the questions that are truly of interest to the community to be asked.

One approach to asking questions of
interest to the online community is available through
20 online bulletin boards and chat rooms. By submitting a question to a bulletin board or a chat room, a user can observe the responses that are generated by the respondents on that bulletin board or in that chat room. Nevertheless, such bulletin boards and chat
25 rooms do not facilitate consolidating the responses that are generated by respondents into statistically meaningful data.

Accordingly, it is desirable to be able to
provide systems and methods for polling in which a
30 user can submit their own polling questions and receive useful statistical information in response.

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Summary of the Invention

In accordance with this and other objects of the invention, systems and methods for polling are provided. More particularly, systems and methods for
5 conducting polls, rating and categorizing content, and presenting advertisements in an interactive environment implemented across multiple computers and servers on a computer network, such as the Internet, are provided.

10 Through the systems and methods of the present invention, a user of a wide area computer network, such as the Internet, is enabled to submit his or her own polling questions to online communities. These polling questions may be of any
15 topic and in any suitable format, and may include images, video, and/or audio content, and/or any other suitable multimedia or interactive portions. The user may also specify the manner in which responses may be submitted, and more particularly what
20 responses are permitted. When specifying the polling questions, the user may also be permitted to specify a rating and a category for the question so that respondents can determine whether they would like to be presented with the question.

25 In order to prevent users from submitting inappropriate questions, or questions that do not belong in the rating, category, or target audience that is assigned to them by the author, the present invention also provides a peer review mechanism and a
30 rating and categorizing mechanism. Through the peer review mechanism, a user's question may be submitted randomly to a subset of the polling community that is

interested in the category assigned to the question
by the user, for example. This subset may be
selected randomly from the entire community or may be
a predetermined review board. Upon reviewing the
5 question for content, appropriateness, and any other
suitable factors, the subset may elect to pass or
fail the question. Questions that are passed may
then be presented to the polling community at large
and those that fail may be returned to the author
10 and/or submitted for appeal review.

Through the rating and categorizing
mechanism, polling questions can be assigned ratings
and/or categories, or ratings and/or categories
assigned to questions by their authors can be
15 confirmed. This mechanism preferably uses a pattern
recognition algorithm or artificial intelligence to
determine the appropriate rating or category for a
question and then use that determination to assign a
rating or category to the question or confirm a
20 rating or category assigned to a question by an
author.

In connection with the systems and methods
of the present invention, a targeted advertisement
presentation mechanism is also provided. Through
25 this mechanism, advertisers can target advertisements
based upon the underlying subject matter of a polling
question (or any content, for that matter) with which
the advertisement is to be presented. The space for
such advertisements may also be allocated to
30 advertisers through a bidding process to generate the
most revenue for the operator of a polling system.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The above and other objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIGS. 1-29b are illustrations of user interfaces that may be presented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 30 is flow diagram of a polling process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 31 is a flow diagram of a peer review process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 32 is a flow diagram of a user profiling process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 33 is a flow diagram of a polling question targeting process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

FIG. 34 is a flow diagram of a rating and category assignment and confirmation process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention;

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FIG. 35 is a flow diagram of an advertisement targeting, bidding, and distribution process that may be implemented in a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention; and

FIG. 36 is a block diagram of a hardware system that may be used to implement a polling system in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention.

10

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Turning to FIGS. 1-36 preferred embodiments of the present invention are illustrated in detail.

In FIG. 1, a user interface 100 for a polling system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. As shown, interface 100 may include a logo 102, a menu bar 104, menu tabs 106, a search interface 110, topics options 112, a hot question interface 114, a personal question interface 126, an information window 128, and alternate menu options 132. As can be seen, logo 102 may be presented to identify the source of the interface to each user of the interface. This logo may include graphics, text, or a combination of the same. Menu bar 104 may include any suitable menu options for operating the polling interface. In the illustrative example, menu bar 104 includes a login/logout option, a my-profile option, an ask-a-question option, a search option, a member-e-mail option, and a help option. These options are preferably provided to enable a user to easily access any of the options regardless of which tab of menu

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tabs 106 have been selected by the user. The functions that may be provided by these options are discussed in detail below in connection with FIGS. 7-24.

5 As illustrated in FIG. 1, menu tabs 106 may include a home option, a global-polling-network option, a Q-care option, and/or any other suitable options. When selected, the home tab may provide the interface illustrated in FIG. 1, although any other
10 suitable interface could be selected for the home tab. Examples of interfaces that may be displayed when the global-polling-network option or the Q-care option are selected are shown in FIGS. 25-28 and discussed in connection therewith.

15 Search interface 110, as shown, may include a search string entry window, a field-of-search menu, a go button, and "advanced" hypertext. The search string entry window may be implemented as a field for entering a search string as known in the art. The
20 field-of-search drop down menu may be implemented as a drop down menu or in any other suitable manner and may include "all items," "categories," "discussions," and "questions" (as shown) options. Once a search string and a field of search option have been
25 selected, a search may be implemented by pressing the go button. By selecting the "advanced" hypertext, the user may indicate a desire to implement an advanced search. Upon selecting this hypertext, instruction for performing an advanced search may be
30 presented to the user, or a search interface may be presented as illustrated in, and described in connection with, FIG. 23.

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Topics options 112 may be provided in interface 100 to enable a user to select topics of interest to the user for which polling questions may be available. As shown, these topics options may

5 include "hot questions," "entertainment," "politics," "family," "qttopics," "finance," "shopping," "health," "sports," "kids," "teenagers," "other," and "women." As shown, in FIG. 29, these topics options may also include "Peer Review" and "Questions for You," for

10 example when the user is a registered member. Each of these topics options preferably corresponds to a section relating to the topics option's name. For example, upon selecting "hot questions," the interface may appear as shown in FIG. 1. However,

15 upon selecting "Peer Review" (FIG. 29), the interface may appear as shown in FIG. 29b. The "qttopics" topics option preferably corresponds to a section that relates to the polling process. In preferred embodiments and as shown, the "hot questions" option

20 is automatically selected by default and hot questions interface 114 is automatically displayed.

As can be seen, questions in interface 114 are preferably selected based upon the number of votes received by each question over a period of

25 time. Questions in interface 114 may be additionally or alternatively selected based upon any other suitable criterion or criteria. These questions may be from a variety of different ones of, or only one of, topics options 112. When these questions are

30 displayed, each may include a question portion 119, a question author 120, a number of votes received 122, and a question submission date 124. Because some

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questions may be longer than the available space in interface 100, question portion 119 may show the whole question or only a portion thereof. Certain questions may also include an icon 125 to indicate
5 that the question has an indicated trait. For example, as shown, question 123 has a multimedia portion which may include an image portion, a video portion, or an audio portion. Traits may also indicate an interactive portion, or any other
10 suitable portion. Also displayed with questions 114 may be a next button 116 and a help button 118. Using these buttons, a user may request to see additional questions or help information relating to selecting and responding to a question.

15 Personal question interface 126 may be provided in interface 100 in order to present a question specifically suited for the user of interface 100. As can be seen, this feature may be explained in information window 128. Alternatively,
20 information window 128 may be used to provide any other desirable information to the user. Like interface 114, interface 126 may provide a question portion, a question author, a number of votes received, and a question submission date. A topic
25 130 may also be indicated in personal question interface 126 in order to reflect why the presented question was selected for the user.

 Alternate menu options 132 may also be provided in interface 100 to enable the user to
30 access different functions of the polling system. Like those in menu bar 104, these alternate options 132 may be provided regardless of the tab

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from menu tabs 106 that has been selected in order to allow the user to rapidly and easily access any of the corresponding functions. As shown, these options may include "ask" to ask a poll question, "search" to
5 access an advanced search interface, "posting policies" to see the system's posting policies, "privacy policies" to see the system's privacy policies, "user agreement" to see the system's user agreement, "e-mail q-care" to access the system's
10 customer support, "about qtopics" to learn more about the company running the polling system, and any other suitable or desirable options.

As also shown in interface 100, a banner advertisement 134 may be presented to the user to
15 help generate revenue to cover the operating costs of the polling system.

Once a user selects a question, such as question 136, from interface 100 by clicking on that question, a question interface 200 may be presented
20 to the user as shown in FIG. 2. As shown, interface 200 may contain a logo 202, a question 204, answer options 206, buttons 208, question information 210, and an advertisement 212. Like logo 102 in FIG. 1, logo 202 may indicate the operator of the polling
25 system and may include graphics and/or text. Question 204 preferably includes a written question and may also include one or more images, video, audio, or any other suitable multimedia or interactive portions. Answer options 206 may be any
30 suitable mechanism for responding to question 204. As shown, this may include a set of multiple-choice answers that may be selected by pressing a radio

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button in the interface. Answer options may also include a text entry field, a mechanism to submit an image, video, or audio, or any other suitable mechanism. Buttons 208, as shown, may include a help
5 button, a close button, a comment view button, a comment post button, a vote button, an e-mail author button, and an e-mail friend button. Using these buttons, a user may respectively be able to receive help in operating the interface, close the interface,
10 view comments to question 204, post a comment to question 204, submit an answer to question 204 (i.e., vote), send an e-mail message to the author, or send a copy of the question to a friend. Question information 210, as illustrated, may include an
15 indicator of the type of question (in this case, a "poll"), an expiration date for question 204, the name of the author of the question (i.e., "MINRAN"), the number of votes received by the question so far, the date the question was submitted, and a link to
20 the site of origin of the question. The link to the site of origin of the question may simply indicate that selecting the link will take the user to the site of origin of the question (as shown) or may also indicate the name of the site (e.g., "Origin: XYZ.com
25 Partner Site"). Lastly, as in interface 100, a banner advertisement 212 may be presented in interface 200.

As stated above in connection with icon 125 of interface 100 of FIG. 1, the questions that are
30 presented to a user may include images, video, and audio portions. FIG. 2b illustrates an example of an

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interface 250 that includes images 252, 254, 256, 258, and 260.

Upon responding to a question 204, the user may be presented with a follow-on question 304 as shown in interface 300 of FIG. 3. As explained in information 302 that may also be included in interface 300, the user's response to question 304 may be used to enhance the polling experience by facilitating selecting an appropriate question for the personal question interface 126, appropriate questions which will be displayed in response to selecting a questions-for-you tab 2910 as shown in FIG. 29, and/or appropriate banner advertisements displayed in the polling system. The follow-on question that is presented to the user may be randomly selected from available questions or may be specifically targeted based upon the type of polling question being asked. For example, in the case of a political question, the polling system may provide a follow-on question that asks what the user's political affiliation is. Like question 204, the user may respond to question 304 by selecting one of answer options 306. Like answer options 206, answer options 306 may include any suitable mechanism for responding to question 304, such as the multiple-choice answers presented. Buttons 308 may be provided to enable the user to receive help in answering follow-on question 304 or to close interface 300.

Once the user has responded to follow-on question 304, or after the user has responded to poll question 204 if no follow-on question is to be

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provided, the user may be presented with a poll
result interface 400 as shown in FIG. 4. As
illustrated, interface 400 may include a copy 402 of
question 204, poll results 403, and display controls
5 414. Results 403 may be arranged so that the results
are provided as a series of bar graphs. These bar
graphs may have, for each possible answer, a bar that
has a relative length corresponding to the relative
percentage of the total answers having that answer.
10 Thus, as shown, three possible answers 404, 406, and
408 are presented. In portion 410, a bar graph
corresponding to each of these possible answers is
presented. As indicated, these bars are for all
respondents. In order to provide the user with
15 additional information, the results may also indicate
the total number of votes for portion 410 and the
numeric value of the percentage for each possible
answer.

Also shown in results 403 is a controllable
20 series of bar graphs in portion 412 that is similarly
arranged to that in portion 410. In portion 412,
however, the responses that are used to generate the
bar graphs are determined by selecting demographics
in display controls 414. In the display controls,
25 the user may select a demographic category using menu
416 and a demographic subcategory using menu 418.
Examples of demographic categories include: age;
gender; marital status/children; education; income;
occupation (as shown); and political affiliation.
30 For the age category, the subcategories may include:
0-12; 13-17; 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and
65 and over years of age. For the gender category,

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the subcategories may include: male and female. For the marital status/children category, the subcategories may include: never married/no children; married/no children; not married/no children; never
5 married/with children; married/with children; and not married/with children. For education, the subcategories may include: did not complete high school; high school; some college; associates degree; bachelors degree; some graduate school; masters
10 degree; or Ph.D., M.D., or J.D. For the income category, the subcategories may include: under \$10,000; \$10-20,000; \$20-35,000; \$35-50,000; \$50-75,000; \$75-100,000; and \$100,000 and over. For the occupation category, the subcategories may include:
15 student; professional; management; office worker; blue collar; laborer; sales; other. For the political affiliation category, the subcategories may include: Democrat; Republican; Independent; Libertarian, and other.

20 As illustrated in FIG. 4, by selecting the occupation category and the professional subcategory, the user can see the bar graphs for the portion of the results that were selected by professionals in portion 412 of results 403. Immediately above the
25 bar graphs in portion 412, it is evident that only one respondent was known to be a professional. In order to update the bar graphs corresponding to the category and subcategory selected, the user may depress button 420.

30 Although portion 410 of results 403 shows the results for all respondents, the user may alternatively select to present the results for

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members of the polling system only using the all
respondent and members only radio buttons 422. In
order to switch between viewing the results as bar
charts and icon charts, the user may select the bar
5 charts and icon charts radio buttons 424. As with
buttons 208 in FIG. 2, the user can use buttons 426
to get help, close interface 400, view comments, post
a comment, send an e-mail to the author, or send the
poll to a friend. Also, by depressing the hide
10 option button in buttons 426, the user may cause
menus 416 and 418, button 420, and radio buttons 422
and 424 to be hidden.

Turning to FIGS. 5 and 6, examples of
interfaces for viewing and posting comments are
15 shown. As illustrated in FIG. 5, a list of comments
506 may be displayed in an interface 500 in response
to a question 502 when a user presses the view button
of buttons 426 in interface 400 of FIG. 4. When no
comments have been posted, only question 502 may be
20 displayed as shown. As can be seen, the comments
shown in list 506 may include a portion of the
comment, the author's name, a number of responses to
the comment, and the date the comment was submitted.
In order to obtain help for viewing comments, the
25 user may press help button of buttons 504. Once the
user is done viewing comments, the user may press the
close button of buttons 504 to close interface 500.

FIG. 6 illustrates an interface 600 for
posting a comment in response to a poll question. As
30 shown, a poll question 601 may be displayed to the
user. In response to this question, the user may
then post a comment in comment entry field 602.

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Using the post button of buttons 604, the user may then submit the comment to the polling system. Alternatively, the user may select the close button, the help button, the e-mail the author button, or the e-mail a friend button, of buttons 604 to close interface 600 without posting a comment, to receive help on posting a comment, to send an e-mail to the author, or to e-mail the question to a friend, respectively.

10 Referring to FIG. 7, an interface 708 for viewing and modifying a user's registration information is shown in display 700. This display may be presented in response to a user selection of my profile option 702 from menu bar 104. When option 15 702 is selected, my profile tabs 704 are presented with the registration tab 706 initially selected. As can be seen, tab 706 includes interface 708. Within interface 708 may be a variety of pieces of personal information including the user's login name, first 20 name, middle initial, last name, address (including street, city, state, country, and zip code), telephone number (including country code, area code, and telephone number), e-mail address, screen name, birth date, highest poll rating, highest poll rating 25 for peer review, and password reminder hint. The user may also access a password change interface by selecting button 710. Once the user has satisfactorily modified his registration information, that information may be saved by pressing update 30 button 712.

Referring to FIG. 8, an interface 804 for controlling the user's demographic profile is

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illustrated in display 800. As can be seen,
interface 804 may be accessed by selecting
demographics tab 802 from my profile tabs 704.
Within interface 804 are five columns 806, 808, 810,
5 812, and 814. Column 806 may list demographic
questions that have been answered by the user and
column 808 may list the corresponding answer. Using
buttons in column 810, the user may be able to elect
to change the answer given. The user may also be
10 able to elect to turn off personalized promotions
that are given to the user based upon a question
using the corresponding button in column 812.
Finally, the user may be able to delete a question by
depressing the corresponding button in column 814.

15 A user may view and update the user's
interests profile in the polling system using an
interests interface 904 as shown in display 900 of
FIG. 9. Similarly to interface 804, interface 904
may be accessed by selecting interests tab 902 from
20 my-profile tabs 704. Within interface 904, the user
may be able to view and update direct interests in
area 912 and inferred interests in area 914. Direct
interests may be interests that the user has directly
indicated are of interest to him or her. This may be
25 accomplished using interface 904 by selecting browse
button 906. In response to selection of button 906,
the interface may then present a list of common
interest categories. Upon selecting one of these
categories, the user may be presented with a
30 subcategory. The user may then select the category
only or just the subcategory within the category.
For example, included in the category list may be

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"sports." Upon selecting "sports," the user may be presented with a subcategory list that includes "football." At this point the user may select "sports" only -- thereby indicating that he or she
5 likes all sports, not just football -- or may select "football" only -- thereby indicating that he or she wants to focus on football and not the other sports. In order to further focus the user's interests profile, interface 900 may also present subcategories
10 of subcategories to any degree desirable. For example, within football the user may be presented with a "rules" subcategory, and within the "subcategory" the user may be presented with an "overtime" subcategory. In this way, the user could
15 very specifically designate his or her interest in the overtime rules of football or could generally designate his or her interest in sports. Once an interest has been selected, the user may then add that interest to direct interests area 912 of
20 interface 904 by pressing add interest button 908. Examples of displays that may be presented in allowing a user to specify his or her interests are shown in FIGS. 18-20.

Inferred interests may be interests that
25 the polling system has inferred the user as having. This may be accomplished in any suitable manner. For example, the polling system may infer that the user is interested in sports by detecting that the user frequently selects to view polling questions in the
30 sports topics option.

As shown in FIG. 9, prior to a user having selected any interests and the polling system having

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inferred any interests of the user, interface 904 may display "You have not stated any interests" and "You have not established a pattern of interests" in areas 912 and 914, respectively. Once the user has stated
5 an interest or the system has inferred an interest of the user, that interest is preferably listed in interests column 916. Using a "turn off" button that may be provided in the corresponding row of personalized promotions column 918, the user may
10 cause personalized promotions that are based on that interest to not be provided to the user. Similarly, using a "delete" button that may be provided in the corresponding row of delete column 920, the user may cause the direct interest or inferred interest to be
15 deleted from the user's profile. In order to enable the user to easily switch between viewing inferred interests and direct interests, interface 904 provides buttons 922 and 924 that, when pressed, cause the interface to scroll to the inferred
20 interests area 914 and the direct interests area 912, respectively.

Turning to FIG. 10, the user may view a list 1004 of his or her questions as shown in display 1000. This list may be activated by the user
25 selecting my questions tab 1002 of my profile tabs 704. As shown, questions are preferably displayed in list 1004 with the category and subcategory, a portion of the question, the author's name, the number of votes received, and the creation date
30 indicated.

FIG. 11 illustrates an example of a notifications profile interface 1104 as shown in

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display 1100. Interface 1104 may be activated by the user by selecting notifications tab 1102 for my profile tabs 704. In each of areas 1106, 1108, 1110, and 1112 of interface 1104, the user may see the

5 notifications that have been configured for the instances when the user's questions receive a certain number of initial votes, each time the user's questions receive an additional number of incremental votes, when the polling system receives a certain

10 number of votes, when the user's questions are peer-reviewed, and when peer review for the user's questions are completed, respectively. As shown in FIG. 11, when no notifications have been configured in any of areas 1106, 1110, and 1112, "none" is

15 indicated by indicator 1114. Area 1108 illustrates a notification for the user's question "Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential...." As can be seen, the user is to be notified every ten votes that this question receives. By pressing edit button

20 1118, the user can modify or delete this notification. In order to modify these notifications, the user may select "add new subscription" hypertext 1116.

In order to view information on the rewards

25 program available in the polling system, the user may select q-rewards tab 1202 from my profile tab 704, as shown in display 1200 of FIG. 12. Once the user selects tab 1202, a q-rewards interface 1204 may be presented. Prior to the user having earned any

30 rewards, a description 1206 of the rewards program may be presented in interface 1204. After the user has earned rewards, the interface may replace or

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supplement information 1206 with details of the rewards earned by the user.

Upon a user selecting the "ask a question" icon from menu bar 104, as shown in FIG. 1, the polling system may present a series of displays to receive polling question information from the user. The first of these displays may be presented as shown in display 1300 of FIG. 13. As can be seen, display 1300 includes instructions 1302, possible responses 1304, and buttons 1306. As set forth in instructions 1302, the user may first be asked to indicate the type of question that the user would like to ask. In response, the user may then select one of possible responses 1304 by selecting the corresponding radio button. As can be seen, the polling system may permit the user to select questions with which others may "agree/disagree," with which others may express "measured agreement," which have "multiple choice" answers, and which are "open questions." Although particular types of questions are illustrated herein, any suitable type of question or type of responses may be used in accordance with the polling system of the present invention. Once a user has selected one of possible responses 1304, the user may proceed by selecting the next button from buttons 1306. Alternatively, the user may receive help, cancel the question submission, or go to the previous display by respectively selecting the "help," "cancel," or "back" buttons of buttons 1306.

After the user has selected a question type, the user may then be prompted to provide a question subject, a question context, and a question

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as shown in display 1400 of FIG. 14. The subject, context, and question may be submitted using text entry boxes 1402, 1404, and 1406 as shown. The user may also elect to attach images, video, or audio to the question by checking "select to attach media" box 1408. Once the user has completed these boxes, the user may proceed by selecting the next button from buttons 1410. Alternatively, the user may receive help, cancel the question submission, or go to the previous display by respectively selecting the "help," "cancel," or "back" buttons of buttons 1410. An example of a completed subject box 1502 and a completed question box 1506 are shown in display 1500 of FIG. 15.

As shown in display 1600 of FIG. 16, once the user has submitted the subject, context, and question, the user may then be prompted to select the available response based upon the type of question selected in display 1300 of FIG. 13. As shown, display 1600 may provide the user with a copy 1602 of the question submitted and instructions 1604 on what the user needs to do next. In the illustrated example, the "agree/disagree" radio button was selected in display 1300 and thus the user is presented with menu boxes 1606 and 1608 for the possible answers that correspond to an "agree/disagree" type of question. With menu box 1606, the user may select "agree/disagree," "true/false," or "yes/no." Within menu box 1608, the user may select "abstain," "neither," or "do not know." By selecting one of the available options from each of boxes 1606 and 1608 the user may specify

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all possible responses to his or her question. Once the user is satisfied with the selections made, the user may proceed by selecting the "next" button of buttons 1610. Alternately, the user may receive
5 help, cancel the question submission, preview what the selected answers will look like, or return to the previous display by selecting the "help," "cancel," "preview," or "back" buttons of buttons 1610.

After the user has configured the possible
10 responses to his or her question in display 1600, the user may be prompted to provide a rating for the question using display 1700 of FIG. 17. As shown, display 1700 may include instructions 1702, possible responses 1704, peer review permission 1706, peer
15 review overview hypertext 1708, peer review policies hypertext 1710, a start date indicator 1712, an end date indicator 1714, and buttons 1716. As indicated in instructions 1702, the user may be requested to select an appropriate rating so that the user's
20 question is only sent to appropriate audiences. Examples of responses that may be made to this prompt are "Q-All - Suitable For All Ages/Audiences," "Q-Kids - Suitable For Most Children," "Q-Teens - Suitable For Most Teenagers," "Q-Adults - Suitable
25 For Most Adults," and "Q-X - Sexually Explicit Content/Graphic-Language." The user may also elect to submit the question for peer review by checking the peer review permission 1706 check box. If the user desires, the user may obtain additional
30 information on peer review by clicking on the peer review hypertext 1708 and/or the peer review policies hypertext 1710. To limit the time that the user's

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question is posted, the user may specify a start date and end date for the question using start and end date indicators 1712 and 1714. Once the user is satisfied with the selections made, the user may
5 proceed by selecting the "next" button of buttons 1716. Alternately, the user may receive help, cancel the question submission, preview what the rating will look like, or return to the previous display by selecting the "help," "cancel," "preview," or "back"
10 buttons of buttons 1716.

Next, the user may be required to specify a top level category for the question using display 1800 shown in FIG. 18. As can be seen, display 1800 may include instructions 1802, categories 1804, and
15 buttons 1806. Through instructions 1802, the user may know to select one of categories 1804 that is appropriate to the user's question. The user may also request help or close display 1800 by pressing the corresponding one of buttons 1806. Upon
20 selecting one of categories 1804, the user may then be presented with a subcategory display 1900 as shown in FIG. 19. In the illustrated example, it can be seen that the user selected the "politics" category by indicator 1908. If the user wishes to change this
25 selection, the user can go back to the previous display by selecting the "go up a level" hypertext 1906. If the user is satisfied with simply selecting the current category (in this case, "politics"), the user may press select button 1904 to assign the
30 user's question to the category. Otherwise, the user can further narrow the scope of the question by selecting one of subcategories 1902. The user may

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also request help or close display 1900 by pressing the corresponding one of buttons 1910. In the event that the user selects a subcategory, the user may again be presented with another, similarly operated
5 subcategory display 2000 as shown in FIG. 20. Any suitable number of category and subcategory displays may be provided to the user until the level of categorization is determined to be sufficient.

Once the user has selected a category and
10 subcategory(ies) (if any) for the user's question, display 2100 of FIG. 21 may be displayed. This display may enable the user to modify the category and subcategory(ies) selected, and select additional categories and subcategories, if desired. More
15 particularly, as explained in instructions 2101, the user may click on "browse" buttons 2104, 2110, and 2112 to select categories and subcategories for boxes 2102, 2106, and 2108, respectively. Within display 2100, the user may also configure the notification
20 profile for this question in area 2114. By selecting check boxes 2116, 2118, 2120, and 2122, the user may select to be notified (e.g., by receiving an e-mail message) when the user's question is reviewed by a member in peer review, when the user's question
25 passes or fails peer review, when the number of respondents exceeds a specified number, and every time a specified number of respondents responds to the question. Once the user is satisfied with the selections made, the user may proceed by selecting
30 the "next" button of buttons 2124. Alternately, the user may receive help, cancel the question submission, preview what the category and

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notification selections, or return to the previous display by selecting the "help," "cancel," "preview," or "back" buttons of buttons 2124.

Finally, the user may be presented with one
5 last preview of the user's question prior to completing the submission as shown in display 2200 of FIG. 22. As illustrated, display 2200 may indicate the user's question, the possible answers, the subject, the category and subcategory, the rating,
10 the peer review status (e.g., submitted or not submitted), the start date, the end date, and any other suitable information. Once the user is satisfied with the question and other information, the user may complete the submission by pressing the
15 "finished" button of buttons 2202. Alternately, the user may receive help, cancel the question submission, or return to the previous display by selecting the "help," "cancel," or "back" buttons of buttons 2202.

20 Referring to display 2300 of FIG. 23, a search interface 2304 and a results interface 2306 are shown. These interfaces may be presented when a user selects search icon 2302 from menu bar 104. As can be seen, search interface may include a search
25 text field 2308, a search method menu 2310, a search area menu 2312, a peer review limit check box 2314, a time limit menu 2316, a category limit interface 2318, a search button 2320, and a help button 2322. In order to perform a search, a user may use these
30 components of interface 2304 as follows. First the user may enter text into field 2308. This text will indicate the text that the search engine must find.

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As shown, field 2308 contains the text "gore" that was entered by the user. Next, from menu 2310, the user may select a search method. Search methods may include "exact phrase" (as shown), "matches on all
5 words (AND)," "matches on any word (OR)," and/or any other suitable methods. The user may also select where to search using menu 2312. Search areas may include "all items," "discussions," "questions," and/or any other suitable areas. The user may also
10 specify whether to only search peer reviewed question by selecting check box 2314. The user may further limit searching to question created within a given time period using menu 2316. This time period may include an unlimited time period, the past day, the
15 past week, the past month, the past year, or any other suitable time period. Lastly, using interface 2318, the user may select whether to search only specified categories and/or subcategories. Once the user has configured the desired search, the user may
20 initiate the search by pressing search button 2320. Alternatively, the user may obtain help by pressing help button 2322.

Once the polling system has performed the desired search, the search results may be posted in
25 results interface 2306. As illustrated, these results may be displayed in groups according to category, and may include a portion of the question, the question's author, the number of votes received by the question, and the submission date of the
30 question.

When a user selects member e-mail icon 2324 in menu bar 104, an e-mail editor 2400 may be

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presented as shown in FIG. 24. Using editor 2400, the user may enter the name of the recipient(s) of the e-mail in fields 2402 and 2404, enter the subject of the e-mail in field 2406, enter whether to send
5 the e-mail as Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML) or as plain text, and enter the body of the message. Once the user has completed the message, the user may cause the message to be sent by pressing the "send" button of buttons 2412. Alternatively, the user may
10 request help or cancel preparing the message by selecting the "help" or "cancel" buttons of buttons 2412.

Turning to FIG. 25, a display 2500 illustrating what may be presented when a user
15 selects global polling network tab 2502 from menu tabs 106 is shown. Global polling in the polling system may be used to facilitate polling across a variety of platforms of a variety of hosts. For example, polls may be conducted by entering questions
20 on the polling system's web site (e.g., Qtopics.com) or by entering questions on an affiliate's web site (e.g., Flying Tigers Cycling Team). As can be seen, upon selecting global polling network tab 2502, the polling system may present a series of tabs 2504. Of
25 the series of tabs 2504, cross community tab 2506 may be automatically selected as a default tab as illustrated. Within tab 2506 may be a list 2510 in area 2508 showing cross community participants (i.e., the host of the polling system and the affiliates),
30 and information 2514 in area 2512 showing advantages that may result from being an affiliate.

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As shown in FIG. 26, upon the user selecting overview tab 2602 from tabs 2504, affiliate overview information 2604 may be presented to the user. This information may include information
5 regarding becoming an affiliate of the polling system.

On deciding to become an affiliate, the user may select tab 2702 of tabs 2504 as shown in display 2700 of FIG. 27. Upon selecting tab 2702,
10 the user may be prompted for information including the type of affiliate (e.g., commercial or homestead), the affiliate's name, the administrative contact of the affiliate, the public uniform resource locator (URL) of the affiliate, the email address of
15 the affiliate, the address of the affiliate, the phone numbers of the affiliate, the maximum content rating for the affiliate site (e.g., "Q-All - Suitable For All Ages/Audiences"), the poll hosting policy for the affiliate site (e.g., "any polls" or
20 "only peer reviewed polls"), any comments, and that the user has read the affiliate agreement. After filling out the required information, the user may submit the information by pressing "create affiliate" button 2706. Alternatively, the user may clear the
25 information submitted by pressing reset button 2708.

Once the user has pressed the create button, a new tab 2710 is available in tabs 2504 as shown in FIG. 27b. Manage layouts tab 2710 enables the user to create a layout (e.g., layout 2712
30 illustrated in FIG. 27b) by pressing button 2714. This layout may be used to present polling questions or any other content on the user's web site. Once

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the layout has been created, the layout may be incorporated by embedding a script that is generated as part of the layout creation process in the user's web site.

5 FIGS. 27c-27e illustrate the layout creation process that is initiated upon pressing button 2714. As shown, in FIG. 27c, the user is prompted via question 2716 for the type of layout desired. Next, in FIG. 27d, the user is prompted
10 through interface 2718 for categories for the layout. The selection of a category at this point may be performed in the same manner as illustrated in, and discussed in connection with, FIGS. 18-20. After a category or categories have been selected, the user
15 is prompted for display options through interface 2720 as illustrated in FIG. 27e. Finally, once these question have been answered, the layout 2722 may be shown as illustrated in FIG. 27f.

 After the user has created the layout, the
20 user may then accept the layout by pressing button 2724 as shown in FIG. 27g. Once pressed, button 2724 changes to a "show script" button. Upon pressing shown script button 2724, the user is presented with an HTML script listing. Although an HTML script may
25 be presented, any suitable computer language may be used. By following the instructions presented with the listing, the user can then incorporate the script into the user's web site.

 In alternative embodiments of the present
30 invention, a URL could be provided to the user so that URL could be incorporated in the user's web site. Upon accessing the user's web page, that web

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page would then include a display of the layout from the URL provided.

Referring to FIG. 28, when a user selects "Q-care" tab 2802 from menu tabs 106, a customer service interface 2804 may be shown as illustrated in display 2800. Within interface 2804 are a plurality of questions that have been submitted to customer care or generated by customer care in anticipation of user questions. Upon selecting one of these questions, the user may be presented with an interface similar to those shown in FIGS. 2 and 2b. As can be seen, this interface may include a full version of the question (in the event that the question has been concatenated), a list of answer options, and buttons to vote, view and submit comments, and send an email.

An illustration of a display 2900 that may be presented to a user when a peer review question has been targeted to the user is shown in FIG. 29. As illustrated, personal question interface 126 that is shown in FIG. 1 has been replaced by a peer review interface 2902. As can be seen the peer review question's category ("College Basketball") and the question to be reviewed ("Who will win the NCAA Tournament?") are presented. Also, in area 2908, information instructing the user about the peer review process may also be presented. In order to engage in the peer review process, the user may select review button 2904 or peer review hypertext 2906.

Another peer review interface 2950 that may be presented upon the user selecting button 2904 or

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hypertext 2906 is shown in FIG. 29b. As can be seen, area 2952 may provide information instructing the user on how to proceed. In area 2954, the question to be reviewed may also be presented. After
5 reviewing the information and question, the reviewer may select one of buttons 2956 in order to get help, cancel participation in the peer review process, indicate that the peer review question should pass, indicate that the peer review question should fail,
10 abstain from voting in the peer review process, and notify customer support that they should review the question.

Turning to FIG. 30, a flow diagram of a process 3000 that may be implemented in the polling system of the present invention is shown. As
15 illustrated, through process 3000, one of users 3001 may create a question using function 3002 to be submitted to other users 3001 in the polling community. As part of this step, the user may select
20 a question format, input question text, determine a target audience, indicate start and end dates, and select viewer ratings. The target audience and viewer ratings may alternatively be assigned automatically. For example, the target audience
25 and/or viewer ratings may be assigned using a pattern recognition algorithm that detects certain patterns in the question (or an associated image, video, or audio file) and then assigns a category and rating to the question. In preferred embodiments, the user may
30 also configure notifications to be generated when certain events occur, such as a question's peer review completion or a question's receipt of a

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certain number of votes. Examples of such actions are shown in, and discussed in connection with, FIGS. 13-22. Once a question has been created, the question may be stored in a question database 3004
5 (e.g., according to category) and/or a user database 3006 (e.g., in association with the author or other users of the polling community).

Prior to a question being submitted to the polling community, the question is preferably first
10 reviewed as part of a peer review function 3008. Prior to peer review function 3008 being performed, however, a subset of users 3001 may be selected by target peer review function 3010 to participate in the peer review process. Preferably, these users are
15 selected randomly from the polling community and have interests in the category assigned to the question by the author. Alternatively, however, any suitable arrangement for selecting peer reviewers may be implemented. For example, in accordance with the
20 present invention, a predetermined peer review board may review all questions submitted to the polling system or that are within a category or subcategory of the polling system. As yet another alternative embodiment, target peer review function 3010 may be
25 omitted altogether and peer review function 3008 may be performed using artificial intelligence.

In performing peer review function 3008, the question to be reviewed is preferably checked for a variety of qualities that make the question
30 suitable for distribution to the polling community. In this way, offensive, unsuitable, absurd, and non-sense questions may be screened prior to the question

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being widely distributed. Examples of qualities that may be checked for may include that the question is intelligible, that the question conforms to the rating level assigned to it by the author, that the question is not a repeat question, that the question is substantially different from an existing question, that the question is likely to be interesting to members of the community, and/or that the question has any other desirable qualities.

10 Examples of displays that may be presented to a peer reviewer are presented and discussed in connection with FIGS. 29 and 29b.

 Upon peer review function 3008 determining that a question has not met the requirements of peer review, function 3008 may notify the author that the question failed and may also indicate why. This notification may include providing the author with reviewer comments, suggestions on how to correct the question, and/or any other suitable information.

20 When peer review function 3008 has determined that a question has met the requirements of peer review, however, target poll function 3012 may then determine which users 3001 are to be presented with the question. This may be performed, for example, by providing the question to all users 3001 having profiles in user information database 3006 that are compatible with the question, although any suitable method for determining which users are to receive the question may be used. For example, users 3001 who have an interest in politics may be presented with question regarding the Presidential election. Similarly, users 3001 whose profiles

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indicate that those user prefer not to receive questions having a "Q-X - Sexually Explicit Content/Graphic-Language" are preferably not presented with questions having that type of content.
5 The question may also be presented to only registered members of the polling system, to all users who access the polling system, to users or members of an affiliate's web site, or to any other desired set of users.

10 Once a question has been targeted by target poll function 3012, the question may be presented to the targeted users 3001 by select and vote function 3014. As shown in, and discussed in connection with, FIG. 1, function 3014 may present the question to the
15 user as a "hot question," as a "question just for you," as part of a category selection (e.g., entertainment, politics, family, etc.), or in any other suitable manner. For example, the user may be presented with the question and the available
20 answers, as shown in FIG. 2, upon accessing the polling system, in an e-mail message, upon accessing an affiliate's web site, or at any other suitable time or place.

 After a question has been presented to a
25 user 3001, the user may then be prompted to answer the question. The select and vote function may restrict which users 3001 can answer the question (based upon information from function 3012, for example) or may permit all users to whom the question
30 was presented to answer the question. Function 3014 may permit the user may to answer the question in any suitable manner. For example, with multiple choice

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questions, function 3014 may permit the user to select a radio button next to each answer (as illustrated in FIG. 2), or may permit the user to enter a letter or number corresponding to the desired
5 answer. As another example, function 3014 may permit the user to submit text or data (e.g., an image, video, or audio file).

Upon a user submitting his or her answer, function 3014 may ask the user for profile
10 information (such as demographic and interest information) that may be related or unrelated to the question. For example, as shown in FIG. 3, following a question related to solar energy (see FIG. 2), the user may be asked for unrelated information regarding
15 how many compact discs (CDS) the user buys per month. Alternatively, the user may be asked related information, such as whether the user is employed in a technical field, so that the user's answer to the polling question may be compared to the related
20 information question. This information may then be stored by function 3014 in user information database 3006.

Upon answering a polling question or a profile question (if asked), the user may then be
25 presented by select and vote function 3014 with the results of the polling question. As with the answering of polling questions, presentation of the results may be restricted by select and vote function 3014 to certain users or may be available to all
30 users to whom the question is presented. As shown in FIG. 4, the results of the question may be presented as a series of bar graphs, or in any other suitable

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manner. Moreover, function 3014 may also permit the user to specify demographic parameters and then present the results that meet those demographic parameters as is also shown in FIG. 4.

5 In order to induce users to participate in the polling process, and do so in a desirable manner, process 3000 may also include an awards redemption function 3018 and an awards and incentives database 3016. Through the awards redemption function, users
10 may be able to earn and redeem awards such as special privileges, badges, points which may be redeemable for cash, merchandise, and/or prizes, and/or any other suitable incentives. Users may earn these awards, for example, by creating desirable questions
15 in function 3002, by positively participating in peer review function 3008, by answering a large number of questions, or receiving a large number of votes for their questions, in select and vote function 3014, by identifying the most popular questions at an early
20 state, and/or by taking any other suitable action. More particularly, for example, a user may earn more or better awards if the user reviews a peer review question similarly to a majority of others in an area of interest.

25 Turning to FIG. 31, an example flow 3100 combining a target peer review function 3010 and a peer review function 3008 is illustrated in detail. As shown, a PR queue 3102 may be used to store questions, or pointers to questions, to be reviewed.
30 Questions may be placed in queue 3102 by function 3002 or by any other suitable process. For each question in queue 3102, the queue may also contain

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information regarding the duration of time the question has been in the queue, the status of the question in peer review, the number of reviews for that question that have been completed, and/or any
5 other desirable information. PR queue 3102 may also maintain data regarding the queue itself, such as the number of questions in the queue.

For each question in PR queue 3102, PR allocation engine 3104 may perform target peer review
10 function 3010 to determine which of the users is to review the question. As mentioned in connection with function 3010, users may be selected using any suitable mechanism, such as by selecting users randomly from the target audience of the question
15 (e.g., by comparing user profiles in database 3006 with categories and ratings for questions).

Once a reviewer has been selected from the users, the reviewer may then be presented with the question to be reviewed and prompted to review the
20 question as part of peer review function 3106. This review may include the reviewer indicating whether the question should pass or fail peer review, the reasons why the question should pass or fail peer review, and/or any other suitable information. An
25 example of a manner in which this may be done is illustrated in, and discussed in connection with, FIG. 29b.

Each time peer review function 3106 has been performed by a reviewer on a question, PR weight
30 calculator function 3108 preferably assigns a weight to the peer reviewer's determination based upon the accuracy of the reviewer's prior reviews in

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predicting the popularity of reviewed questions.
This weight may be calculated in any suitable manner.
This weight may be calculated across all categories,
for example, by:

5 determining the questions that were
 previously reviewed by the reviewer;
 for each of these questions that passed
 peer review, calculating a success factor for
 that question by multiplying the percentage of
10 non-peer review users that saw the question and
 responded to it (out of the total number of non-
 peer review users that were targeted for the
 question) by a weighting factor based on whether
 the reviewer voted to pass the question and
15 whether the question in-fact passed peer review;
 for each of these questions that failed
 peer review, calculating a success factor for
 that question as equal to a weighting factor
 based on whether the reviewer voted to pass the
20 question and whether the question in-fact
 passed; and
 calculating the weight as the average of
 the success factors calculated over all of these
 questions.

25 Any suitable weighting factors may be used.
 For example, under Bayes theorem, weighting factors
 of 0.9, 0.1, 0.1, and 0.9 may be used in the cases
 where the reviewer voted to pass and the question
 passed, where the reviewer voted to pass and the
30 question failed, where the reviewer voted to fail and
 the question passed, and where the reviewer voted to
 fail and the question failed, respectively.

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In cases where it is desirable to calculate the weight across only a desired group of questions (e.g., a single category, a subcategory, or sets of either or both), the procedure may be modified by
5 replacing the first step with:

determining the questions that were previously reviewed by the reviewer and that fall within the desired group of questions.

Alternatively, the weight may be calculated
10 by replacing the second step with:

for each of these questions that passed peer review, calculating a success factor for that question by adding the percentage of non-peer review users that saw the question and
15 responded to it (out of the total number of non-peer review users that were targeted for the question) to a weighting factor based on whether the reviewer voted to pass the question and whether the question in-fact passed peer review;

20 After PR weight calculator function 3108 has determined a weight for a review for a question, PR state analysis function 3110 and tests 3112 and 3114 may then determine whether a peer review decision for the question is conclusive. This
25 determination may be based upon the weight generated by function 3108, by the reviewer's review, by results of prior reviews (and the corresponding weights) of the question (if any), and/or by any other suitable information. If the peer review
30 decision for the question is determined to not be conclusive, the question is preferably then re-entered into PR queue 3102. However, if the peer

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review decision for the question is determined to be
conclusive, question database 3004 may then be
updated with the status of the peer review process,
and the author notified (if the peer review process
5 failed). Or target poll function 3012 may be
performed as illustrated in connection with FIG. 30
(if the peer review process passed).

Turning to FIG. 32, an example of a process
3200 for asking a user profile questions as part of
10 select and vote function 3014 (FIG. 30) is
illustrated. Although suitable for use in function
3014, process 3200 may be also be used as part of
other functions or independently to ask users profile
questions for any desirable purpose. As shown in
15 FIG. 32, a profile allocation engine 3202 within
process 3200 may be used to retrieve information
about a user 3001 from user information database
3006. Using this information, engine 3202 may then
determine what profile question from profile question
20 library 3204 to ask the user. This determination may
be made in any suitable manner. For example,
demographics questions may be randomly selected from
a library of available questions, may be selected
according to categories such that one question is
25 asked from each category before a second is asked
from any category, may be selected based upon polling
questions responded to by the user, or may be
selected in any other suitable manner. Once a
question has been located, the question may then be
30 presented to the user by engine 3202. This
presentation may be accomplished in any suitable
manner, for example such as that illustrated in, and

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discussed in connection with, FIG. 3. Next, at test 3206, process 3200 may determine if the user answered the profile question. If so, that user's answer is preferably then stored in database 3006. Otherwise, 5 at test 3208, process 3200 may then determine whether to ask the question again later. This determination could be based upon the user's manner in not answering the question (e.g., the user indicating to ask the question later), based upon the user's 10 profile (e.g., if it is information that may be critical to categorizing the user, such as the user's income), or based upon any other suitable factor. Once test 3208 has determined whether to ask the profile question again, this determination may then 15 be recorded in database 3006.

An example of a combined process 3300 for performing target poll function 3012 and select and vote function 3014 (FIG. 30) is illustrated in FIG. 33. As shown, a question allocation engine 3302 may 20 first retrieve user profile information from user information database 3006 for a user 3001. Based upon this information, engine 3302 may then select a question from question database 3004 for the user. Any suitable method for selecting a question using 25 the user information may be used. For example, engine 3302 may select a question based upon a correlation between the user's interests, as indicated in the user's profile information, and category(ies) assigned to certain questions.

30 After a question has been selected, process 3300 may next determine whether the question should be presented to user 3001 at test 3304. This

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determination may be made by asking the user whether the user wants to view the question now, by presenting a portion of the question or a button that the user can press to cause the question to be
5 presented, by determining how long it has been since the last question was presented to the user, or using any other suitable method. If it is determined that the question is to be presented to the user, user information database 3006 may be updated with a
10 notation that the question has been presented to the user and the question may be presented to the user as part of question presentation process 3306. The question may be presented in any desirable manner, such as that illustrated in, and discussed in
15 connection with, FIGS. 1, 2, and 2b. If it is determined at test 3304 that the question is not to be presented to the user, however, then process 3300 may determine whether to present the question later at test 3308. This determination may be made in any
20 desirable way, including asking the user whether the user wants to see the question later, by automatically presenting the question to the user later, by checking whether the user has opted to view questions later in the past, etc. If it is
25 determined that the user is to be presented with the question later, then that fact is preferably noted in databases 3004 and 3006. Otherwise, a notation may be stored in user information database 3006 that the question is not to be presented to user 3001 in the
30 future.

A process 3400 that may be used to assign a rating and/or a category to a question, or that may

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be used to confirm a rating and/or a category assigned to a question, created in function 3002 (FIG. 30) is illustrated in FIG. 34. As can be seen, process 3400 may utilize a pattern recognition system 5 3402 that receives a question and/or associated content (e.g., an image, video, and/or audio data) from question database 3004 and then indicates a raw rating/category and a confidence level for that question and/or content. This may be accomplished 10 using any suitable method. For example, as illustrated, process 3400 may retrieve templates from templates database 3404 and compare those templates to the question and/or content. If the question and/or content sufficiently matches one or more of 15 the templates, an associated rating/category may be assigned to the content. These templates may be generated through a learning process where pattern recognition system 3402 is taught that certain features are indicative of content having a given 20 rating/category. For example, with ratings, the pattern recognition system may be taught that when certain obscene words are found in the text of a question, the question should be rated as obscene. A confidence level may be determined by looking for a 25 certain quality or number of matching patterns in the question and/or content and the template.

Once a raw rating/category has been determined for a question, the rating/category may then be converted to an implied rating/category that 30 is usable in the polling system. For example, for certain questions and/or content, the raw rating may be a number ranging from one to ten where one is for

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general audiences and ten is for restricted audiences. In the question rating portion of the polling system, however, questions may be assigned ratings of "Q-ALL," "Q-Kids," "Q-Teens," "Q-Adults," and "Q-X." Thus, there may be a need to convert raw ratings into a polling system ratings. As illustrated in FIG. 34, this may be accomplished using a ratings/categories standards database 3406 that receives the raw ratings/categories from pattern recognition system 3402 and converts those ratings/categories into implied ratings/categories. In order to do so, ratings/categories standards database 3406 may contain a conversion table for each type of raw rating/category, or may use any other suitable conversion mechanism.

Although process 3400 is illustrated as using a ratings/categories standards database 3406 that converts raw ratings/categories into implied ratings/categories, process 3400 may also be implemented such that database 3406 is omitted and implied ratings/categories are generated by pattern recognition system 3402 instead of raw ratings/categories.

Once an implied rating/category and a confidence level 3408 have been determined for a question, process 3400 may determine at test 3410 whether the confidence in the rating/category is sufficiently high so that rating/category may be applied to the question. Whether the confidence level is sufficiently high may be determined using any suitable method. For example, with categories, a fixed confidence level may simply be required before

- 46 -

applying any category to a question. With ratings, however, the confidence level that is required may be a function of the rating that would be applied. In such a case, for example, ratings that are on the
5 ends of the spectrum may require a higher confidence level than those in the middle. Alternatively, ratings that are for more general audiences (i.e. in the direction of the most restrictive rating) may require a higher confidence level than those that are
10 for more restrictive segments. Thus, in this example, a question may be easily rated as "Q-X" while requiring strict scrutiny before being rated as "Q-ALL."

If the confidence level is determined to be
15 sufficiently high, the rating/category may then be formally applied to the question in function 3412. In the case where process 3400 is being used to assign a rating/category to a question, function 3412 may assign the rating/category to the question and
20 then submit that question for peer review. In the case where process 3400 is being to used confirm a rating/category selected by an author, function 3412 may return a question to the author when process 3400 cannot confirm the author's selection. In the event
25 that a person, be it the author, a peer reviewer, or any other user, wants to challenge a question's rating/category, that question may be submitted to appeal in function 3414. As shown, appeal in function 3414 may also be triggered when the
30 confidence level for a rating/category is not determined to be sufficiently high at test 3410. Appeal may be performed in any suitable manner, and

- 47 -

is preferably performed by a board of appeal reviewers. After the appeal review, process 3400 may determine at test 3416 whether the implied rating/category was acceptable. If so, the
5 rating/category may be applied to the question in function 3412 and pattern recognition system 3402 may be taught that its previous decision was correct (thus causing its confidence level for the same situation to be boosted in the future). Otherwise,
10 the rating/category may be modified in function 3418, the rating/category may be applied to the question in function 3412, pattern recognition system 3402 may be taught that the modified rating/category is the correct rating/category to be applied in the same
15 situation in the future, and the templates in templates database 3404 may be modified for the same situation in the future.

FIG. 35 illustrates a process 3500 for presenting advertisements, such as advertisement 132
20 (FIG. 1), along with other content, such as polling questions, generated in the polling system. As shown, at step 3502, process 3500 may begin by receiving a question selection. This question selection may be made automatically by another
25 process, such as a process for selecting a question in personal question interface 130 as shown in FIG. 1, or manually by a user selecting to be presented with a particular question or a particular type of question. Next, at step 3504, a request for bids
30 containing the question selection may be distributed to advertisers. In addition to the question selection, the request for bids may also contain any

- 48 -

other suitable information. At step 3506, process 3500 may then receive bids from the advertisers and select a winning bid. Any suitable factors may be used to select a winning bid, including the payment
5 being offered, the terms of payment, the credit of the advertiser, etc. Once a winning bid has been selected, the corresponding advertiser may then be notified at step 3508.

Next, at step 3510, process 3500 may
10 receive the advertisement to be placed. This advertisement may be received from the advertiser or may be received from a database operating in conjunction with process 3500. Upon the advertisement being received, the advertisement and
15 the question selected may then be combined together into a standard advertising format at step 3512. This combining may be performed using any suitable technique including overlaying one of the question and the advertisement on top of the other, by placing
20 the question and the advertisement adjacent to each other, etc. Examples of standard advertising formats may include a banner advertisement format, a video clip format (e.g., like a television commercial), etc. The combined advertisement and question may
25 then be distributed to the user. This distribution may be accomplished in any suitable way, including distributing the combined question and advertisement through an ad-network to a third party web site, by presenting the combined question and advertisement as
30 a web page, by sending the combined question and advertisement as an e-mail message, or in any other desirable way. Finally, once the combined question

- 49 -

and advertisement have been distributed, process 3500 may measure response to the advertisement at step 3516. This measurement may include comparing the number of responses received to an advertisement as a function of the particular question, or type of question, with which the advertisement was combined, the number of responses received to an advertisement as a function of the place in which the combined question and advertisement were presented, and/or any other suitable measurement.

Although this aspect of the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 35 in connection with polling questions, it should be apparent that any type of advertisements may be presented with any type of content without departing from the present invention.

Turning to FIG. 36, one embodiment of a system 3600 for implementing the present invention is illustrated. As shown, system 3600 may include a server 3602, multiple users 3606, multiple advertisers 3608, and multiple ad-networks 3610, which may all be connected together by a computer network 3604 and multiple communication links 3612. In a preferred embodiment, each of server 3602, advertisers 3608, and ad-networks 3610 are computer servers that communicate over computer network 3604 and communication links 3612. These computer servers may be implemented using any suitable hardware and/or software. In this embodiment, users 3606 are preferably Internet web browsers that are implemented using any suitable hardware and/or software. Computer network is preferably the Internet, although

- 50 -

any suitable computer network, such as a local area network, a wide area network, a wireless network, etc., may also be used. Communication links may be implemented using any suitable method for accessing
5 computer network 3604, including connecting through a dial-up connection via an Internet Service Provider (ISP), using digital subscriber lines, cable modems, direct connections to computer network 3604, etc.

Persons skilled in the art will appreciate
10 that the principles of the present invention can be practiced by other than the described embodiments, which are presented for purposes of illustration and not of limitation, and the present invention is limited only by the claims which follow.

- 51 -

What is claimed is:

1. A method for presenting polling questions in an online community, comprising:
 - enabling a user in an online community
5 to submit a polling question;
 - presenting the polling question to users in the online community for review;
 - making the polling question available
10 for presentation to other users of the online community;
 - accepting responses to the polling question from respondents; and
 - presenting results of the responses to the polling question.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the enabling of the user in the online community to submit the polling question comprises accepting at
5 least one of a question type, a rating, and a category for the question from the user.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the presenting of the polling question to users in the online community for review comprises:
 - selecting a subset of the users in the
5 online community to review the polling question;
 - presenting the question to the subset of the users;
 - accepting votes from the subset of the users as to whether the polling question passes
10 review; and

- 52 -

designating the polling question as having passed review when sufficient passing votes are received from the subset of the users.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the selecting of the subset of the users in the online community comprises randomly selecting users from the online community.

5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

5 assigning a weight to each of the votes from each user of the subset of the users based upon a success factor of previous review votes by the user; and

using the weight from at least one of the votes in determining whether the polling question has received sufficient votes.

6. The method of claim 3, wherein the making of the polling question available for presentation to other users of the online community comprises:

5 determining whether the polling question passed review by the subset of the users; and

10 preventing the other users from being presented with the polling question when the polling question has not passed review.

- 53 -

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the presenting of the results of the responses to the polling question comprises presenting the results according to a distribution of votes based on a
5 characteristic of the respondents.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising enabling a viewer of the results to select the characteristic of the respondents used to present the results.

9. A method of determining a rating or category for a polling question, comprising:
receiving a polling question from a user in an online community;
5 automatically determining a rating or category for the polling question and a confidence level for the rating or category; and
applying the rating or category to the polling question when the confidence level is
10 sufficiently high.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the automatically determining of the rating or category for the polling question comprises using a pattern recognition algorithm.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the applying of the rating or category to the polling question comprises assigning the rating or category to the polling question.

- 54 -

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the applying of the rating or category to the polling question comprises confirming a rating or category assigned to the polling question by the user.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the applying of the rating or category to the polling question comprises determining whether the confidence level is sufficiently high based upon the rating or
5 category determined.

14. A method of presenting an advertisement with online content, comprising:
receiving the online content;
distributing a request for bids for
5 advertising space to advertisers that indicates the online content as to be presented with the advertising space;
receiving bids for the advertising space from the advertisers;
10 selecting one of the advertisers;
receiving an advertisement corresponding to the advertiser;
combining the online content and the advertisement as a combined online content and
15 advertisement; and
distributing the combined online content and advertisement to an online environment.

1/44

102

134

Create an online photo album... **PhotoPoint** CLICK HERE

100

104

106

110

1087

Welcome **USERNAME**

Home Global Polling Network Q-care

Search: Questions Advanced

Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
	Politics	Topics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

~ 112

Hot Questions

119

114

120

122

124

HELP

118

Which OS should I install on my home PC? (jpeterman , 84 votes , 12/17/1999)

Should the insurance company insuring the show "W... (MINRAN , 49 votes , 02/11/2000)

The media these days will glorify or hype any sit... (Scotte , 46 votes , 01/28/2000)

Does internet have more impact on the society tha... (PGR , 46 votes , 02/13/2000)

Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in th... (MINRAN , 42 votes , 02/03/2000)

The Disney Parks are a better overall family ente... (skybrew , 41 votes , 01/11/2000)

136 Global warming is affecting weather patterns and ... (chad , 40 votes , 01/27/2000)

Which of the Appalachian Home Series presented he... (jbrookman , 30 votes , 02/21/2000)

Do your kids like this game? (WORM ARMAGEDDON) (xrcc , 28 votes , 12/17/1999)

Which is the best War Game of all time (2Slickk , 28 votes , 01/27/2000)

123

116

125

128

Questions for You

130

126

Computer Languages

As data on the internet multiplies, XML will be t... (misterniceguy , 18 votes , 02/02/00)

Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Qtopics network as well as the demographic questions Qtopics asks you. To review you personal profile, click My Profile above.

Ask | Search | Posting Policies | Privacy Policies | User Agreement | E-Mail Q-Care | About Qtopics

132

FIG. 1



Ask the World a Question

204

2/44

200

204

Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in the 21st century?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

206

HELP CLOSE COMMENT → VIEW POST VOTE

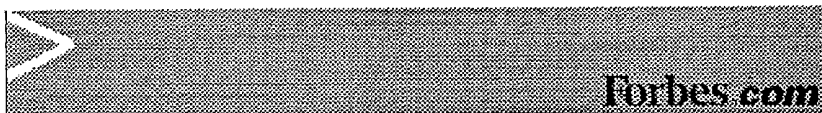
208

E-mail the Author EMAIL E-mail a friend this question EMAIL

Expiration: 08-17-2000

210

[Poll | MINRAN | 44 votes | 2/03/2000 | Site of Origin]



212

FIG. 2

3/44

250



Ask the World a Question

Context: I created a series of watercolors titled Appalachian Home. They were painted in various places along the New River in Southwest Virginia.

Which of the Appalachian Home Series presented here do you prefer? (you may also click on the link to go to site)

252 -  Peaceful River

254 -  Lazy River

256 -  Narrows Park

258 -  New River

260 -  Wolf Creek Dam

HELP CLOSE COMMENT → VIEW POST NOTE

E-mail the Author [EMAIL](#) E-mail a friend this question [EMAIL](#)

Expiration: 04-23-2000

[Poll | jbrookman | 36 votes | 2/21/2000 | [Site of Origin](#)]

Candlemart.com
 bath & body candles click here 

FIG. 2b



Ask the World a Question

4/44

← 302

← 300

The information you provide below will be used by Qtopics to personalize and enhance yours and others' browsing experiences.

How many times per month do you purchase CDs?

← 304

- Never
- less than 1
- 1
- 2-3
- 4-7
- 8 or more

← 306

← 308

FIG. 3



Ask the World a Question

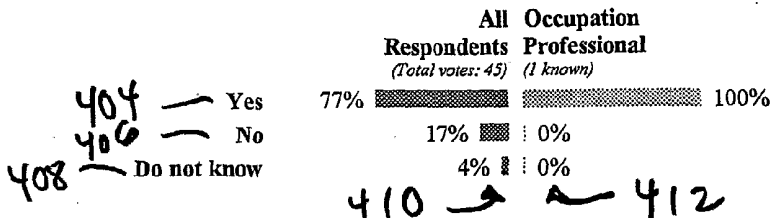
5/44

400

402

403

Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in the 21st century?



Select responses broken out by different demographics.

Occupation: Professional [UPDATE]

416 / 422 Include: All Respondents Members Only

418 / 424 Display: Bar Charts Icon Charts

420 / 426

HELP CLOSE COMMENT -> VIEW Post HIDE OPTION

Send comment to poll's author: [EMAIL] Send poll to a friend: [EMAIL]

Where should I buy it?

alta.vista: SHOPPING .com
smart shopping starts here

FIG. 4

6/44

500



Ask the World a Question

Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in th... (MINRAN , 53 votes , 02/03/2000)

502

Although possibly the best, is solar energy a via... (matt , 0 response(s), 03/19/2000)

No wind power is gooder! (MeeTsenPu , 0 response(s), 03/15/2000)

506

Solar energy is an alternative but the technology... (skybrew , response(s), 03/01/2000)

Solar Energy is a good alternative but more power... (testuser , 0 response(s), 02/28/2000)

hydrogen fuel, very powerful (2Slickk , 0 response(s), 02/25/2000)

CLOSE HELP

504

PhotoPoint Million-Dollar Moment Photo Contest
 Focus on the big picture. Enter now.

PhotoPoint
Million-Dollar Moment
 ENTER NOW!

FIG. 5



Ask the World a Question

7/44

Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in the 21st century?

Comment:

E-mail the Author E-mail a friend this question

600
601
602
604

How much is your  really worth?

FIG. 6

8/44

700y

You won't know until you try.

104



Ask the World a Question

702

- Logout
- My Profile
- Ask a Question
- Search
- Member E-mail
- Help

Welcome OSERNAME

- Home
- Global Polling Network
- Q-Care

Search:	Questions	Advanced
Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family
	Finance	Health
	Kids	Other
	Politics	Otopics
	Shopping	Sports
	Teenagers	Women

704 →

706

- Registration
- Demographics
- Interests
- My Questions
- Notifications
- Q-rewards

Registration Information

708

HELP

Login: (Read-only) Country Code:
 First Name: MI: Area Code:
 Last Name: Telephone Number:
 Address: Email:
 City: Screen Name: (Read-only)
 State/Province: SELECT STATE Birthdate: mm/dd/yyyy
 Country: SELECT COUNTRY Highest Poll Rating: Q-Kids
 Zip Code/Postal Code: Highest Poll Rating for Peer: Q-Kids
 Password:
 Reminder Hint:

UPDATE

CHANGE PASSWORD

712

710

Questions for You

Energy Crisis
 Do you think that the world oil resources will be...
 (MINRAN, 21 votes, 02/03/00)

Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Otopics network as well as the demographic questions Otopics asks you. To review you personal profile, click My Profile above.

FIG. 7

9/44

800

How things get done.

eHow

How to:



Ask the World a Question



My Profile | Ask a Question | Search | Member E-mail | Help

Welcome USERNAME

Home | Global Polling Network | E-care

Search:	Questions	Advanced
Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family
	Politics	Qttopics
	Finance	Shopping
	Health	Sports
	Kids	Teenagers
	Other	Women

704

1802

Registration | Demographics | Interests | My Questions | Notifications | Rewards

Demographics

HELP

804

Question	Your Answer	Modify Answer	Personalized Promotions	Delete Question
How long have you been living in your current home?	Under one year	CHANGE ANSWER	TURN OFF	DELETE
What best describes your occupation?	Professional	CHANGE ANSWER	TURN OFF	DELETE

Questions for You

Family Entertainment
The Disney Parks are a better overall family ente...
(skybrew , 41 votes , 01/11/00)

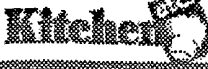
Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Qttopics network as well as the demographic questions Qttopics asks you. To review you personal profile, click My Profile above.

Ask | Search | Posting Policies | Privacy Policies | User Agreement | E-Mail O-Care | About Qttopics


FIG. 8

10/44


900 →



The ultimate place for dinnerware.



Ask the World a Question



My Profile | Ask a Question | Search | Member E-mail | Help

Welcome USERNAME

Home | Global Polling Network | Q-Care

Search: Questions Advanced

Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
	Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

704 →

Registration | Demographics | Interests | My Questions | Notifications | Q-rewards

Interests

904 ↓

PROVIDE | ADD INTEREST

906 ↙ 908 ↘ 910 ↖ 912 ↗ 918 ↘ 922 ↙

Direct Interests: Interests Personalized Promotions 920 - Delete

You have not stated any interests

Inferred Interests: 916 ↙ 914 ↘ 918 ↘ 924 ↙

Inferred Interests: Interests Personalized Promotions 920 - Delete

You have not yet established a pattern of interests

Questions for You

global warming

The best place to buy land now if global warming ...
(chad , 20 votes , 01/27/00)

Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Otopics network as well as the demographic questions Otopics asks you. To review you personal profile, click My Profile above.

FIG. 9

11/44

Grammar check in MS Word
 Do you agree that we should throw grammar check in MS Word out the "WINDOWS"?

©2000

1000 →



Ask the World a Question



[My Profile](#) | [Ask a Question](#) | [Search](#) | [Member E-mail](#) | [Help](#)

Welcome USERNAME

[Home](#) | [Global Polling Network](#) | [O-care](#)

Search: [Questions](#) [Advanced](#)

Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
Questions for You		Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

704 →

1002

[Registration](#) | [Demographics](#) | [Interests](#) | [My Questions](#) | [Notifications](#) | [O-rewards](#)

My Questions

1004 →

[Help](#)

[Politics](#) > [Campaign 2000 President](#)

Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential... (USERNAME , 10 votes , 03/14/2000)

Questions for You

[Grammar check in MS Word](#)

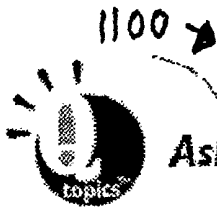
Do you agree that we should throw grammar check i... (MINRAN , 7 votes , 03/19/00)

Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Otopics network as well as the demographic questions Otopics asks you. To review your personal profile, click My Profile above.

[Ask](#) | [Search](#) | [Posting Policies](#) | [Privacy Policies](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [E-Mail O-Care](#) | [About Otopics](#)

FIG. 10

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St. Patrick's Day Flowers
freshness guaranteed [click here](#)

Ask the World a Question



[My Profile](#) [Ask a Question](#) [Search](#) [Member E-mail](#) [Help](#)

Welcome USERNAME

[Home](#) [Global Polling Network](#) [Gore](#)

Search: All Items Advanced

Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
	Politics	Qtopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

704 →

← 1102

[Registration](#) [Demographics](#) [Interests](#) [My Questions](#) [Notifications](#) [Rewards](#)

Notifications

← 1104

[HELP](#)

Notify me when the question receives a certain number of votes

None — 1114 — 1116
 Add [New Subscription](#)

← 1106

Notify me every so many votes

• [Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential...](#) every 10 votes
 Add [New Subscription](#)

1108
↓

[EDIT](#)
1118

Notify me when someone peer-reviews my question

None — 1114 — 1116
 Add [New Subscription](#)

← 1110

Notify me when peer review for one of my questions ends

None — 1114 — 1116
 Add [New Subscription](#)

← 1112

Questions for You

NY Senate Campaign
[Should Hillary be able to run for the senate from...](#)
 (pollsterg, 9 votes, 02/27/00)

Questions For You are targeted to you based on the interests in your personal profile. We determine your interests from the areas you visit on the Qtopics network as well as the demographic questions Qtopics asks you. To review your personal profile, click My Profile above.

[Ask](#) | [Search](#) | [Posting Policies](#) | [Privacy Policies](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [E-Mail Q-Care](#) | [About Qtopics](#)

FIG. 11

13/44

1200 →

1204 →

1202 →

1206 ←

The screenshot shows the Otopics website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "daily deals aromatherapy" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "My Profile", "Ask a Question", "Search", "Member E-mail", and "Help". The main content area features a "Welcome USERNAME" message and a "Global Polling Network" section. A search filter menu is visible, showing categories like "Hot Questions", "Entertainment", "Family", "Finance", "Health", "Kids", "Other", "Politics", "Otopics", "Shopping", "Sports", "Teenagers", and "Women". The "Q-rewards" section is highlighted, containing text about the rewards program and a link to "Ask a Question". Handwritten annotations include "1200" pointing to the search bar, "1204" pointing to the "Q-rewards" title, "1202" pointing to the "Q-rewards" link in the navigation menu, and "1206" pointing to the "See Ask a Question" link.

FIG. 12



Ask the World a Question

14/55

1300

Create a Question

Please select the type of question you would like to ask. If you would like to see examples for each type of question, click the HELP button.

1302

- Agree/Disagree
- Measured Agreement
- Multiple Choice
- Open Question

1304

1306

HELP CANCEL BACK NEXT

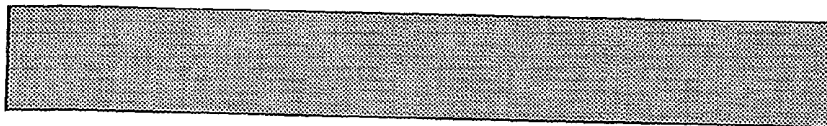


FIG. 13



Ask the World a Question

Create Question Text

Subject:
(Title or Headline)

1400

-1402

Context:
(Optional, use if background information is necessary.)

-1404

Question:

-1406

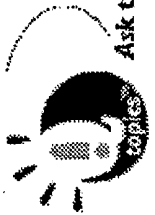
Select to attach media. - 1408

15/44

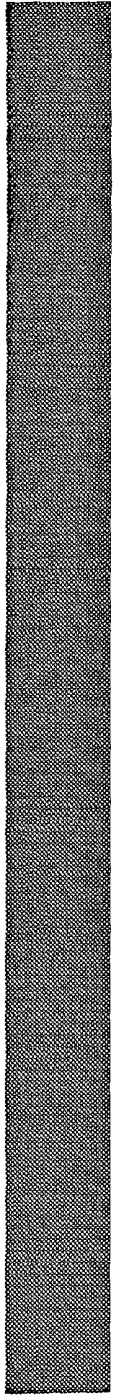
HELP CANCEL BACK NEXT -1410



FIG. 17



Ask the World a Question



1506

Create Question Text

1502

Subject:
(Title or Headline)

Presidential Election

Context:
(Optional, use if background information is necessary.)

[Empty text box]

1506

Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential election?

Question:

Select to attach media.

HELP CANCEL BACK NEXT

16/44



FIG. 15



Ask the World a Question

1600

Create Answer Text

Question:

Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential election?

1602

1604

Please select the appropriate response to your question.

Yes/No Abstain

1608

1606

HELP CANCEL PREVIOUS

BACK NEXT

1610

17/44

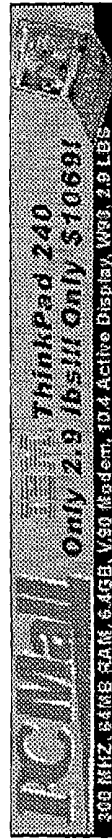
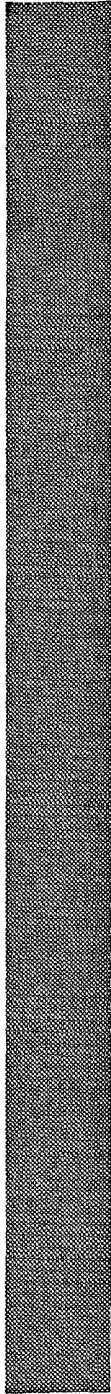


FIG. 16



Ask the World a Question

Please enter a rating for your question so we can send it to an appropriate audience.

Question Rating

- 1702

1700

- 1704

Peer Review

- 1708

1710

- 1706

Yes, circulate my question among Qtopics members by submitting it to Peer Review. I also agree to abide by the [Peer Review Policies](#)

Start Date

Start Date/End Date

1712

End Date

1716

18/44

RefCites - Free Hosting

Get 20 MegaBytes disk space! Click Here

Sign Up!

FIG. 17



Ask the World a Question

Top Level Category

Select the topic area that you wish to use. You can click on a sub-topic area name to navigate the topic areas. When you are finished, push the 'Select' button.

- Entertainment
- Family
- Finance
- Health
- Kids
- Other
- Politics
- Ottopics
- Shopping
- Sports
- Teenagers
- Women

← 1804

← 1802

← 1800

HELP CLOSE

← 1806

19/44

Where should I buy it?

alta. **vista: SHOPPING** .com
smart shopping starts here

FIG. 18



Ask the World a Question

Politics

1908
1906

Go up a level

- Advocacy Groups
- Campaign 2000 Other
- Campaign 2000 President
- Campaign 2000 Representatives
- Campaign 2000 Senators
- Civic Participation
- Conventions and Conferences
- Election Process and Law
- Ethics
- Government
- Government
- Headlines
- Intelligence
- International Government
- International Organizations
- Issues
- Lobbyists
- National Symbols and Songs
- News and Media
- Political Parties
- Politics and Technology
- Politics and The Future
- Research Labs

← 1902

20/44

select

1909

← 1900

HELP

CLOSE

← 1910

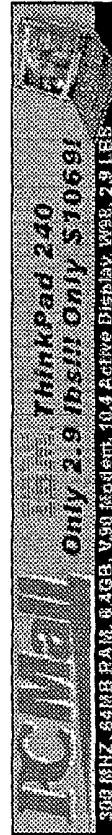
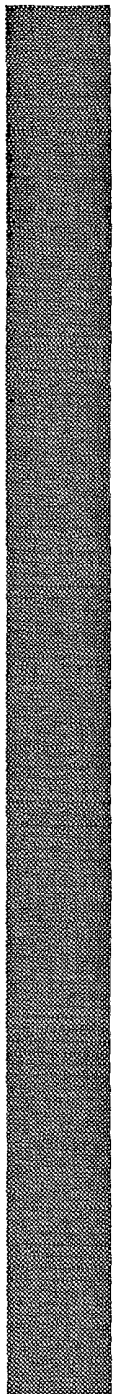


FIG. 19

21/44



Ask the World a Question

Politics > Campaign 2000 President

Go up a level

- Candidates
- Platforms
- Primaries
- Tactics and Strategies

SELECT

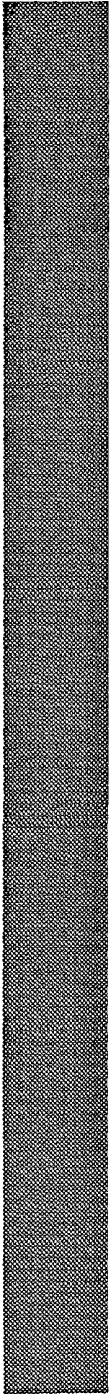
2000

HELP CLOSE

How much is your  really worth?

FIG. 20

22/44



Ask the World a Question

2100

2102

2101

Categories

Please click BROWSE to select a category.

Politics > Campaign 2000 President

BROWSE - 2104

You may select two additional categories for your question:

BROWSE - 2110

BROWSE - 2112

2106 -
2108 -

Notification

Email me when:

- My question is reviewed by a member in Peer Review
- Upon PASS or FAIL in Peer Review
- The number of respondents exceeds 50
- Every 10 respondents

2114

2124

HELP CANCEL PREVIOUS BACK NEXT

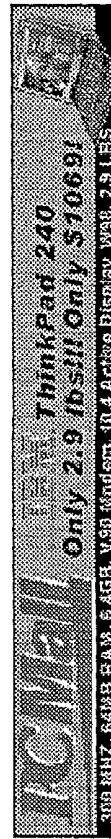
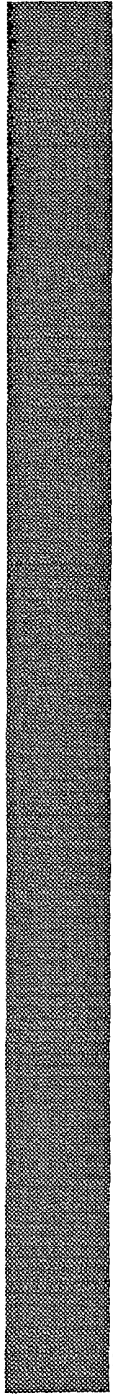


FIG. 21



Ask the World a Question



2200

Question Preview

Do you think Gore is going to win the presidential election?

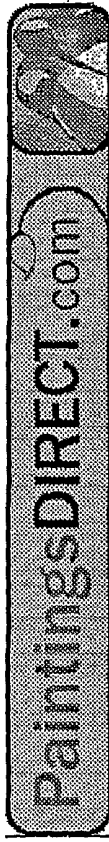
- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Question Summary: Subject: Presidential Election | Categories: Politics > Campaign 2000 President | Rating: Q-All | Peer Review: Submitted | Start Date: 3/14/2000 | Close Date: 3/28/2000

HELP CANCEL

BACK PRINTED

2202



23/44

FIG. 22

24/44

2300 →

Get \$05 of free merchandise
1st ORDER. UP TO \$15. 1 PER PERSON. NO MINIMUM PURCHASE www.headbriquick.com ← 104

Ask the World a Question

Welcome *USERNAME*

Home Global Polling Network Q-Care

Search: All Items 99 Advanced

Hot Questions	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
	Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

← 2302 2324

← 2304 2306 →

Search

2322

Search Text: - 2308

Select a Search Method: - 2310

Search through: - 2312

Search only Peer Reviewed questions - 2314

Find questions created in the last: - 2316

Pick a Category:

All Categories ← 2318

Selected

Include subcategories - 2320

Results

Politics

- Do you agree with Al Gore's push on B... (pollsterg, 13 votes, 02/27/2000)

Politics > Campaign 2000 President

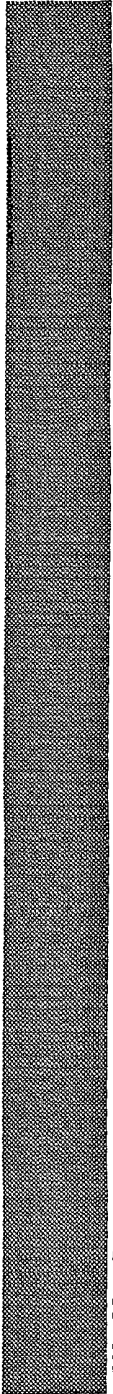
- Do you think Gore is going to win the... (matt, 8 votes, 03/14/2000)
- Do you agree with Al Gore's push on B... (pollsterg, 13 votes, 02/27/2000)

[Ask](#) | [Search](#) | [Posting Policies](#) | [Privacy Policies](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [E-Mail Q-Care](#) | [About Otopics](#)

FIG. 23



Ask the World a Question



2400

Qtopics E-mail Editor

To: [text box]

(for example, jdoe@qtopics.com)

Cc: [text box]

Subject: [text box]

-2402

-2404

-2406

Send as HTML Send as plain text - 2408

[Large empty text box for email content]

-2410

HELP CANCEL SEND

2412




25/44

FIG. 24

26/44

2500 ↘



Things got a little out of hand at the office party.

Million-Dollar Contest News

ACCOUNT

Ask the World a Question 106 →

My Profile | Ask a Question | Search | Member E-mail | Help

Welcome USER NAME

Home | Global Polling Network | Q-care

Search: Questions | Advanced

Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
Questions for You		Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

2504 →

2506

Cross Community | Overview | Become Affiliate

Supporting Cross Community Interaction ↘ 2508

HELP

<p>betatest1</p> <p>betatest3</p> <p>Flying Tigers Cycling Team</p> <p>JBrookman Galleries</p> <p>Otopics, Inc.</p> <p>R&T Grosvenor Publishing</p>	<p>betatest2</p> <p>betatest4</p> <p>GETNB.COM</p> <p>Music 4 Children</p> <p>Otopics Demo</p> <p>T&I Test Site</p>
---	---

← 2510 →

Why Become An Affiliate 2512 ↘ 2514

As a Otopics™ affiliate, you can expect an increase in interest, traffic, and stickiness, at your Web site, as well as fresh insight into your visitors. Otopics windows will complement the content of your site's pages with questions your visitors will want to respond to. Otopics delivers an environment, branded with the look and feel of your site, that motivates visitors to ask their own questions and return again and again for updates on results. Also, while Otopics maintains a strict policy of protecting individual Otopics member identity, we provide aggregate demographic information on visitors to your site, all at no cost to you.

[Ask](#) | [Search](#) | [Posting Policies](#) | [Privacy Policies](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [E-Mail Q-Care](#) | [About Otopics](#)

FIG. 25

27/44

2600



Ask the World a Question

- [My Profile](#)
- [Ask a Question](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Member E-mail](#)
- [Help](#)

Welcome *USQWAME*

- [Home](#)
- [Global Polling Network](#)
- [Q-Log](#)

Search:		Questions		Advanced	
Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health
Questions for You		Politics	Qtopics	Shopping	Sports
				Teenagers	Women

2504 →

← 2602

- [Cross Community](#)
- [Overview](#)
- [Become Affiliate](#)

Affiliate Overview

← 2604

Affiliates are content-rich sites which serve specific communities of interests. Qtopics' Affiliates use the Qtopics polling infrastructure and tools to enrich the experience of visitors to the Affiliate site. Qtopics' questions can be displayed on the Affiliate site along with Affiliate-generated questions.

To become an Affiliate, you must be a Qtopics member. After you are a registered member with Qtopics, you may sign on as an Affiliate via the Global Polling Network pages. You then have access to the tools that help you build the polling layouts that will be displayed on your site. A bit of web page building experience is useful but setting up your Affiliate page is quite simple. And your visitors will enjoy the added interest generated by the questions - Hot, Topical or otherwise.

- [Ask](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Posting Policies](#)
- [Privacy Policies](#)
- [User Agreement](#)
- [E-Mail Q-Care](#)
- [About Qtopics](#)

FIG. 26



Ask the World a Question

- [My Profile](#)
- [Ask a Question](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Member E-mail](#)
- [Help](#)

Welcome USERNAME

- [Home](#)
- [Global Polling Network](#)
- [Q&As](#)

Search:	Questions	Advanced
Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment
Questions for You	Politics	Family
	Qtopics	Finance
		Health
		Kids
		Other
		Shopping
		Sports
		Teenagers
		Women

2504 →

2702

- [Cross Community](#)
- [Overview](#)
- [Become Affiliate](#)

Create An Affiliate

2704

HELP

Enter the Affiliate Information Below.

Type:

Affiliate Name:

Administrative Contact:

Public Web URL:

Email Address:

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Tele:

Fax:

Max Content Rating for Affiliate Site:

Poll Hosting Policy for Affiliate Site:

Comments:

I have read and agree to the [Affiliate Agreement](#).

2706

2708

FIG. 27

29/44

Burning Calories
Which activity burns the most calories in an hour?

[Home](#) | [Global Polling Network](#) | [2584](#)

[Ask the World a Question](#) | [My Profile](#) | [Search](#) | [Member E-mail](#) | [Help](#)

Welcome USER-NAME

[Home](#) | [Questions](#) | [Advanced](#) | [Family](#) | [Finance](#) | [Health](#) | [Kids](#) | [Other](#)

[Hot Questions](#) | [Peer Review](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Politics](#) | [Sports](#) | [Teenagers](#) | [Women](#)

[Questions for You](#) | [Politics](#) | [Sports](#) | [Teenagers](#) | [Women](#)

2584 →

2710

Affiliate Layout Resources

[ADD NEW LAYOUT](#)

2714

Layouts are user-definable blocks similar to the sample shown on the right. These layouts can be created and placed on your own personal website.

To create a new layout to place on your own website click on the **ADD NEW LAYOUT** button above. To modify, preview, approve, or show the layout script on a previously created layout, select from one of the Layout options below.

No resources found. Press the **ADD NEW LAYOUT** button to create a layout.

What's your favorite way to stretch your work on a Friday afternoon?

Shipping lunch off

Picking up the kids + drive

Procrastinate in the bathroom

RESULTS

VIEW

Ask the World a Question
 © 2008 Optics 360

2712

FIG. 276

30/44

Vitamins
 Do you think taking vitamins makes you a healthier person?

ASK THE WORLD
Ask the World a Question
 My Profile Ask a Question Search Member E-mail Help

Welcome **USEXMANE** **Global Polling Network** **QUESTIONS**

Search: Questions Advanced Finance Health Kids Other
 Pop Questions Peer Review Entertainment Family Finance Health Kids Other
 Questions for You Politics Global Shopping Sports Teenagers Women

Creating New Layout **HELP**

When creating a new layout, select one of these options:

- A list of categories that you select for display.
- A list of questions within a single category that can be selected for display.
- A list of questions within a single category that can be displayed in a selected order.

BACK **NEXT**

Ask | Search | Posting Policies | Privacy Policies | User Agreement | E-Mail Q-Care | About Qtopics

FIG. 270

Wine
 A glass of wine each day is good for your health.



Ask the World a Question

- [My Profile](#)
- [Ask a Question](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Member E-mail](#)
- [Help](#)

Welcome *USERNAME*

[Home](#) [Global Polling Network](#) [Sign Up](#)

Search: [Questions](#) [Advanced](#)

Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
Questions for You		Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

- [Cross Community](#)
- [Overview](#)
- [Become Affiliate](#)
- [Affiliate Profile](#)
- [Manage Layouts](#)

Selecting New Layout Options

[HELP](#)

Category List Layout

Sort Alphabetically

Click the BROWSE button to select up to 10 categories:

2718
↓

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1: | <input type="text" value="Politics > Campaign 2000 President"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 2: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 3: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 4: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 5: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 6: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 7: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 8: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 9: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |
| 10: | <input type="text"/> | BROWSE | DESELECT |


[BACK](#) [NEXT](#)

FIG. 27D

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FIG. 27e

Back Pain Remedies
 For chronic back pain is it better to...



Ask the World a Question

ABOUT: Home, Global Polling Network, Create

My Profile, Ask a Question, Search, Member E-mail, Help

Welcome **USCFAA00E**

Search, Hot Questions, Peer Review, Questions for You, Questions, Entertainment, Politics, Family, Otopics, Shopping, Sports, Teenagers, Women, Advanced, Finance, Health, Kids, Other

Defining New Layout Display Options

REPORT

Name of Layout:

Description:

Layout Width (in pixels):

Layout Title:

Title Background Color:

Background Color for Layout:

BACK NEXT

Restless Nights:
If I am unable to sleep through the night, is it safe to take
Melatonin?



Ask the World a Question

Welcome **USERNAME** Global Polling Network

[Home](#) | [Questions](#) | [Advanced](#) | [O-Care](#)
[Hot Questions](#) | [Peer Review](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Family](#) | [Finance](#) | [Health](#) | [Kids](#) | [Other](#)
[Questions for You](#) | [Politics](#) | [Sports](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Teenagers](#) | [Women](#)

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[Cross Community](#) | [Overview](#) | [Become Affiliate](#) | [Affiliate Profile](#) | [Manage Layouts](#)

Layout Resource Results

sample name has been created successfully.

sample title
Campaign 2000 President

Ask the World a Question

[Add Layout Resource](#) | [View Layout Resources](#)

2002

FIG. 27f

34/44

FIG. 27g

shop smarter

Ask the World a Question

My Profile Ask a Question Search Member E-mail Help

Welcome U3E2NAME

Home Global Posting Network Logout

Search: Questions Advanced

Hot Questions Peer Review Entertainment Family Finance Health Kids Other

Questions for You Politics Ottopics Shopping Sports Teenagers Women

Guest Community Overview Become Affiliate Affiliate Profile Manage Layouts

Affiliate Layout Resources

Layouts are user-definable blocks similar to the sample shown on the right. These layouts can be created and placed on your own personal website.

To create a new layout to place on your own website click on the ADD NEW LAYOUT button above. To modify, preview, approve, or show the layout script on a previously created layout, select from one of the Layout options below.

Layout Options	Layout Name	Description
<input type="button" value="REVIEW"/> <input type="button" value="MODIFY"/> <input type="button" value="ACCEPT"/>	sample name	sample description

Q: of the day.
 What is your favorite hobby to finish up work on a Friday afternoon?
 Sleeping in bed.
 Fix up the quiet error.
 Postcard in the bathroom.
 (NEW!)
 Ask the World a Question
 © 2000 Quipco, Inc.

Layout Options: **2724**

Layout Name: sample name

Description: sample description

Ask | Search | Posting Policies | Privacy Policies | User Agreement | E-Mail Q-Care | About Ottopics

35/44

Send them a gift basket full of fresh surprises!

www.mybaskets.com [click here](#)



Ask the World a Question

- [My Profile](#)
- [Ask a Question](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Member E-mail](#)
- [Help](#)

Welcome USERNAME

106 →

2802

Home **Global Polling Network** Q-care

Search: Questions:

Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment	Family	Finance	Health	Kids	Other
Questions for You		Politics	Otopics	Shopping	Sports	Teenagers	Women

[Otopics](#) > [Customer Service](#)

2804

Go up a level

This category has no sub categories.

- [Do I have to be a Otopics member to vote?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [What is the purpose of the question rating system?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [How will my personal demographic information be used?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [Why should I provide personal demographic information?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [How do I be become a Otopics member?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [What are the benefits of being a Otopics member?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [What are the benefits of becoming a Otopics Affiliate?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)
- [How do I become a Otopics Affiliate?](#) ✕ (QCare , 0 votes , 02/18/2000)

FIG. 28

36/44

Cartoon
Whose voice is this?



Ask the World a Question

Welcome USERNAME



[My Profile](#) | [Ask a Question](#) | [Search](#) | [Member E-mail](#) | [Help](#)

[Home](#) | [Global Polling Network](#) | [Otopics](#)

Search:	Questions	Advanced
Hot Questions	Peer Review	Entertainment
Questions for You	Politics	Otopics
	Family	Finance
	Health	Kids
	Shopping	Sports
	Teenagers	Women
		Other

Hot Questions

[HELP](#)

- [Which OS should I install on my home PC?](#) (jpeterman , 96 votes , 12/17/1999)
- [Should the insurance company insuring the show "W..."](#) (MINRAN , 58 votes , 02/11/2000)
- [Does internet have more impact on the society tha...](#) (PGR , 52 votes , 02/13/2000)
- [The media these days will glorify or hype any sit...](#) (Scotte , 49 votes , 01/28/2000)
- [Is Solar Energy the best alternative to oil in th...](#) (MINRAN , 49 votes , 02/03/2000)
- [The Disney Parks are a better overall family ente...](#) (skybrew , 45 votes , 01/11/2000)
- [Global warming is affecting weather patterns and ...](#) (chad , 42 votes , 01/27/2000)
- [Which of the Appalachian Home Series presented he...](#) (jbrookman , 41 votes , 02/21/2000)
- [Which is the best War Game of all time](#) (2Slickk , 30 votes , 01/27/2000)
- [Do your kids like this game? \(WORM ARMAGEDDON\)](#) (xrcc , 28 votes , 12/17/1999)

[NEXT](#)

Peer Review

You've been selected to Peer Review this question:
College Basketball
Who will win the NCAA Tournament?

[REVIEW](#)

The peer review process gives you an opportunity to voice your opinion on a question entered by another Otopics user. When reviewing a question you should consider it's rating, assigned categories, and your own experience with the subject matter.

FIG. 29

37/44

2950 ↓

2952



Ask the World a Question

Peer Review

Please decide if this question is suitable for our community.

This question is currently in Peer Review to ensure its appropriateness for the selected audience. You should use the following criteria to decide:

- Is the question understandable?
- Is it of interest to the selected Category?
- Is its content appropriate for the selected Rating?

If this question satisfies these criteria, then click Pass. Otherwise, click Fail. Or, if you feel that Q-care should intervene with this question, please click on 'Notify' below.

Subject: College Basketball | Type: Measured Agreement | Rating: Q-All

Context:

Category: Sports

Question 1: Who will win the NCAA Tournament?

Answer 1: Gonzaga

Answer 2: Syracuse

Answer 3: Seton Hall

← 2954

Click Notify to have Q-Care review this question

← 2956

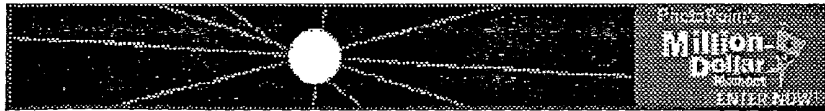


FIG. 296

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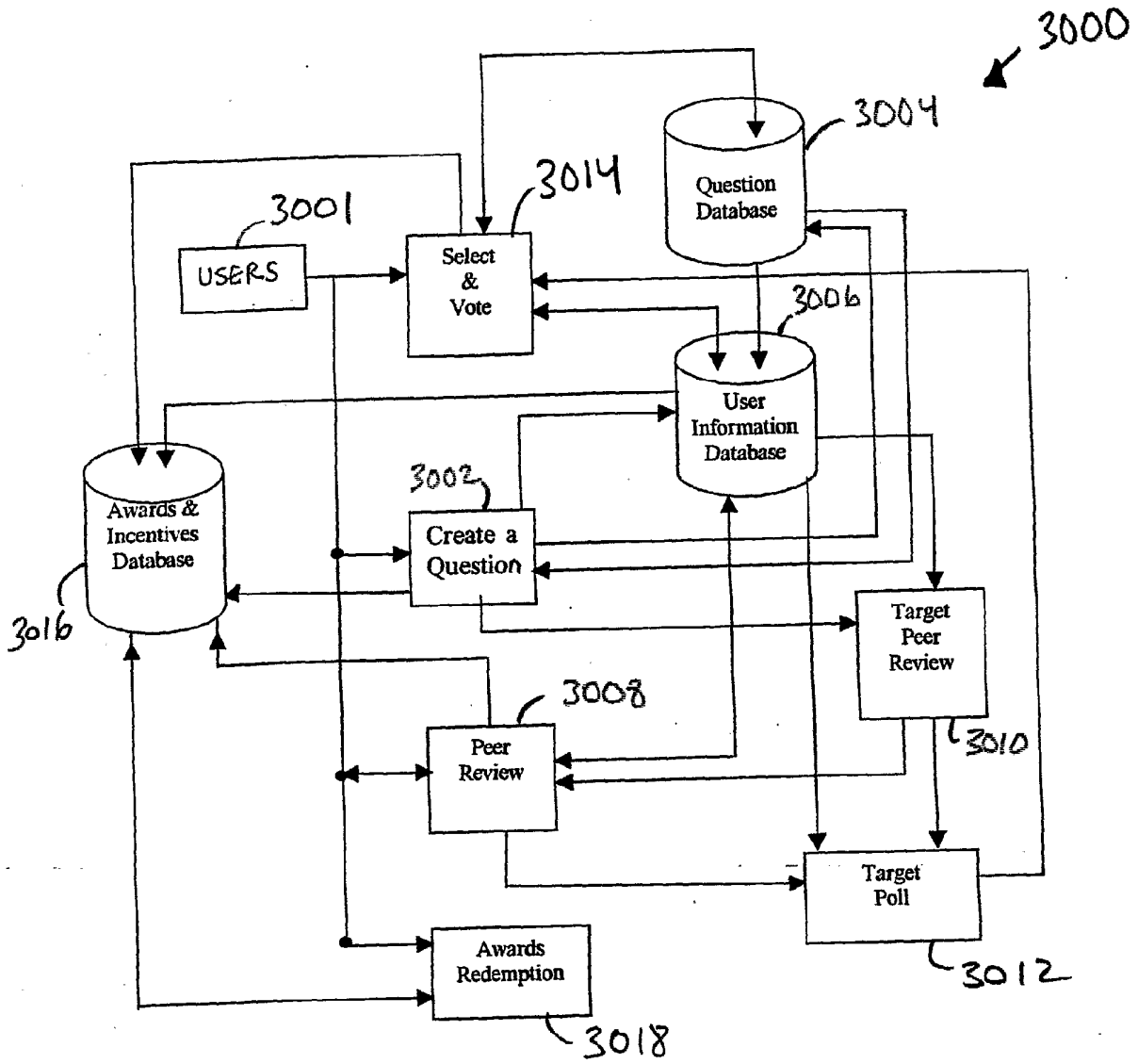


FIG. 30

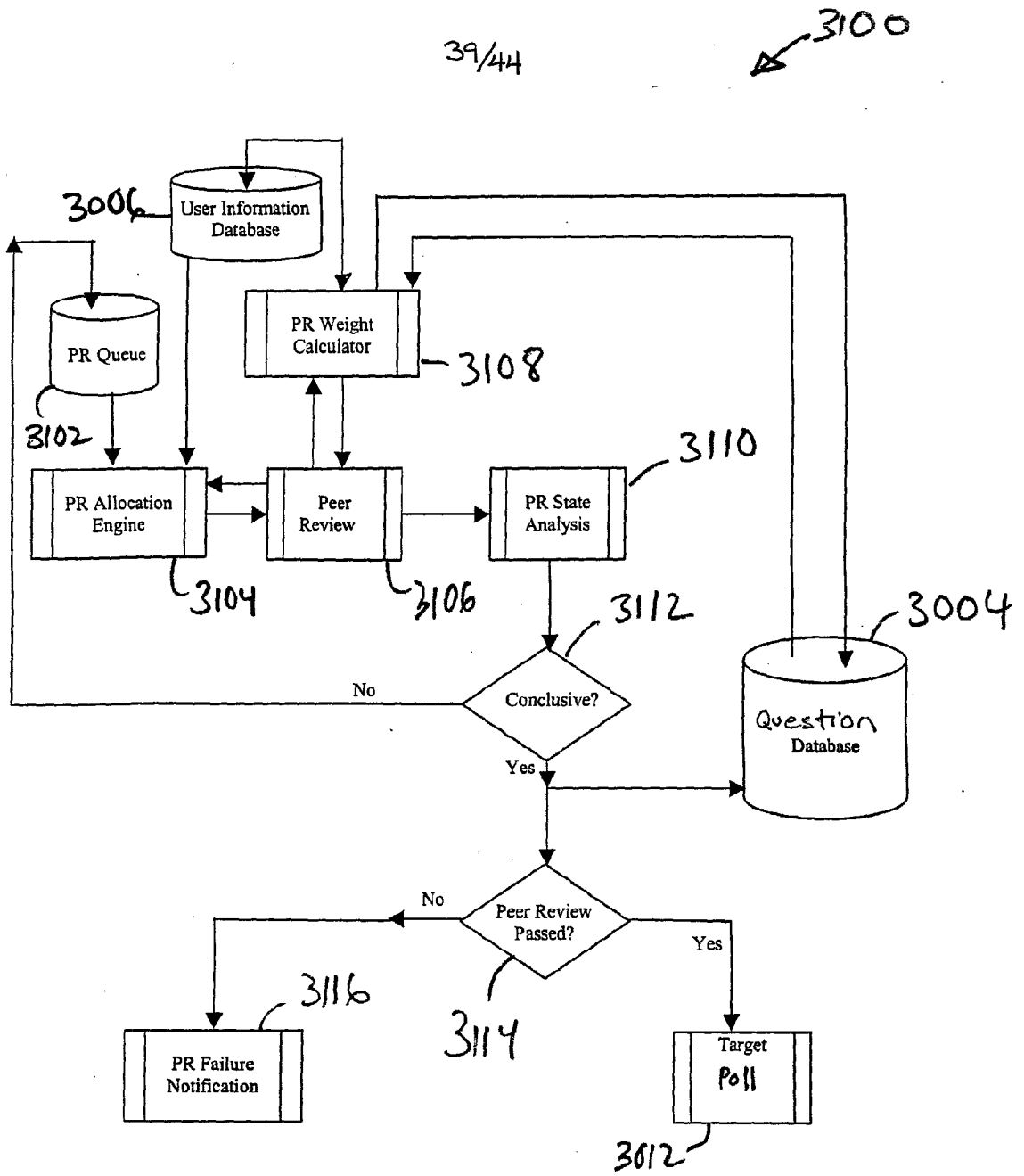


FIG. 31

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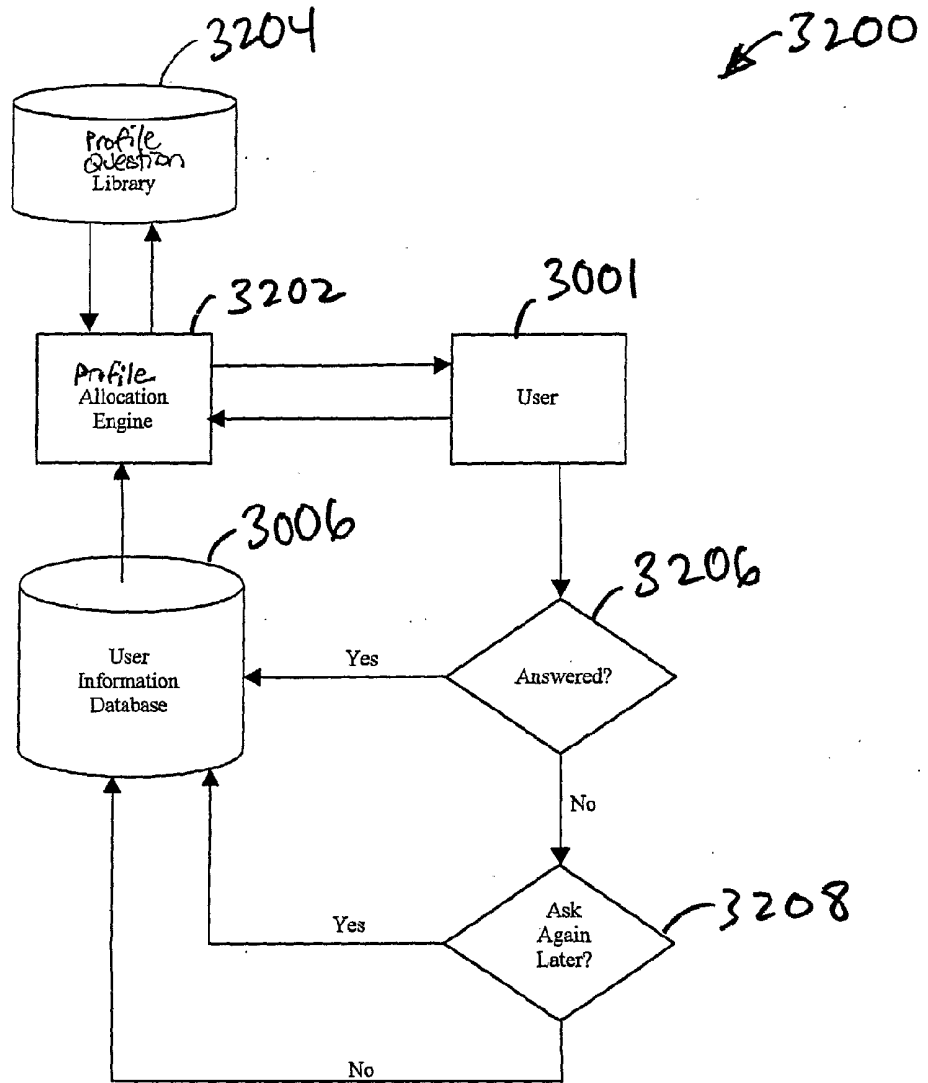


FIG. 32

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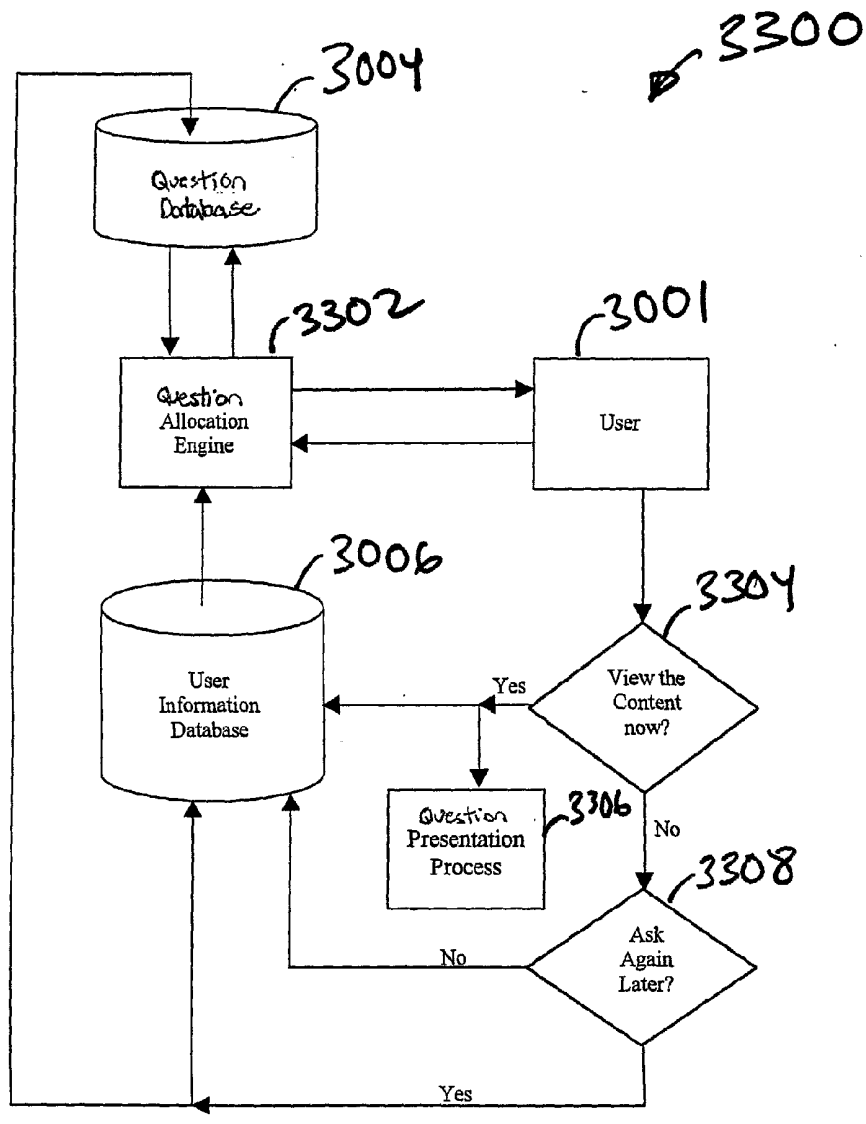


FIG. 33

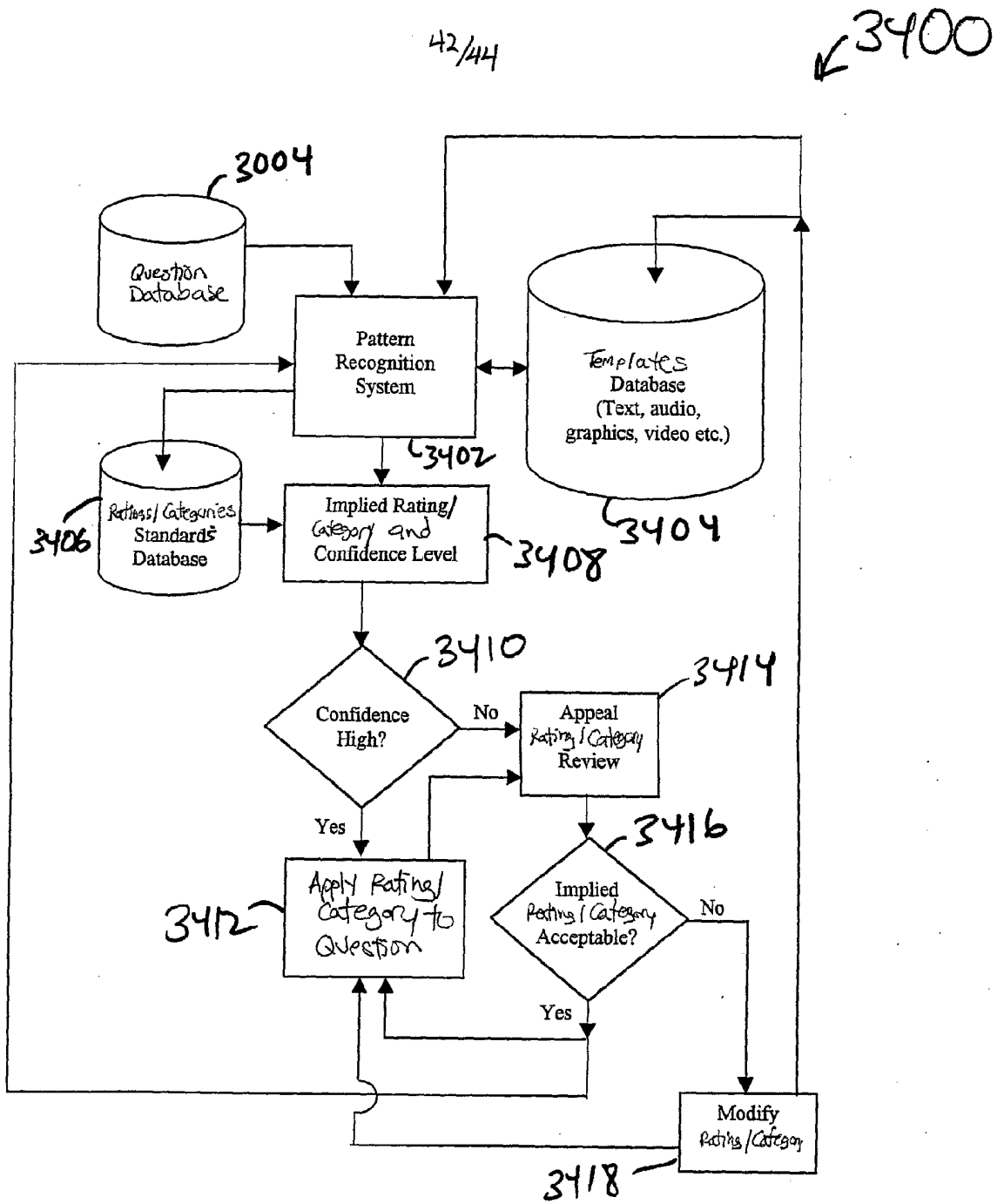


FIG. 34

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3500
↓

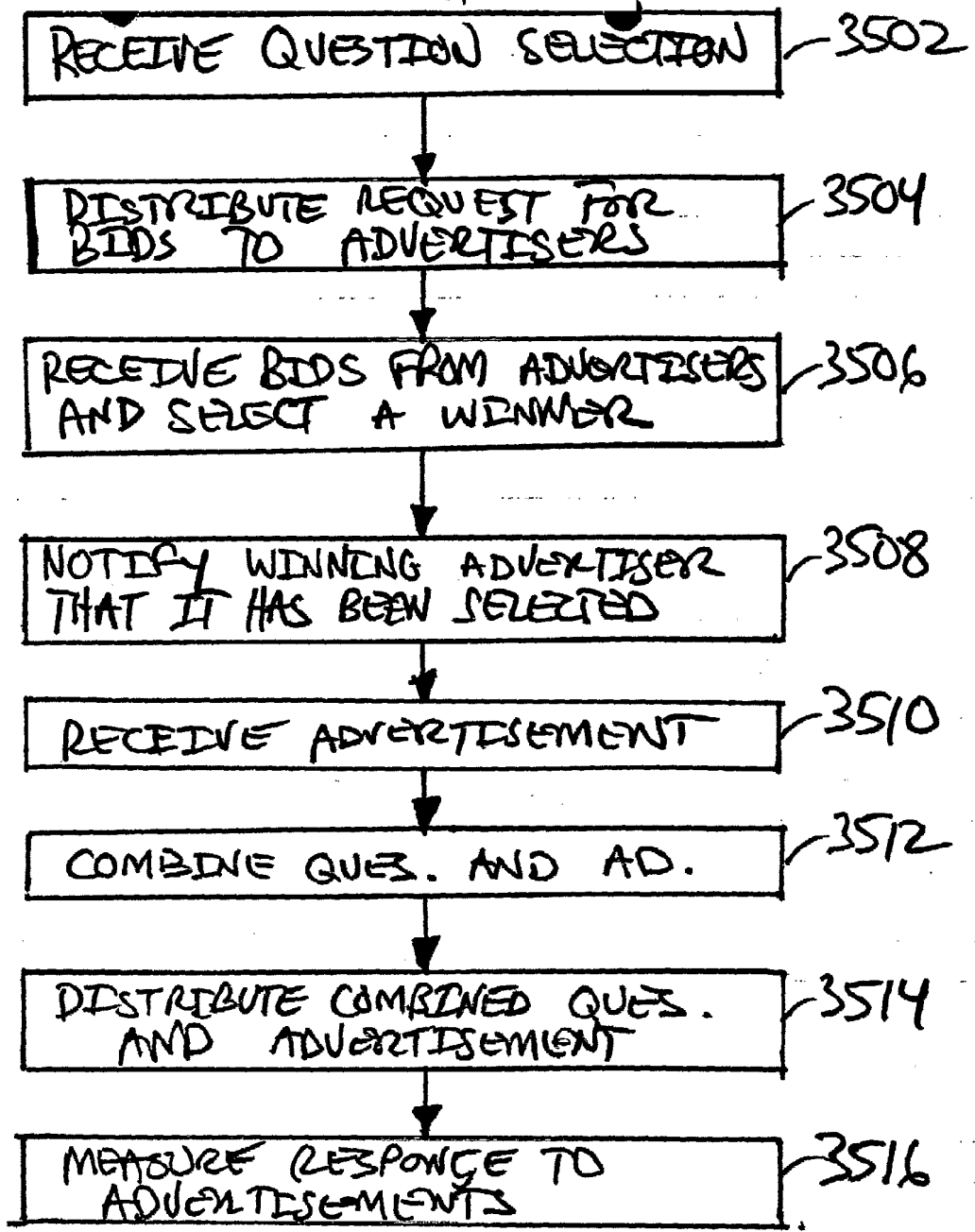


FIG. 35

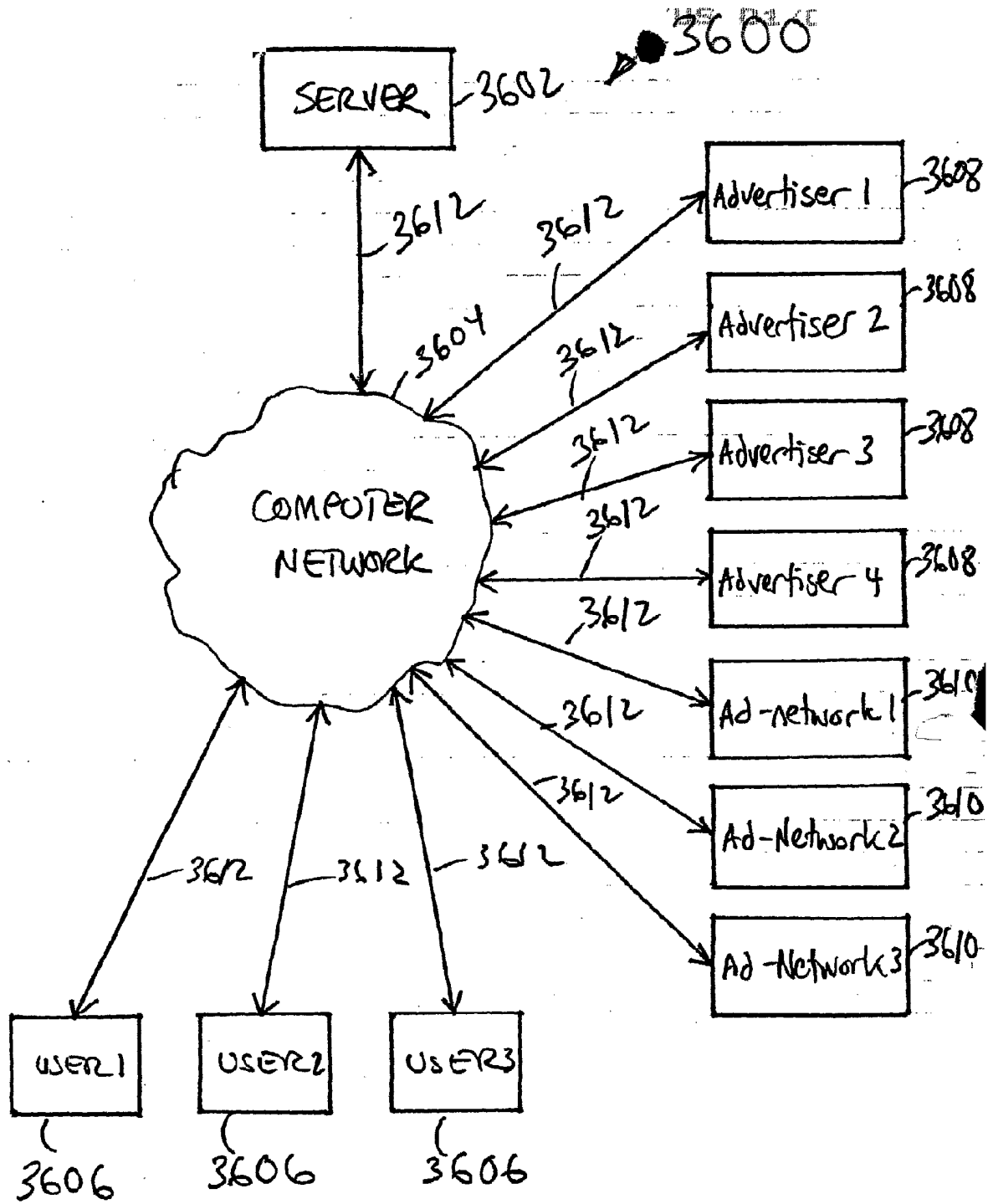


FIG. 36