SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FACILITATING ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING

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ABSTRACT

A method for operating a website for an online social networking includes the steps of receiving a group picture containing a plurality of individuals, receiving identification information regarding the individuals in the group picture, displaying the group picture, and selectively displaying labels for the individuals after the individuals confirm that they have been correctly identified. According to a preferred embodiment, each of the plurality of individuals who are not registered users of the website are automatically invited to become a registered user of the website. According to another preferred embodiment, the plurality of individuals are automatically registered as register users of the website when the group picture is submitted by one of the individuals.
FreezeCrowd Picture Registration

**FreezeTag and Create Your Accounts**

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**FreezeFriends in Picture**  
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<th>FreezeCrowd Name</th>
<th>BU Crew Members</th>
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**Category**  
Sports Crew

**Birthday**

**Registrant's Name**

**Word in the box**

Location

☐ I am confirming that everyone registering in this picture has agreed to FreezeCrowd's Terms of Service.

Register FreezeCrowd!
Before pressing Freeze Crowd Button, the user sees the picture as is.

After pressing Freeze Crowd Button, the user sees the picture with boxes around users heads.

Freezing someone in the crowded picture allows the user to identify this user with a mini profile by simply clicking on their name.

After clicking the right arrow next to the mini profile, the mini profile for the next identified user on the right in the picture is shown. If the user clicks the the left, the mini profile is shown for the next identified user on the left.

After clicking next or previous, the user can view the next or previous picture in the photo album.
Before Pressing Speech Bubbles Button

I'm the fun one in the crowd.

She may be lucky but I'm the cool one in the crowd.

I'm the lucky one in the crowd.

After Pressing Speech Bubbles Button

She may be lucky but I'm the cool one in the crowd.

I'm the lucky one in the crowd.
Fig. 11
SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FACILITATING ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not Applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

[0002] Not Applicable

REFERENCE TO MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not Applicable

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention generally relates to a computer-based data and information systems accessed via the Internet and, more particularly, to computer-based systems that facilitate social networking via the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0005] A category of Internet applications known as online social networks are increasingly popular and are becoming an increasingly influential part of contemporary pop culture. These social networking websites help connect friends, business partners, or other individuals together using a variety of tools. The websites typically offer an interactive, user-submitted network of profiles, blogs, groups, photos, MP3s, videos, an internal e-mail system, etc. Examples of such websites are MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster, Xanga, My Yearbook, Classmates.com, and Live Journal.

[0006] Once a user registers as a member on a social networking website, they typically create their own profile which contains standard interests and personal details such as marital status and physical appearance. Often images can be uploaded and an image can be chosen as the “default Image” that is seen on the profile’s main page etc. Some websites provide the option of uploading videos. The profile often displays a number of the member’s friends. On some websites, the member and/or the member’s friends can leave comments for all viewers to read. Typically, the member has the option to delete any comments and/or must approve all comments before posting.

[0007] Members often can invite existing friends to join and search the user base of profiles for new friends. To invite existing friends, automated emails can be sent to the member’s friends for their registration to the website. To find new friends, the user can search the site’s profiles using search characteristics like age, gender, marital status, geographical location, etc.

[0008] While these online social networks are immensely popular, some are rather simplistic and don’t provide much in the way of content and others are relatively difficult to use. Additionally, there is a never ending desire to provide additional features and improved ease of use. Accordingly, there is a need in the art for an improved online social networking system and method.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The present invention provides a system and method for online social networking which addresses one or more problems of the related art. According to the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of receiving a group picture containing a plurality of individuals, receiving identification information regarding the individuals in the group picture, displaying the group picture, and selectively displaying labels for the individuals after the individuals confirm that they have been correctly identified.

[0010] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of receiving a picture containing at least one individual and selectively displaying at least one speech bubble on the picture.

[0011] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of displaying user profile pages including a plurality of fields, displaying a search box when a field is selected, and enabling a search to be performed contextually relevant to the field selected.

[0012] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of displaying user profile pages and enabling visiting users to customize display of portlets for the profile pages.

[0013] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of displaying a mini-profile when a user moves a cursor over one of a user name and a user picture and displaying a profile when a user selects one of a user name and a user picture.

[0014] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a method for operating a website for an online social networking comprises the steps of displaying user profile pages and enabling a visiting user to make the profile pages tabs on a home page of the visiting user.

[0015] From the foregoing disclosure and the following more detailed description of various preferred embodiments it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention provides a significant advance in the technology and art of a system and method for online social networking. Particularly significant in this regard is the potential the invention affords for providing a high quality, reliable, feature, rich, easy to use website. Additional features and advantages of various preferred embodiments will be better understood in view of the detailed description provided below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] These and further features of the present invention will be apparent with reference to the following description and drawings, wherein:

[0017] FIG. 1 is a diagrammatic view of an online social networking system according to one embodiment of the present invention;

[0018] FIG. 2 is a search results screen of the system of FIG. 1;

[0019] FIG. 3 is another search results screen of the system of FIG. 1;

[0020] FIG. 4 is a user profile page of the system of FIG. 1;

[0021] FIG. 5 is a screen for using a group picture to invite friends to the website of the system of FIG. 1;

[0022] FIG. 6 is a screen for using a group picture to register a group of friends to the website of the system of FIG. 1;
FIG. 7a to 7b are screens showing group pictures during operation of an operator button of the system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 8 is a diagrammatic view of an operator button for use with group pictures in the system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 9 is a diagrammatic view of an alternative operator button for use with group pictures in the system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 10a is a screen showing a group picture with a speech bubble button of the system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 10b is a screen showing the group picture of FIG. 10a with the speech bubble button activated and speech bubbles viewable on the group picture.

FIG. 11 is a diagrammatic view of contextual based search window of the system of FIG. 1.

FIG. 12a and 12b are diagrammatic views of a portal customization window of the system of FIG. 1.

It should be understood that the appended drawings are not necessarily to scale, presenting a somewhat simplified representation of various preferred features illustrative of the basic principles of the invention. The specific design features of the online social networking system as disclosed herein, including, for example, specific dimensions, orientations, locations, and shapes of the various components, will be determined in part by the particular intended application and use environment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art, that is, to those who have knowledge or experience in this area of technology, that many uses and design variations are possible for the improved online social networking system disclosed herein. The following detailed discussion of various alternative and preferred embodiments will illustrate the general principles of the invention. Other embodiments suitable for other applications will be apparent to those skilled in the art given the benefit of this disclosure.

In the interest of clarity, not all of the routine features of the embodiments described herein are shown and described. It will of course, be appreciated that in the development of any such implementation, numerous specific decisions must be made in order to achieve the developer's specific goals, such as compliance with application and/or business related constraints, and that these specific goals will vary from one implementation to another and from one developer to another. Additionally, it will be appreciated that such development might be complex and time-consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking of engineering for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of this disclosure.

In accordance with the present invention, the components, process steps and/or data structures may be implemented using various types of operating systems, computer platforms, computer programs, and/or general purpose machines. Those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that devices of less general purpose or nature, such as hard wired devices, field programmable gate arrays (FPGA's), application specific integrated circuits (ASIC's), or the like may also be used without departing from the spirit of the inventions disclosed herein.

FIG. 1 illustrates the general architecture of an online social networking system 10 that operates according to one embodiment of the present invention. A plurality of user interface devices 12 are connected to the system 10 via the Internet 14. Each user interface device 12 may be any device capable of presenting data including, but not limited to, personal computers, cellular telephones, television sets, handheld digital personal assistants, and the like. The illustrated user interface devices 12 display graphical user interface (GUI) displays 16 to the users. As used herein, the term the "Internet" generally refers to the so called world wide network that connects networks to each other using the Internet Protocol (IP) and other similar protocols. While the illustrated embodiment utilizes the public network, the invention applies equally well to other public and private networks, including systems having architectures dissimilar to that illustrated in FIG. 1. For example, but not limited thereto, the system 10 of the present invention can find application a closed university system or a private network of a company.

The illustrated system 10 is connected to the Internet 14 through a router 18 and a switch 20. As well known in the art, the router 18 forwards packets of information between networks. The router 18 forwards information packets between the system 10 and the user interface devices 12 via the Internet 14. The switch 20 acts as a gatekeeper to and from the Internet 14. A load balancer 22 balances traffic across a plurality of mirrored servers 24, 26, 28. While the illustrated embodiment shows three of the servers 24, 26, 28, any suitable number can be utilized. The illustrated servers 24, 26, 28, comprise a web application server 30 that sends out web pages in response to Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) requests from remote browsers and a computer server 32 that serves as the application layer of the illustrated system 10. The web server 30 provides web pages to users of the system 10 which are displayed on the user interface devices 12 as the GUI displays. An image server 34 stores and provides digital images to other components of the system 10. A mail server 36 sends and receives electronic messages to and from the user interface devices 12. A database 38 and database software 40 are also provided. A firewall 42 provides protection from unauthorized access to the system 10. A second switch 44 allows components of the system 10 to be connected to a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), or the like. Data can be transferred to and from the various components.

The computer server 32 may include a central processing unit (CPU), random access memory (RAM), and read only memory (ROM). The computer server 32 may be generally controlled and coordinated by operating system software. The operating system controls allocation of system resources and performs tasks such as processing, scheduling, memory management, networking, and I/O services among other things. The operating system is executed by the CPU and coordinates operation of the other components of the system 10.

The image server 34 manages digital photographs and other human viewable images. The image server 34 may be configured separately from the web server 30 or the web server 30 and the image server 34 can be configured together. Examples of image formats that can be managed by the image server 34 include, but are not limited to, Graphical Interchange Format (GIF), Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG), Portable Network Graphics (PNG) or Tagged Image File (TIF).

The mail server 36 is a repository for e-mail messages received from the Internet 14. The mail server 36
also manages the transmission of electronic messages ("electronic mail or "e-mail"). The mail server 36 includes a storage area, a set of user definable rules, a list of users and a series of communications modules.

[0039] The databases 38, 40 store software, descriptive data, digital images, system data and any other data item required by the components of the system 10. The databases may be provided, for example, as a database management system (DBMS), an object-oriented database management system (OODBMS), a relational database management system (e.g. DB2, ACCESS, etc.), a file system, or any other conventional database package. The databases 38, 40 can be accessed via a structured query language (SQL) or other tools known to one of ordinary skill in the art.

[0040] The components appearing in the illustrated system 10 refer to an exemplary combination of components needed to provide the tools and services contemplated by the present invention. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, various components can be eliminated, additional quantities of the illustrated components can be added, other components can be added, and the components can be configured in other ways within the scope of the present invention.

[0041] A user utilizes the user interface 12 to access the system 10 and register as a member of the online social networking system 10. The system provides a screen in which the user can provide descriptive data that enables the user to login securely and be identified by the system. Once a registered member, the user can construct their own profile. This can consist of uploading photographs and videos that can be viewed on the user's profile as described in more detail hereinafter.

[0042] A user can also search profiles of other users. FIG. 2 shows an exemplary search page or screen 44 showing search results 46. As shown, the user can search by name or can use an advanced search wherein other search criteria are utilized. The illustrated search page 44 shows the search results 46 in rows and columns wherein the search results are in the form of a photograph 47 and name of the user meeting the search criteria. When the user selects one of the search results 46, such as by moving a mouse curser over the photograph, an information box 48 appears that contains information about the selected user. The illustrated information box 48 includes the user's name, photograph, network and/or school, major and/or year in school, geographical location. The illustrated information box 48 also includes links to view friends of the selected user, "Freeze Crowds" which are groups of friends of the selected user, award points of the selected user and rank within network, gifts of the selected user, and a photo album of the selected user. The illustrated information box 48 further includes links to send a message to the selected user, instant message the selected user, forward information about the selected user to a friend, add the selected user to the user's list of friends.

[0043] By selecting an icon 50 at the top of the search page, the user can change the presentation format of the search results 46. FIG. 3 shows an exemplary search screen 44 showing the search results 46 in rows wherein the search results 46 generally include all of the information in the information boxes 48 described above. Thus, fewer users are viewed on a single page but all of the information is shown without opening individual text information boxes 48.

[0044] By selecting the photograph 47 on the search results 46, such as by clicking on the photograph 47 with a mouse, the user can display the profile page 52 for the selected user. FIG. 4 shows an exemplary profile screen or page 52 of a user. The illustrated profile page 52 includes an "about me" window which includes the selected user's name, photograph, school, year in school, major, birthday, e-mail address, website address, a personal message from the selected user, and a photo album. The illustrated profile page includes an "message" window which includes information from the selected user. The illustrated profile page also includes a "friends" window which includes photographs of all or some of the selected user's friends. The illustrated "friends" window also includes links to the profile pages of the friends. The illustrated profile page also includes a "Freeze Crowds" window 54 which includes photographs 56 of groups of friends of the selected user's friends. The illustrated "Freeze Crowds" window 54 also includes links to more information regarding the photographs 56. The illustrated profile page 52 also displays information about friends of the selected user that are in other networks such as the names of the networks and the number of friends in each of the networks. The illustrated profile page also includes links to "FreezeFriend" or make the selected user a friend of the user, send a message to the selected user, and to make the profile page 52 of the selected user a tab 58 on the user's home page.

[0045] A registered user can invite a friend or friends to join the website by uploading a group picture or photograph 56 to the website. As used herein, the term the "group picture" generally refers to a photograph showing a plurality of individuals. FIG. 5 shows an exemplary invitation page or screen 60 for using a group picture 56 to invite friends to join the website. Once the group picture 56 is uploaded, the user labels or tags the picture 56 by identifying the people in the group picture 56 by first and last name and e-mail address. The user also puts a box or box tag 62 around each person's head. Once the information is entered and the "Invite the FreezeCrowd" button 64 is selected, an e-mail invitation is automatically sent to each friend identified in the group picture 56. Each friend receives an email invite which enables them to sign up for the website and asks them to confirm their presence in the group picture 56. By default the group picture 56 is cropped and enlarged (based on where the user put the box 62 around person's head) to create the friend's main profile picture 47. A person is not tagged or identified by box 62 in a group picture 56 for viewing on the website by others until they confirm their presence in the group picture 56. The group picture 56 remains on the website even if one or more people in the group picture 56 do not sign up for the website. A person in the group picture 56 who declines, can always be re-invited to the website through group picture invitation at a later time, unless they opt out from receiving invitations from the website. Any person in a group picture 56 who is not already a registered member of the website can be invited to the website through picture invitation. This process can also be used in connection with uploaded videos, where video face detection is used to tag pictures of persons in the video.

[0046] A similar process can be used to register yourself and friends to the website at the same time by uploading a group picture or photograph 56 to the website. FIG. 6 shows an exemplary registration page or screen 66 for using a group picture 56 to register of group of people to the website. A group of people can together register to the website with a group picture 56 by putting a box 62 around each of the heads in the group picture 56, and tagging the
people in the picture by identifying the people in the group picture 56 by first and last name and e-mail address. The registrant who registers everyone in the group picture 56 enters a password and registers by selecting the “Register FreezeCrowd” button 68. Everyone else in the group picture 56 registers to the website when they receive a link sent to them through e-mail which leads them to a webpage where they can complete the registration process. This process can also be used in connection with uploaded videos, where video face detection is used to tag pictures of persons in the video.

As shown in FIG. 7a, when a “FreezeCrowd” or group picture 56 is viewed on the website, the user sees the group picture 56 as uploaded. However, when the user presses a “FreezeCrowd” or operating button 70 (shown in FIGS. 8 and 9), the user sees boxes 72 around the heads of the persons in the group picture 56 (best shown in FIG. 7b). The name of each person can also be displayed in or near their box if desired. FIG. 8 illustrates a suitable “FreezeCrowd” button 70 which is preferably located near the bottom right corner of each “FreezeCrowd” group picture 56. FIG. 9 shows an alternative FreezeCrowd” button 70. It is noted that the “FreezeCrowd” button 70 can take any suitable form. This “FreezeCrowd” button 70 preferably follows the user’s mouse cursor when the user moves over their cursor over the picture 56. When the “FreezeCrowd” button 70 is pressed, a user can get more information on a user in the picture 56 by hovering over their name and/or box 72 over the head or clicking on their name or box 72 so that a mini profile 74 is displayed (best shown in FIG. 7c). The illustrated “FreezeCrowd” button 70 has a next mini profile arrow or button 76 for the user to see the next mini profile 74 in the group picture 56 and a previous mini profile arrow or button 78 for the user to see the previous mini profile 74 in the group picture 56 (best shown in FIG. 7d). The illustrated next “FreezeCrowd” button 70 also has a next picture arrow or button 80 for the user to see the next group picture 56 or “FreezeCrowd” and a previous picture arrow or button 82 for the user to see the previous group picture 56 or “FreezeCrowd” in the gallery of group pictures 56 (best shown in FIG. 7e).

Head detection technology may be used to detect a person’s head in a group picture 56. This process is used with filtered colors to identify the person in the group picture 56 by adding a color filter to the group picture 56 when the user hovers their mouse cursor over the name or picture. When the “FreezeCrowd” button 70 is pressed, a filter may blink for a second for a special effect. The color of the box 72 around a user’s head will correspond to colors on their user profile page 52 (see FIG. 4). A colored filter may be shown to outline a person, their head, or any other desired item.

As shown in FIGS. 10a and 10b, a user preferably can create a visible speech bubble 84 for a “FreezeCrowd” or group picture 56 and tag or associate that speech bubble 84 with a particular individud in the group picture 56. The user preferably has the ability to edit the speech bubble 84 once they have been tagged to an individual. A speech bubble 84 preferably can only be tagged onto the image of a registered user of the site and the tagged user must confirm that the speech bubble 84 is acceptable for display before it will be shown in a group picture 56 on the website.

As shown in FIG. 10a, a bubble activation button 86 appears below the group picture 56 when the group picture 56 is displayed once a speech bubble 84 has been confirmed by the tagged user. The activation button 86 provides a visual indicator that speech bubbles 84 exist for viewing and, when selected, activates the speech bubbles 84 associated with particular individuals in the displayed group picture 56 so that the speech bubbles are viewable in connection with the group picture 56. The illustrated activation button 86 is in the shape of a speech bubble and is identified as the “Speech Bubble Button” but any other suitable configuration and name can alternatively be utilized. As shown in FIG. 10b, speech bubbles 84 that have been tagged to particular individuals in the group pictures 56 are viewable once the activation button 86 is pressed. The speech bubbles 84 appear in the group picture 56 next to the tagged individual an contain the text that was entered and approved. By pressing the activation button 86 again, the speech bubbles 84 are hidden from view (as shown in FIG. 10a). Thus, the user can selectively view and hide the speech bubbles 84 as desired. Preferably, the text in the speech bubbles 84 can be searched.

It is noted that preferably tag items other than just speech bubbles 84 can be added and tagged to individuals in the group picture 56. For example, the tag items can include angel wings, hats and other items which can be tagged to people in a picture 56. Other activation buttons are provided to represent those tag items and show that such items have been tagged to the group picture 56 and enable those tag items to be selectively displayed and hidden from the picture.

A contextual based “FreezeWord” is a technology that works within the website. When a user of the website visits a user profile page 52 (see FIG. 4), they are able to view different sections known as fields provided in the profile page 52. These fields may consist of Favorite Music, Favorite Movies, Favorite Books, Favorite Television Shows, Favorite Places, Interests, and others. As best shown in FIG. 11, the user can click or mouse over a Field such as “Movies” and a movie search box 88 with search engine provided by Google is provided in context to movies. It is noted that any other suitable search engine other than Google can alternatively be utilized. The search is a specific Movie Search, Book Search, etc. The user can search for a movie or any value created by another on demand, or any field, whereas the user would enter their own search which will be contextually relevant to that field or section (movies, books, music, television etc.) of the profile. The user can click on a “Value” which corresponds to the Field and search for that “Value” in a contextual manner which relates back to that word. So that, if the word is a movie, the user can search for it via a movie search, a book, music, and such. Contextual search works via making categories for fields, and searching for values within this search, or searching an entered value within a Field. The user is able to take a contextual value from one user’s profile and add this value to their own profile. For instance, if a profile page for another person has a movie listed that a visiting user likes, the visiting user can click on “add to (name of movie)” to my profile. This can be done without having to edit their profile page. If a user would like to highlight a word within another user’s profile page, the user can do so, by clicking on the word and clicking highlight word, in a different color. Various search methods can be customized for the user, and provided in the menu for the user to search, but the innovation of contextual search is that the search menu is
relevant to the field or section the user is in. Search history and RSS Feeds can be added to the “FreezeWords”; and “FreezeWords” can be customized by choosing specific categories and sections. Keywords can be tagged with icon images, and words can be tagged with annotated sentences which describe the keyword. For example, but not limited thereto, someone may use the keyword “my dog” and the annotation may be “I like to walk my dog Sparky in the park” and there could be an icon (sized 128x128 pixel image) of Sparky when they click on “my dog” in the person’s interests. By default there will be icons which associate with keywords, for instance an image of a dog for the keyword dog will be shown. If the user likes, they can customize this image only on their own profile page.

A portal to the website is provided for each of user. This portal can be customized by visiting users for improved navigation, and added viewing enjoyment. A user visits another users profile page 52 (see FIG. 4), and looks at the navigation menu top. The visiting user can customize the portal in new ways that have not been done before, which makes this a unique innovation. The portal can be customized with movement of columns, rows, portlets, randomization, cascade stairs, and different shapes. As best shown in FIGS. 12a and 12b, customization includes: (A) one, two or three columns, where columns can have splits such as a 25/70 Split for two columns or a 30/30/30 split for a three column; (B) rotate clockwise or rotate counterclockwise, where users can click the rotate button to navigate with portlets and the content and title from portlet number one can move to portlet number four, and portlet number four moves to portlet number seven, and so forth; (C) move row up, move row down, move column left, move column right, where the user can move one portlet by clicking on these buttons and portlet one would move to portlet two, and portlet three would move to portlet one each of the columns in the portlet; (D) randomize would move portlets randomly within the portlet, and this is more of a “fun feature” for the user; (E) float portlets in a fixed matrix portal would allow a user to detach and attach a portlet from the portal and the ser can also expand and collapse the portlet when detached.

Users of the website can see mini profiles and profiles on demand in an iFrame browser which can be detached to make the iFrame browser a tab. The user mouses over a user name and/or picture anywhere on the website and a mini profile is shown. If the user clicks on a picture or a the user’s name or a flag attached to the user’s name, the user will be shown a profile on demand in an iFrame browser. The user can click on a button in the toolbar of the iFrame browser to detach the iFrame to make it a tab on the website. Similar user functionality can be used for viewing web sites on the website.

It is apparent from the above detailed description of the present invention, that the present invention provides a system and method that facilitates online social networking that provides improved ease of use and useful new tools and features.

From the foregoing disclosure and detailed description of certain preferred embodiments, it is also apparent that various modifications, additions and other alternative embodiments are possible without departing from the true scope and spirit of the present invention. The embodiments discussed were chosen and described to provide the best illustration of the principles of the present invention and its practical application to thereby enable one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. All such modifications and variations are within the scope of the present invention as determined by the appended claims when interpreted in accordance with the benefit to which they are fairly, legally, and equitably entitled.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   receiving a group picture containing a plurality of individuals;
   receiving identification information regarding the individuals in the group picture;
   selectively displaying labels for the individuals after the individuals confirm that they have been correctly identified.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the labels include box tags about heads of the individuals.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying a profile when a label is selected.

4. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of automatically cropping the head of an individual from the group picture and using the cropped head as a profile picture for the user.

5. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying the group picture with labels identifying less than all of the individuals in the group picture.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of automatically inviting each of the plurality of individuals who are not registered users of the website to become a registered user of the website.

7. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of automatically registering the plurality of individuals as register users of the website.

8. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of providing an operation button which displays the labels when pressed.

9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising the step of providing the operation button with left and right portions to step between the labels of the individuals in the group picture.

10. The method according to claim 8, further comprising the step of providing the operation button with next and previous portions to step between a plurality of group pictures.

11. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of selectively displaying at least one speech bubble on the group picture.

12. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of receiving a request for the speech bubble from a registered user and displaying the speech bubble only after the individual in the group picture associated with the speech bubble approves display of the speech bubble.

13. The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of providing an activation button to selectively display and hide the speech bubble.

14. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   receiving a picture containing at least one individual;
   selectively displaying at least one speech bubble on the picture.
15. The method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of receiving a request for the speech bubble from a registered user and displaying the speech bubble only after the individual in the picture associated with the speech bubble approves display of the speech bubble.

16. The method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of providing an activation button to selectively display and hide the speech bubble.

17. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   - displaying user profile pages including a plurality of fields;
   - displaying a search box when a field is selected; and
   - enabling a search to be performed contextually relevant to the field selected.

18. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   - displaying user profile pages; and
   - enabling visiting users to customize display of portlets for the profile pages.

19. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   - displaying a mini-profile when a user moves a cursor over one of a user name and a user picture; and
   - displaying a profile when a user selects one of a user name and a user picture.

20. A method for operating a website for an online social networking comprising the steps of:
   - displaying user profile pages; and
   - enabling a visiting user to make the profile pages tabs on a home page of the visiting user.

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