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(54) **TWO-WAY INFORMATION TRANSMISSION SYSTEM, TWO-WAY INFORMATION TRANSMISSION METHOD, AND SUBSCRIBER TERMINAL**

(52) **U.S. Cl. .... 725/98; 725/86**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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(51) **Int. Cl.<sup>7</sup> ..... H04N 7/173**

A subscriber terminal ms sends the demand including at least information for identifying the demand subscriber terminal and information for identifying the requested information to the information distribution transmission center HE through the going-up line. The information distribution transmission center HE makes a transmission plan of the information based on this demand, and sends the information transmission plan to the subscriber terminal ms prior to the actual information transmission. The subscriber terminal ms sends an information transmission request including a share information transmission request of the transmission information when desired transmission information is listed in the obtained transmission schedule. The information transmission center HE transmits the information requested according to the information transmission schedule to the subscriber terminal which made the information transmission request and, during a share information transmission request, transmits the information also to the subscriber terminal which made the share information transmission request. A video on-demand system can be realized with a relatively small investment, and the centralization of traffic is mitigated, the network resource is used efficiently, and rational charging for information transmission is enabled.

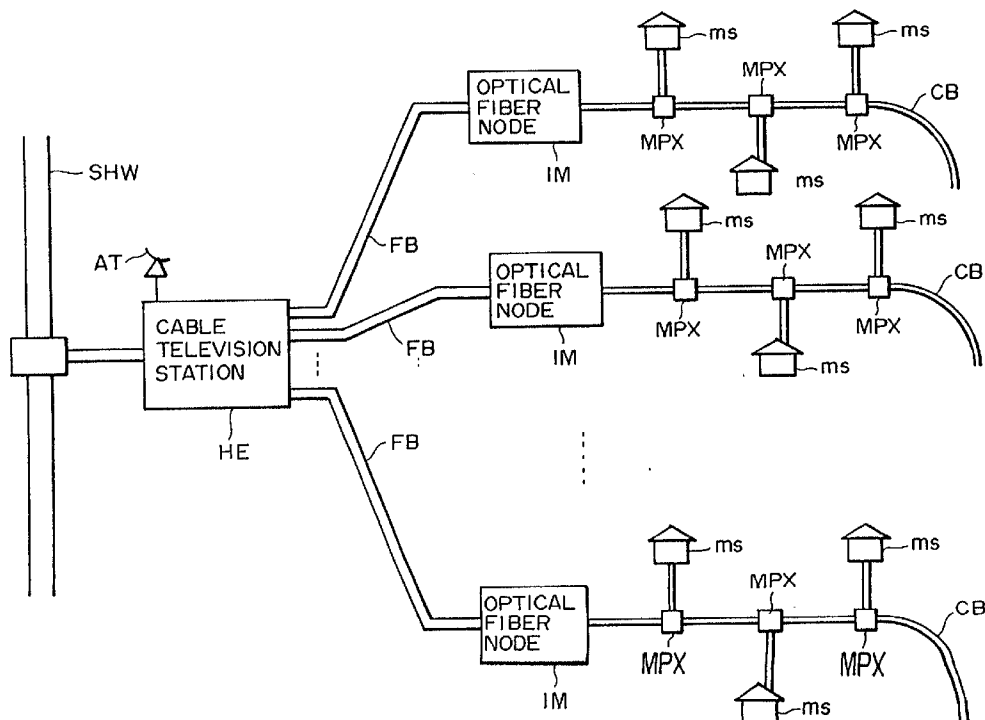


FIG. 1

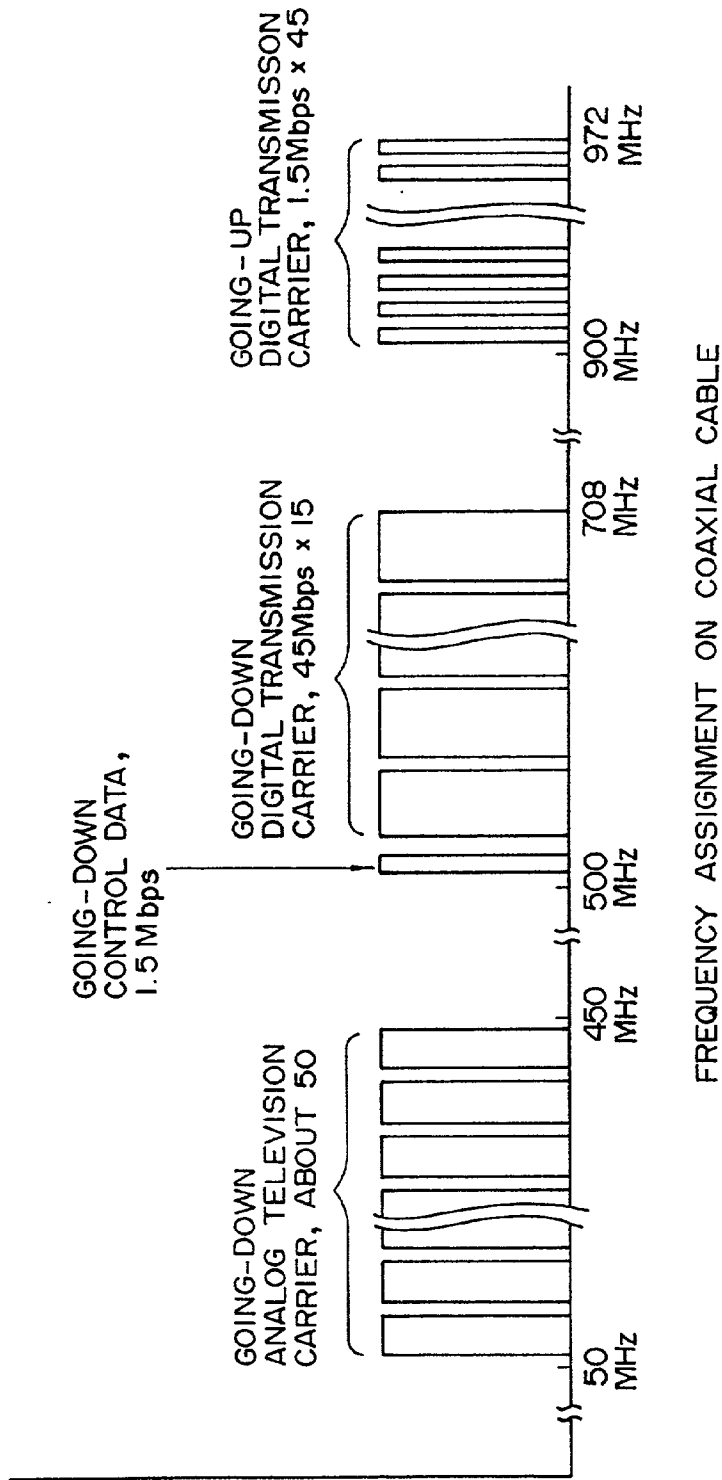


FIG. 2

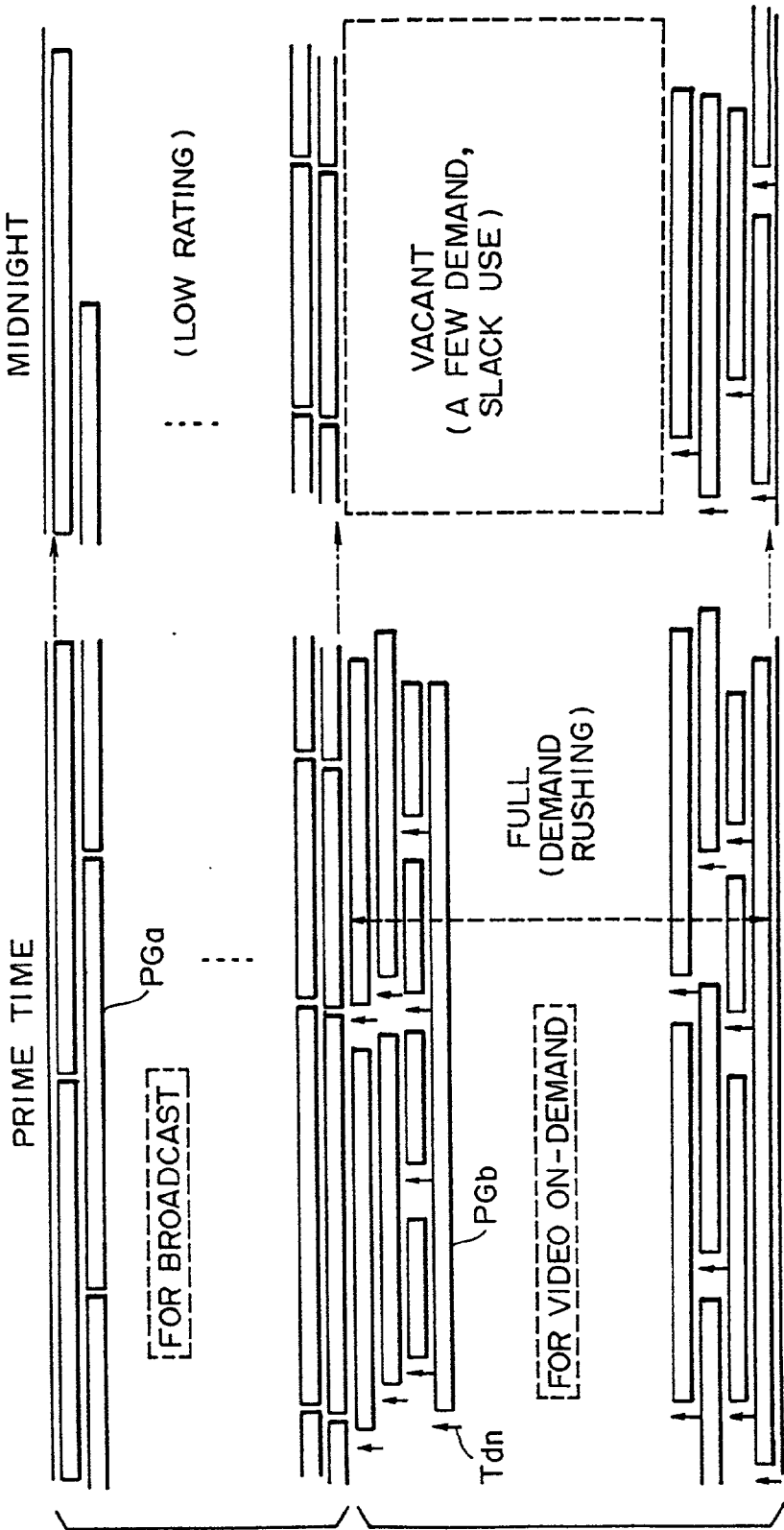


FIG. 3

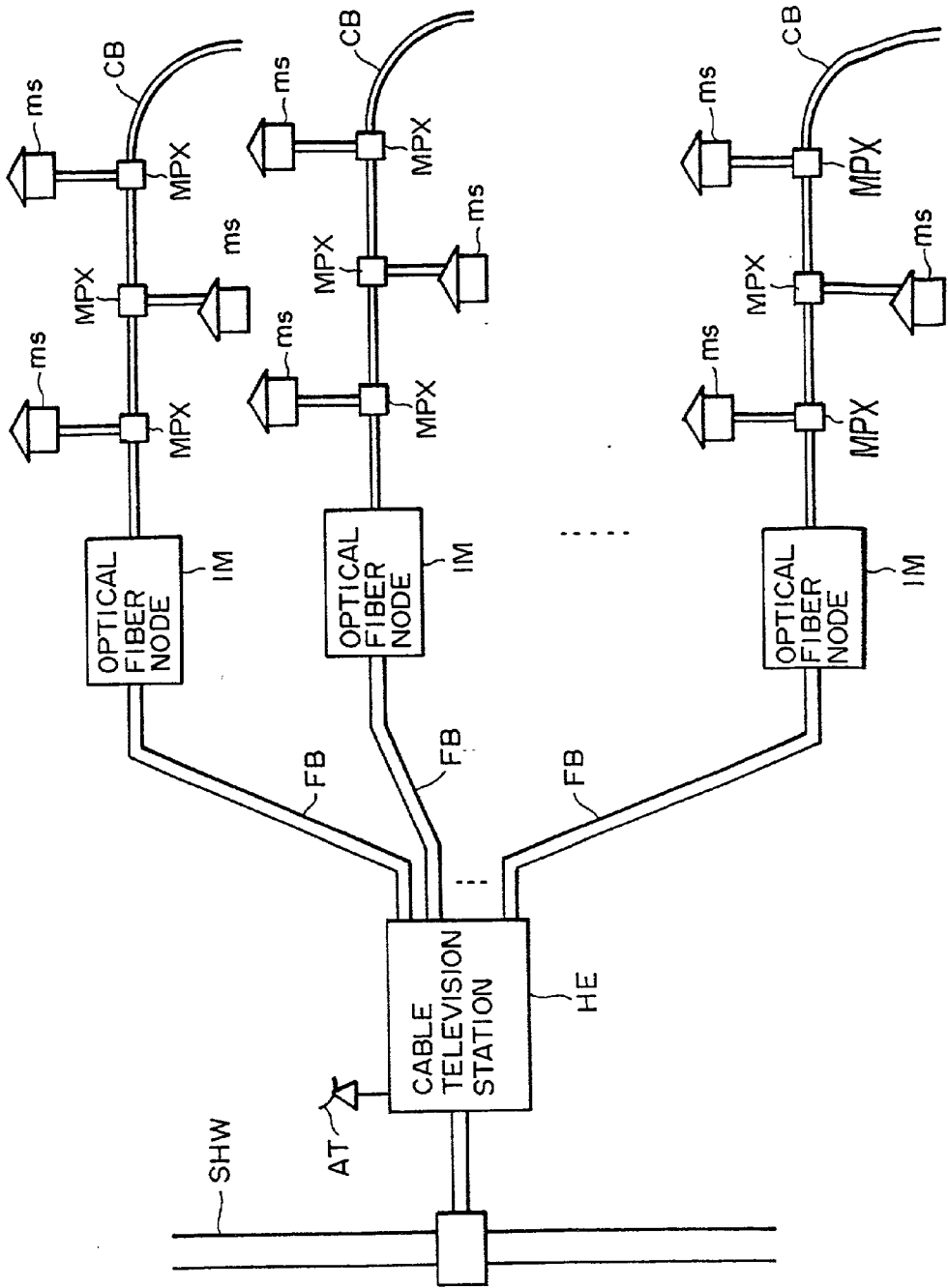




FIG. 5

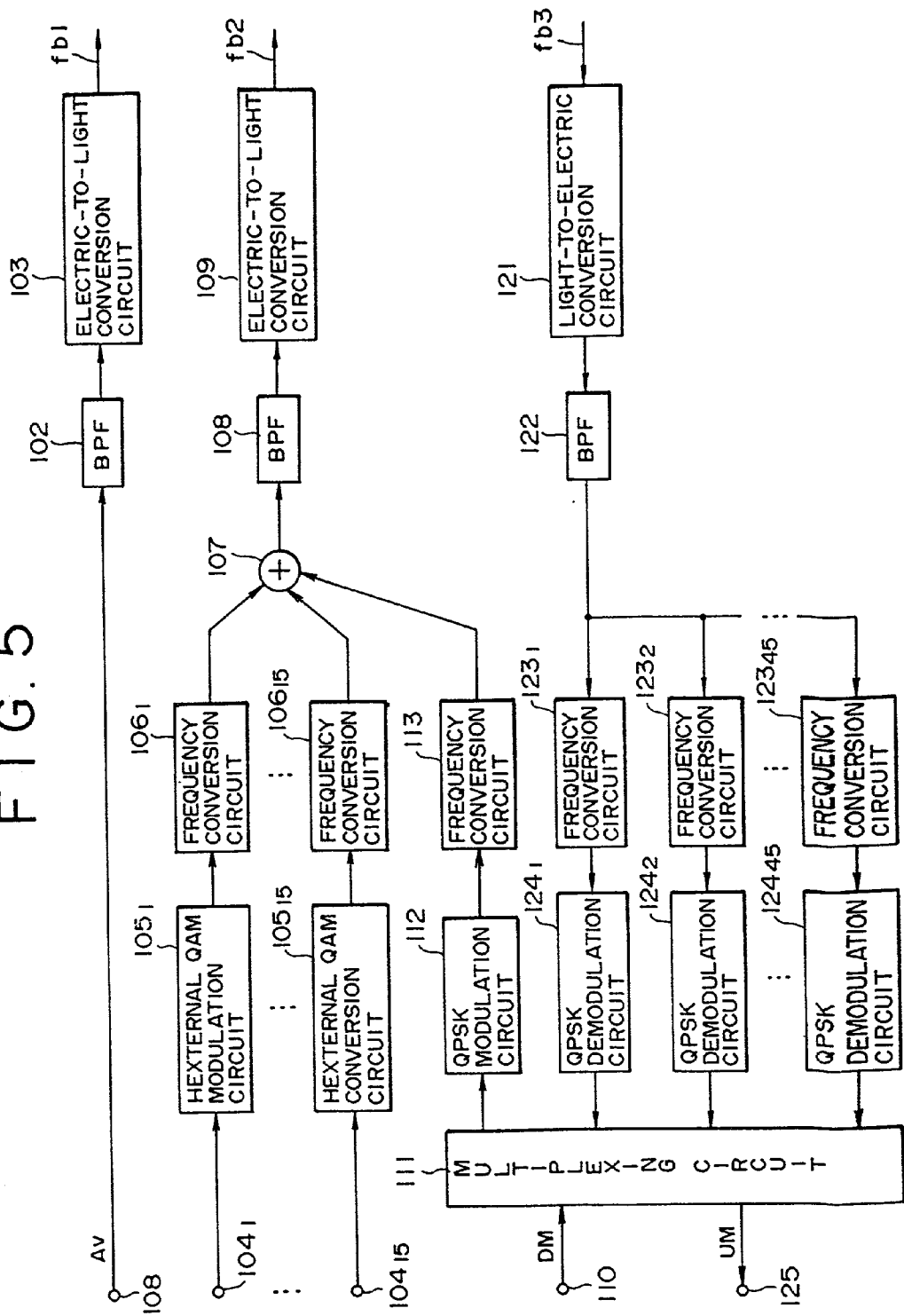


FIG. 6

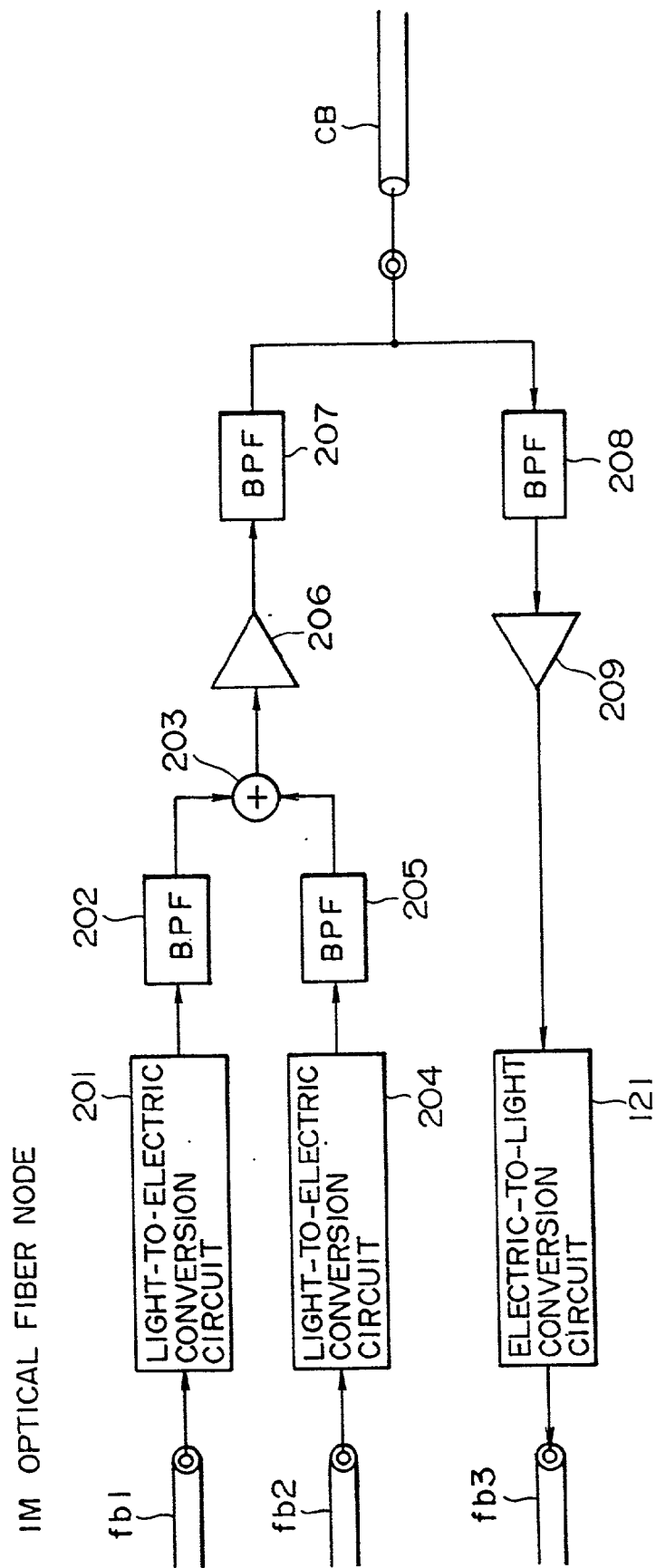


FIG. 7

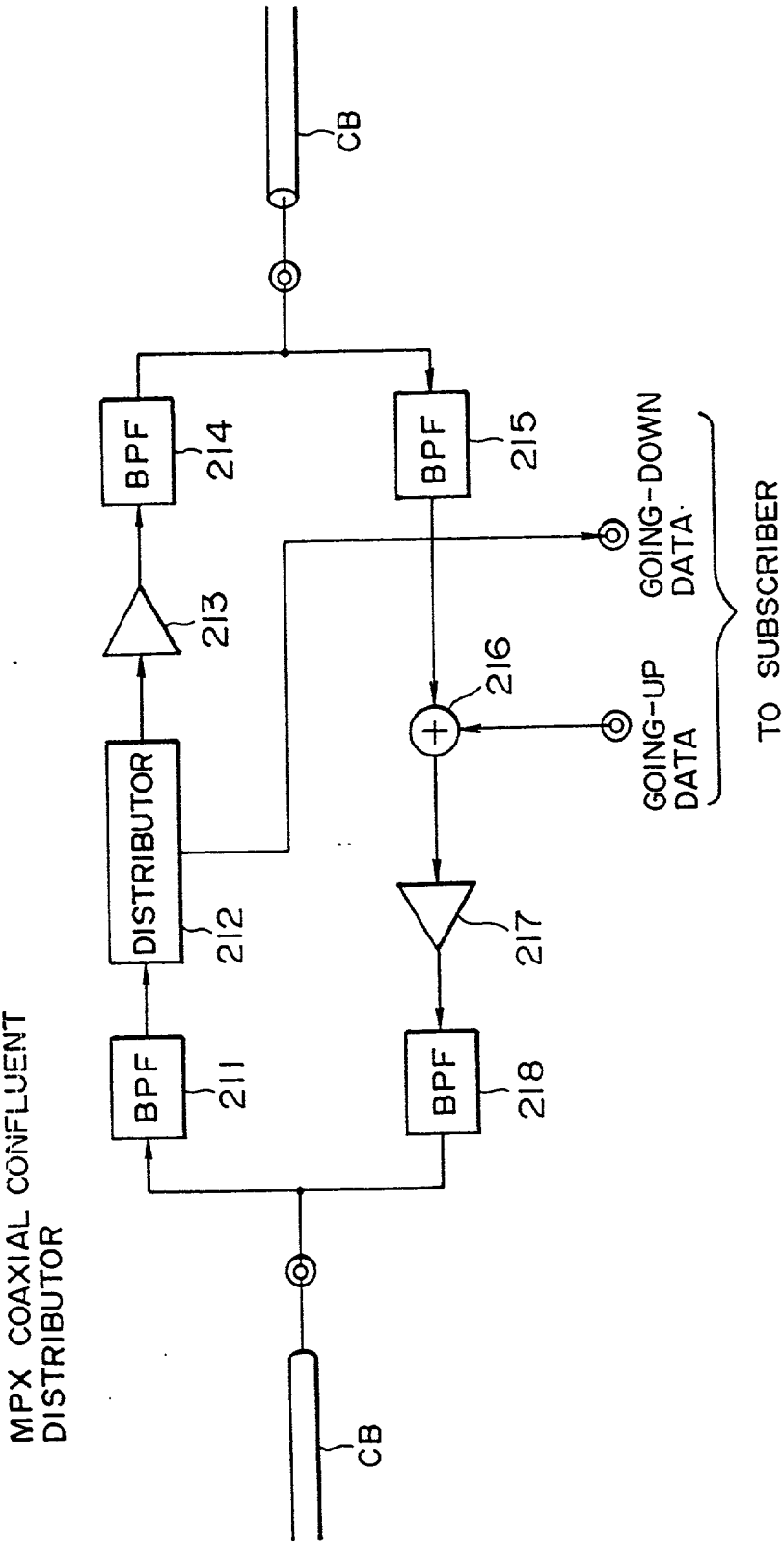




FIG. 8

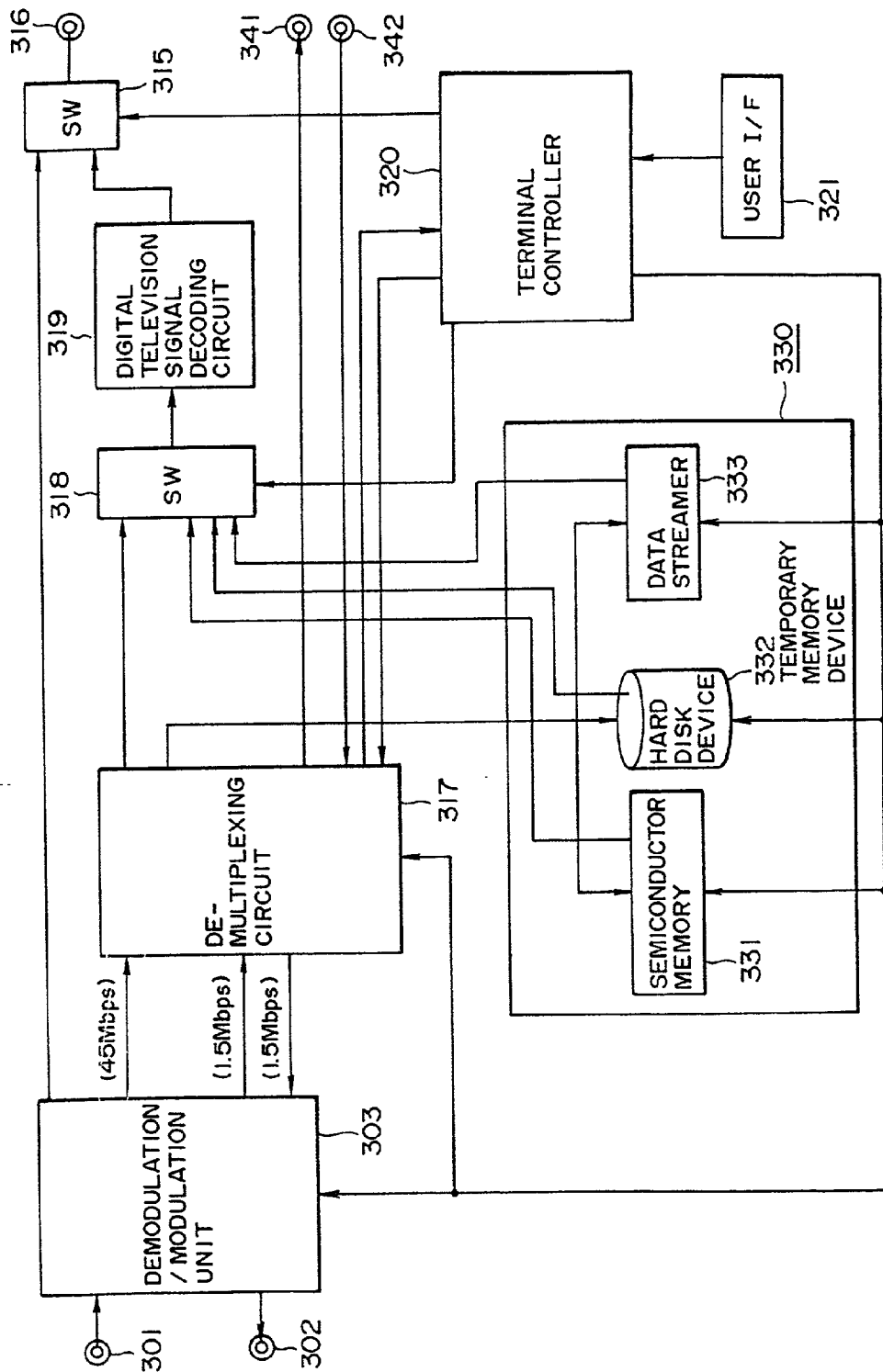


FIG. 9

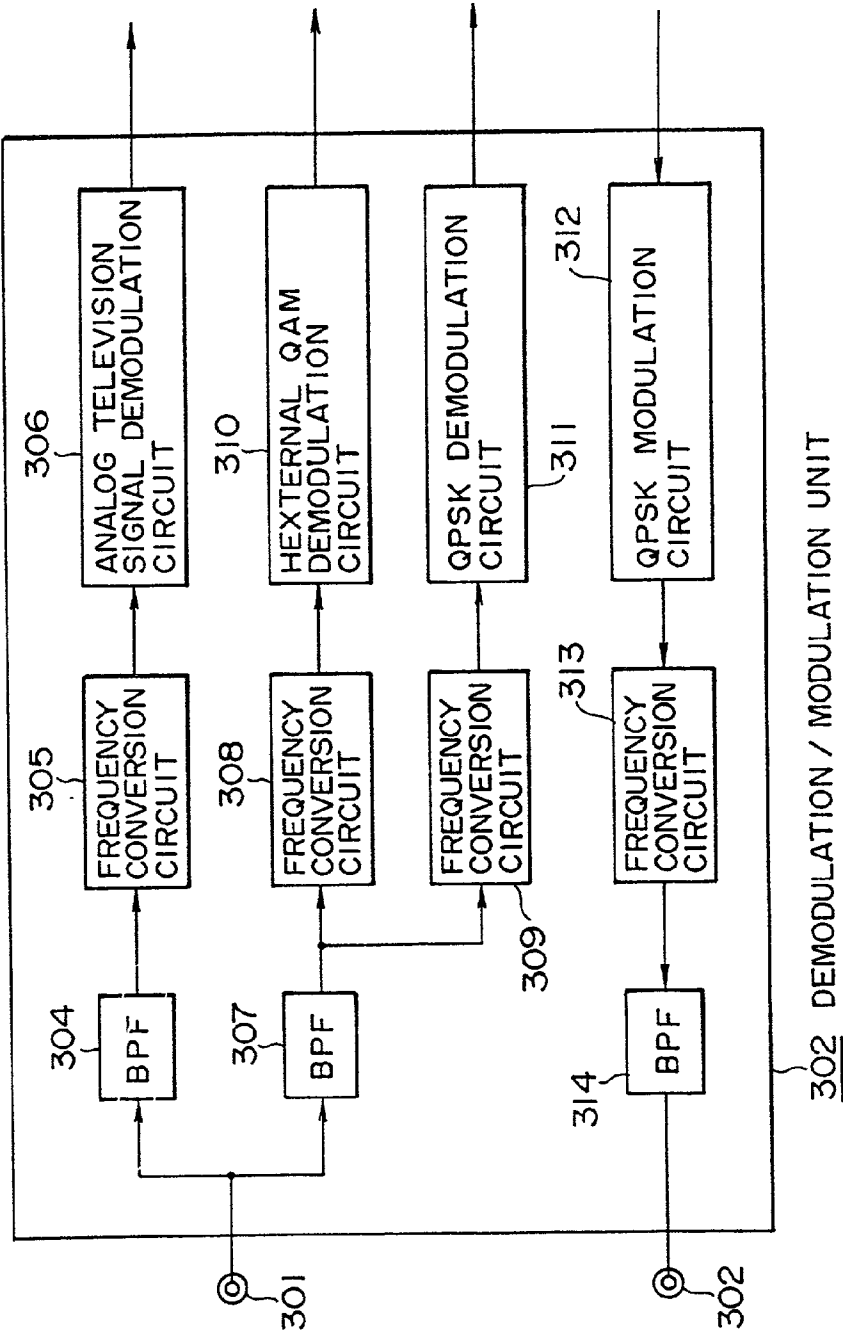


FIG. 10

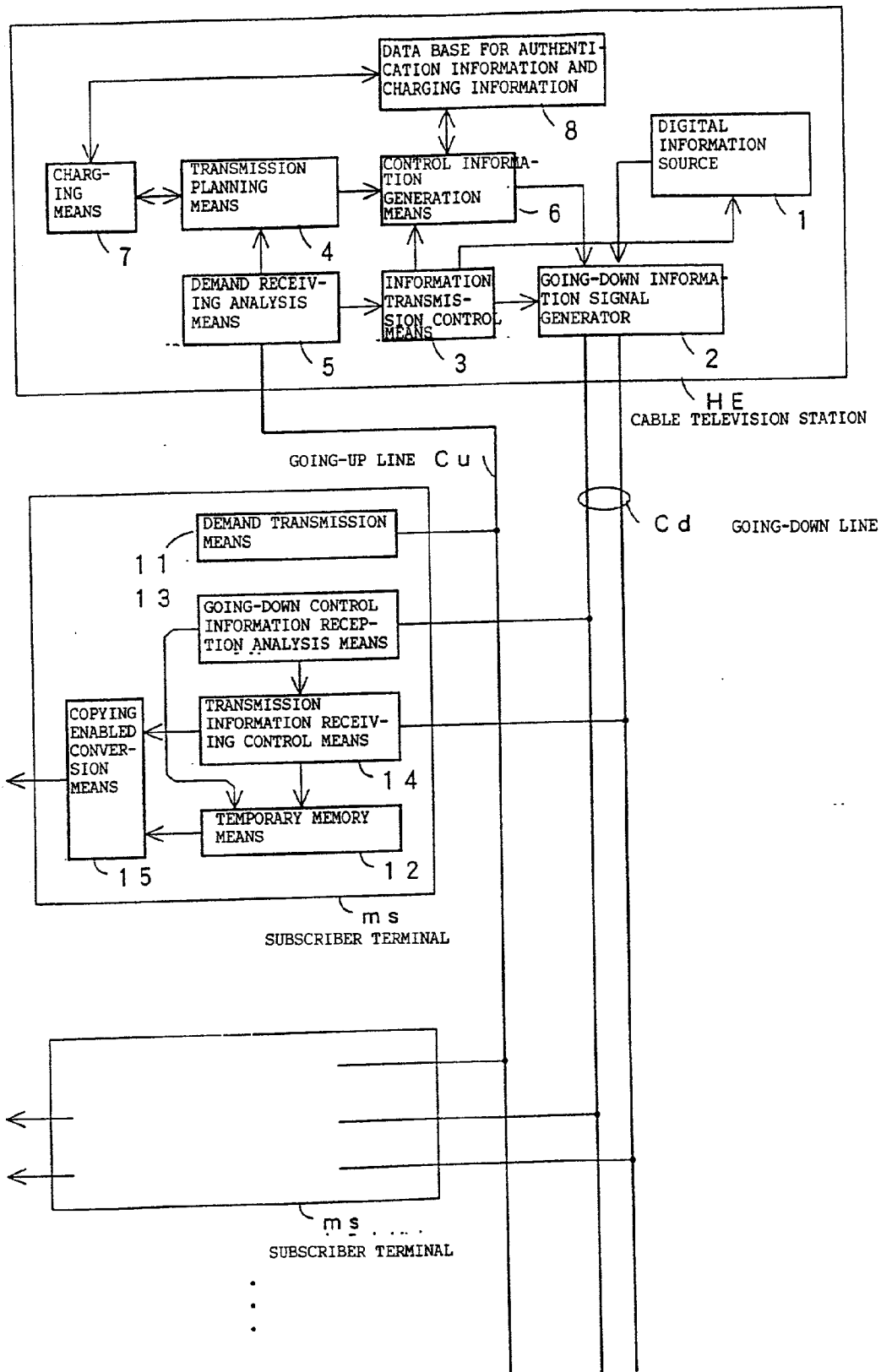


Fig. 11

LIST OF PROGRAMS TO BE TRANSMITTED  
AT OR AFTER THE CURRENT TIME

CURRENT TIME  
19 : 45

	PROGRAM TITLE	TRANSMISSION START TIME
1	JAPANESE OLD TALES	19 : 55
2	HOLYDAYS IN LONDON	20 : 10
3	DIRTY DETECTIVE	20 : 30
:	:	:
:	:	:
:	:	:
:	:	:

# FIG. 12

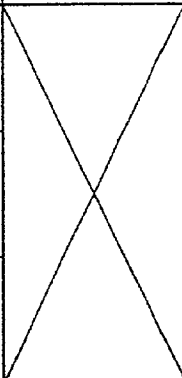
DEMAND CLASS	TIME ZONE FOR TRANSMISSION	CHARGES (UNIT: YEN)		ADDITIONAL CHARGE FOR COPYING REQUEST
		USUAL FEE	SHARE FEE	
A	PRIME TIME (18:00 TO 22:00)	2 5 0		2 0 0 0 YEN
	EARLY MORNING, LATE AT NIGHT (22:00 TO 6:00)	2 0 0		
	OTHER THAN THE ABOVE	2 3 0		
B	PRIME TIME (18:00 TO 22:00 )	2 3 0	1 0 0	
	EARLY MORNING, LATE AT NIGHT (22:00 TO 6:00)	1 8 0		
	OTHER THAN THE ABOVE	2 0 0		
C	OTHER THAN PRIME TIME	1 5 0		

FIG. 13

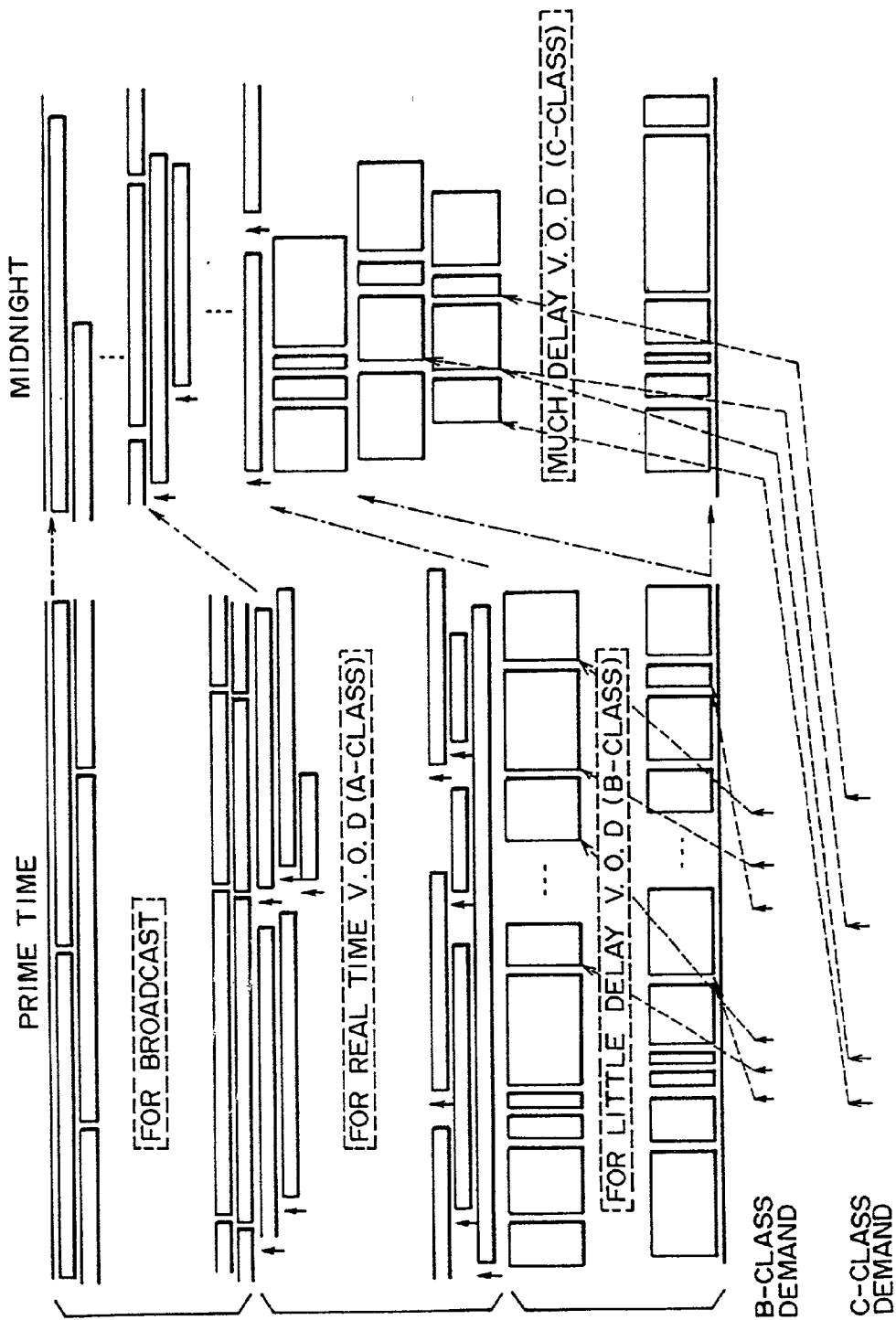


FIG. 14

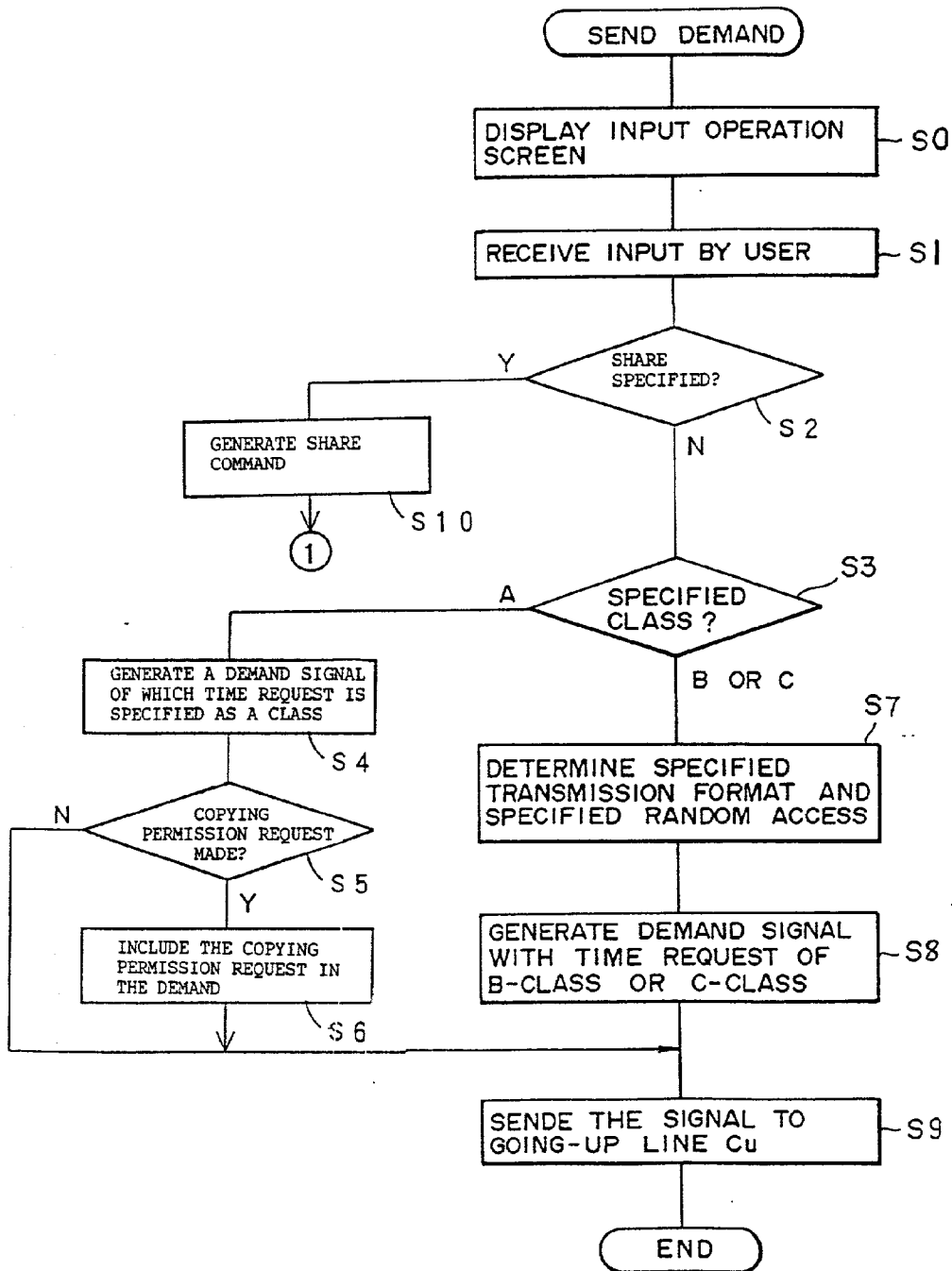


FIG. 15

TABLE OF CHARGES  
(CURRENT TIME 19:45 )

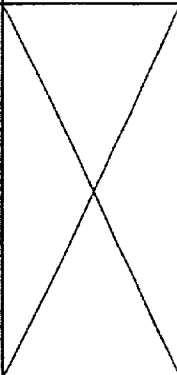
DEMAND CLASS	TIME ZONE FOR TRANSMISSION	CHARGES (UNIT: YEN)		ADDITIONAL CHARGE FOR COPYING REQUEST	
		USUAL FEE	SHARE FEE		
A	PRIME TIME (18:00 TO 22:00)	2 5 0		2 0 0 0 YEN	
	EARLY MORNING, LATE AT NIGHT (22:00 TO 6:00)	2 0 0			
	OTHER THAN THE ABOVE	2 3 0			
B	PRIME TIME (18:00 TO 22:00)	2 3 0	1 0 0		2 0 0 0 YEN
	EARLY MORNING, LATE AT NIGHT (22:00 TO 6:00)	1 8 0			
	OTHER THAN THE ABOVE	2 0 0			
C	OTHER THAN PRIME TIME	1 5 0			



FIG. 16

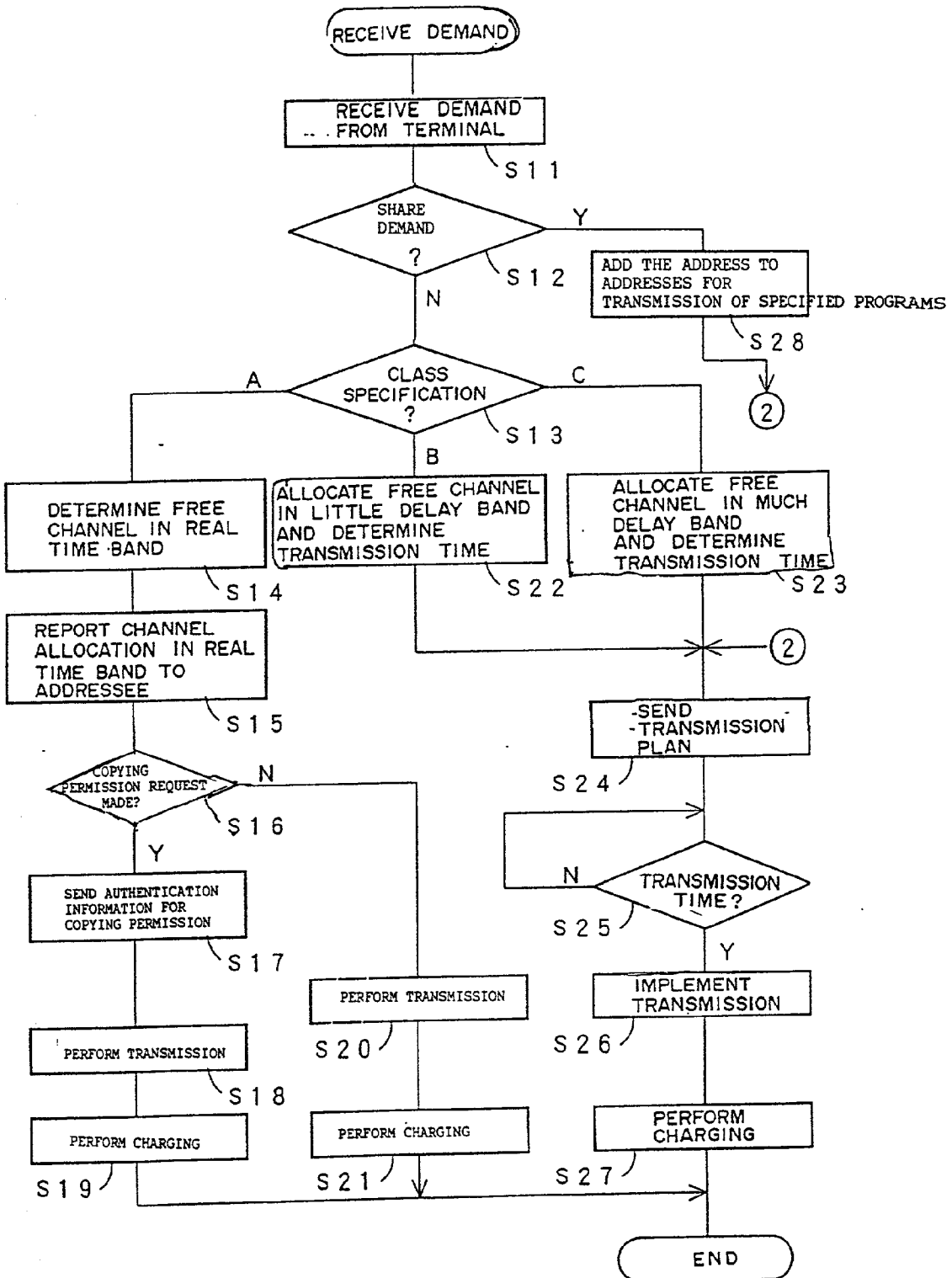


FIG. 17

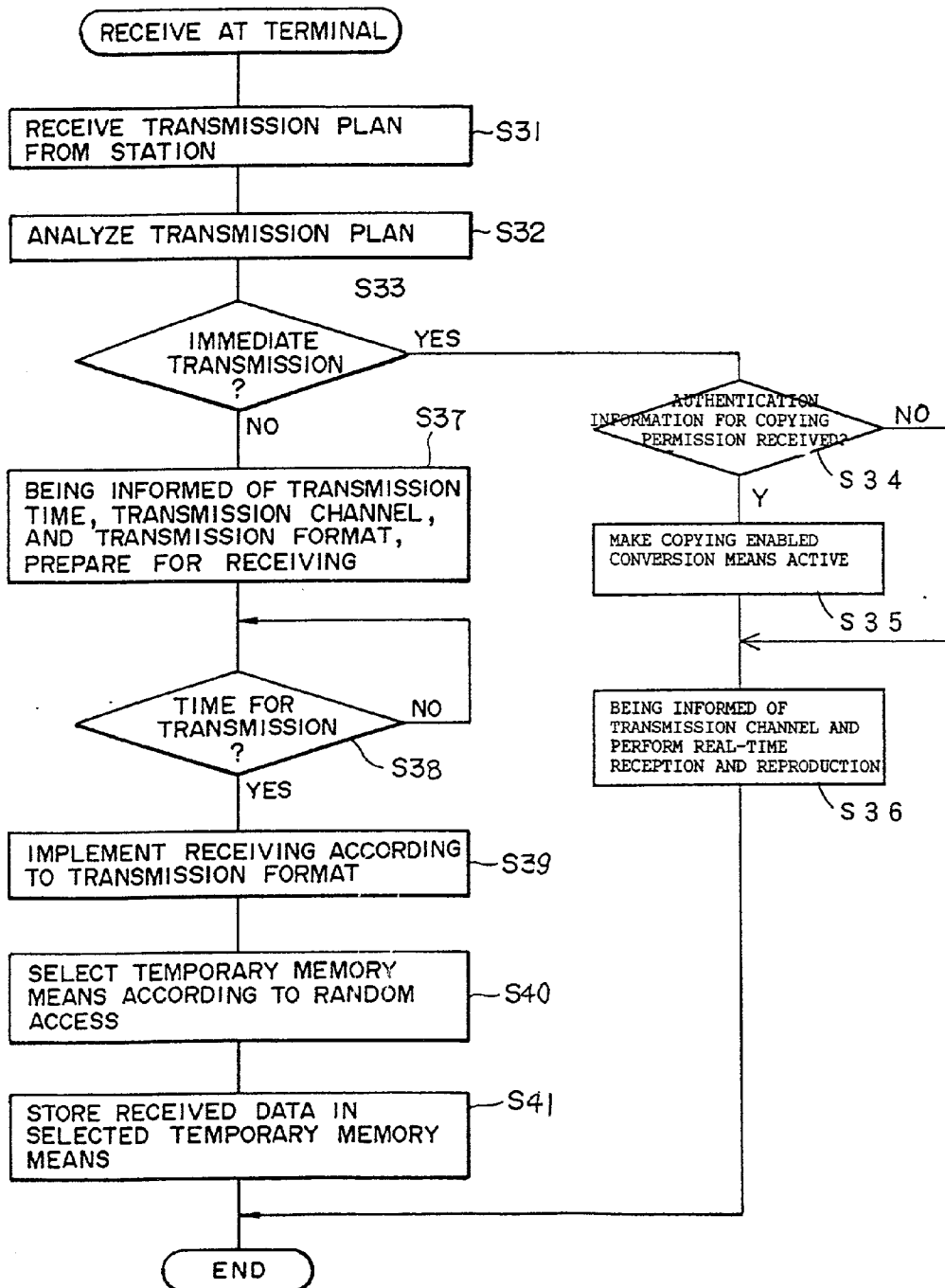


FIG. 18

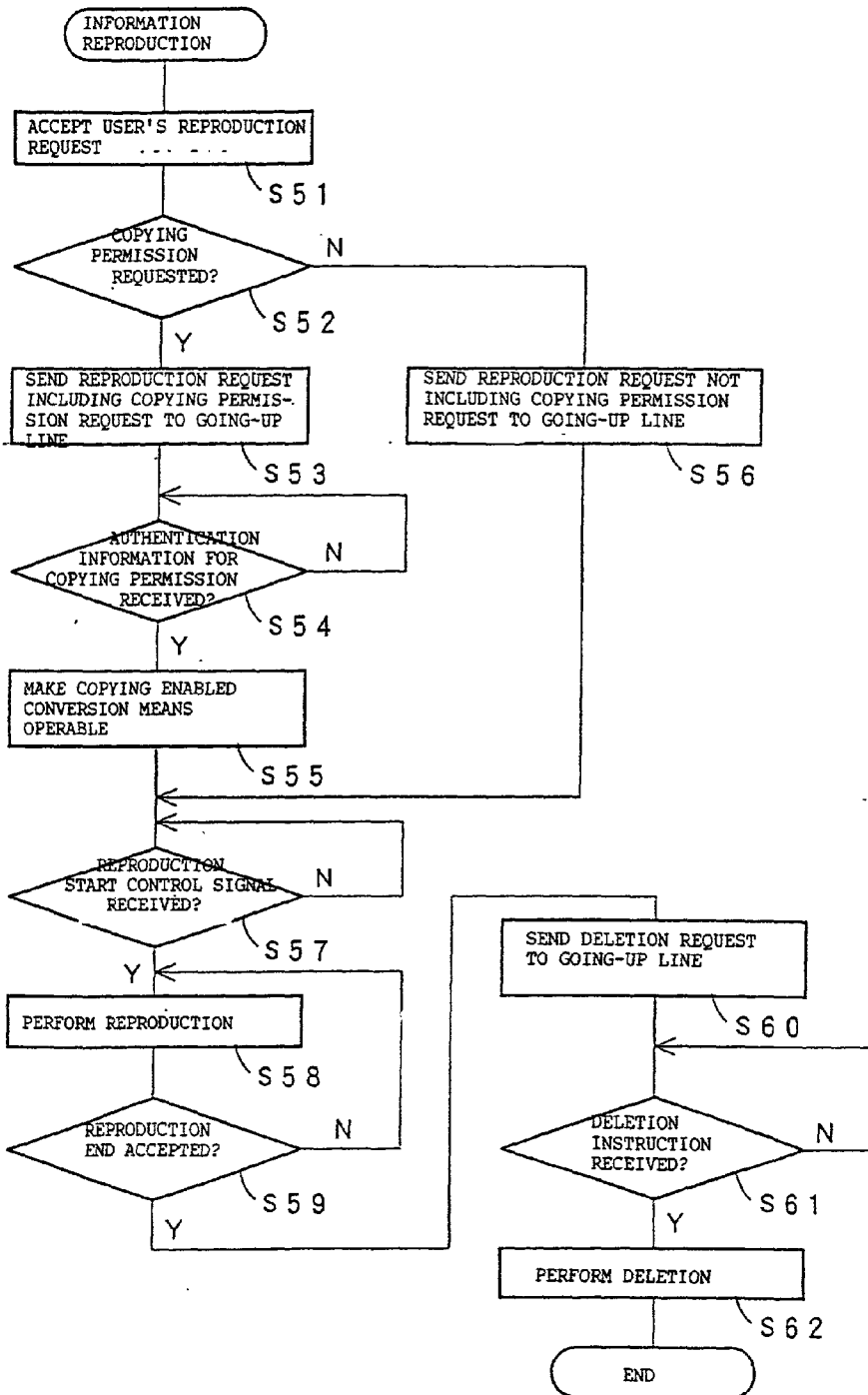


FIG. 19

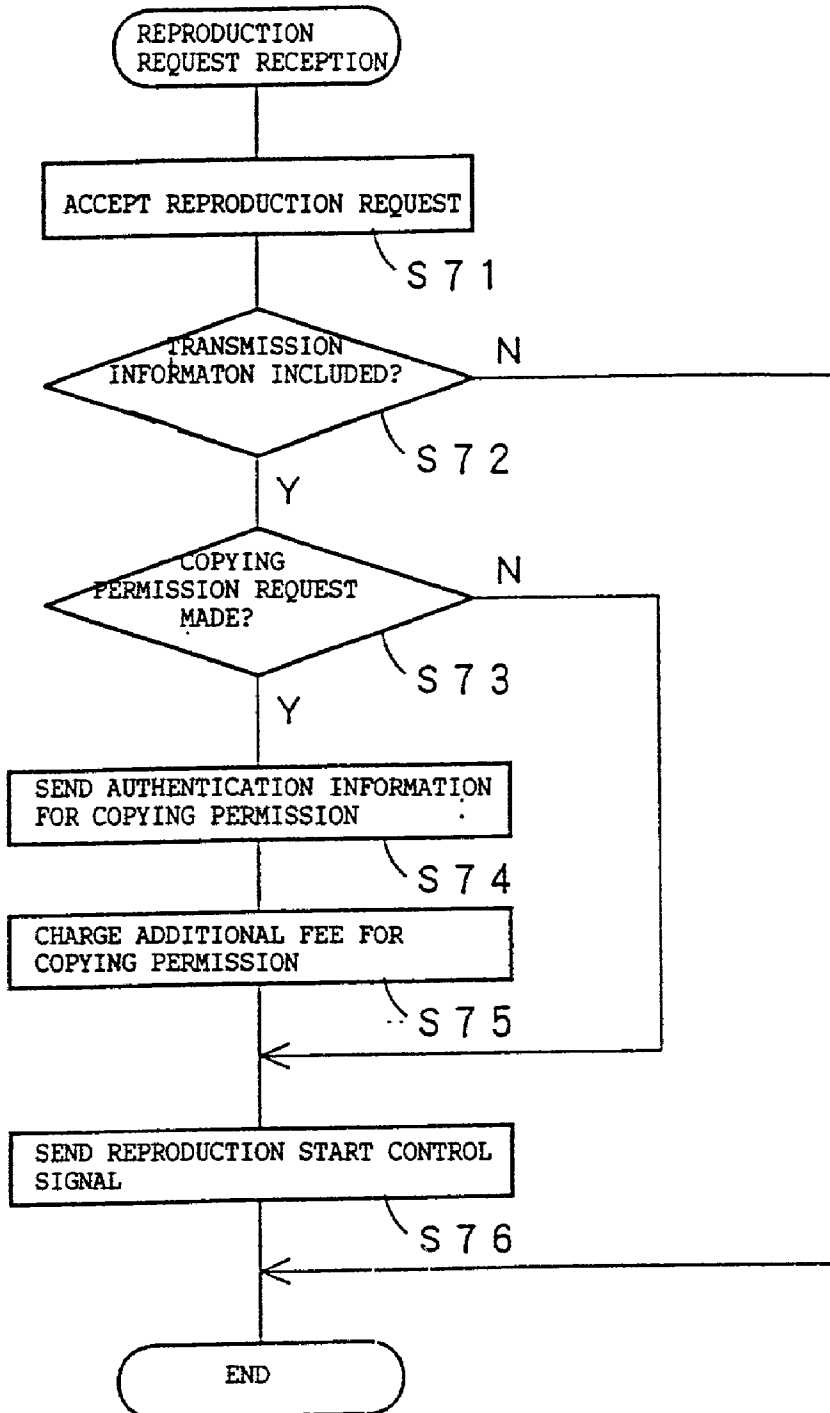


FIG. 20

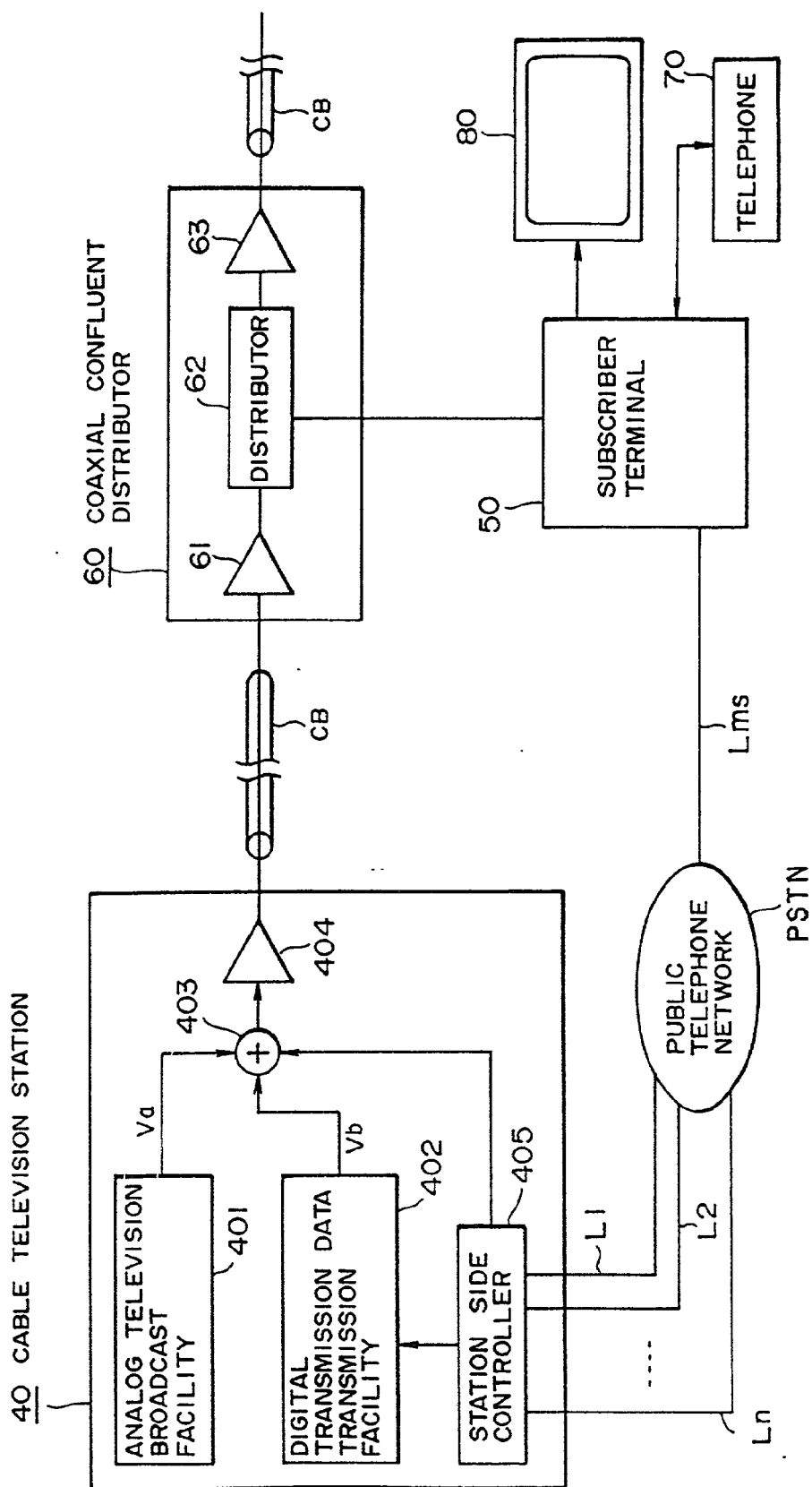


FIG. 21

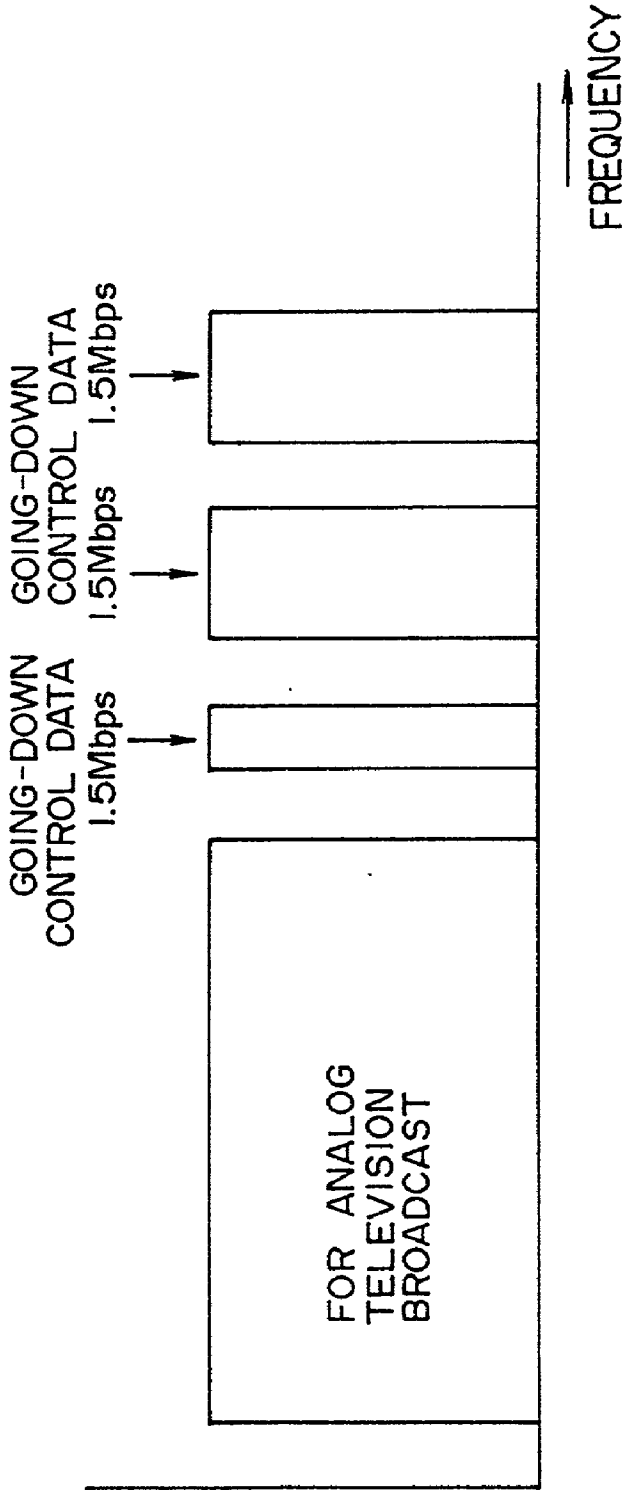


FIG. 22

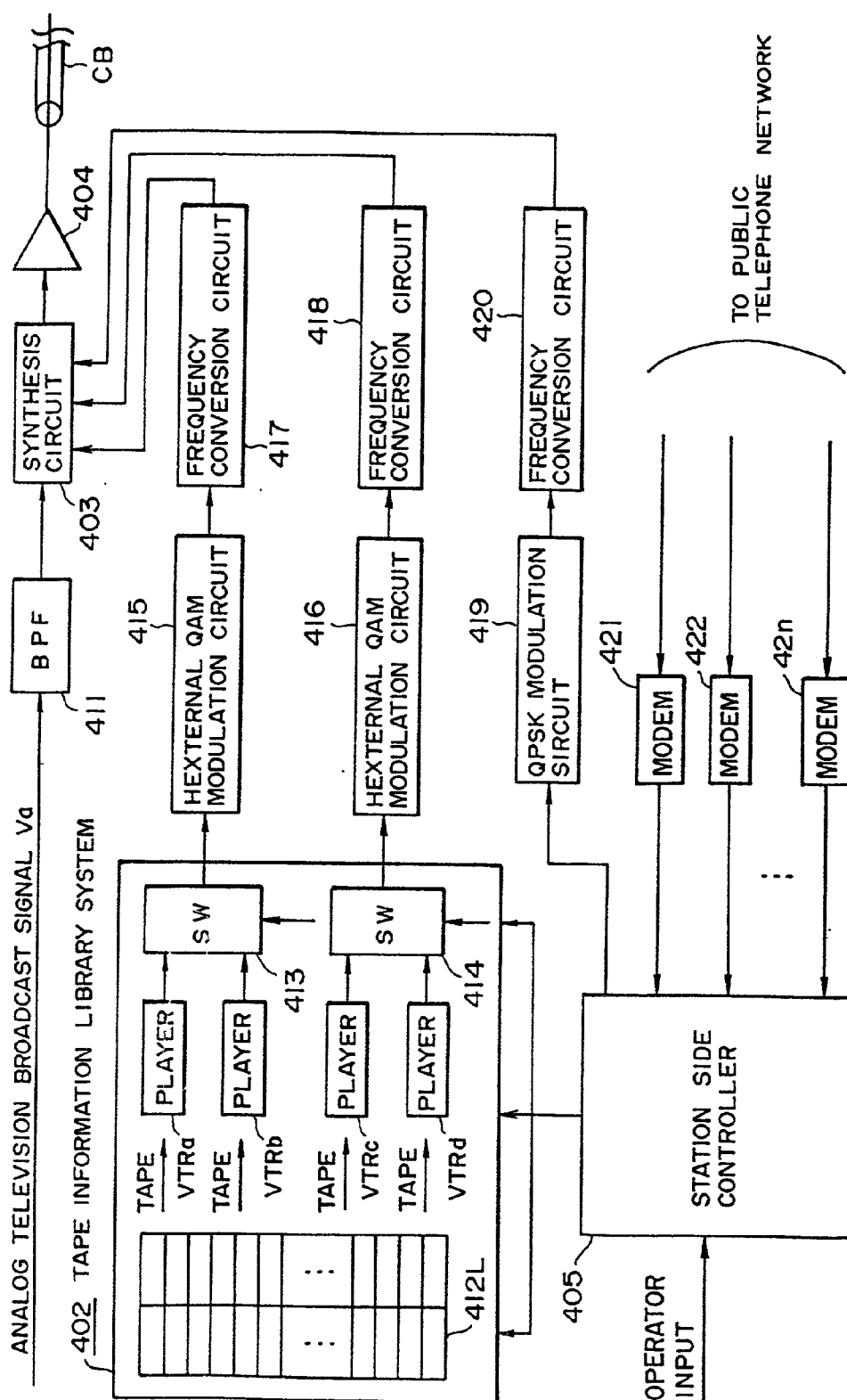
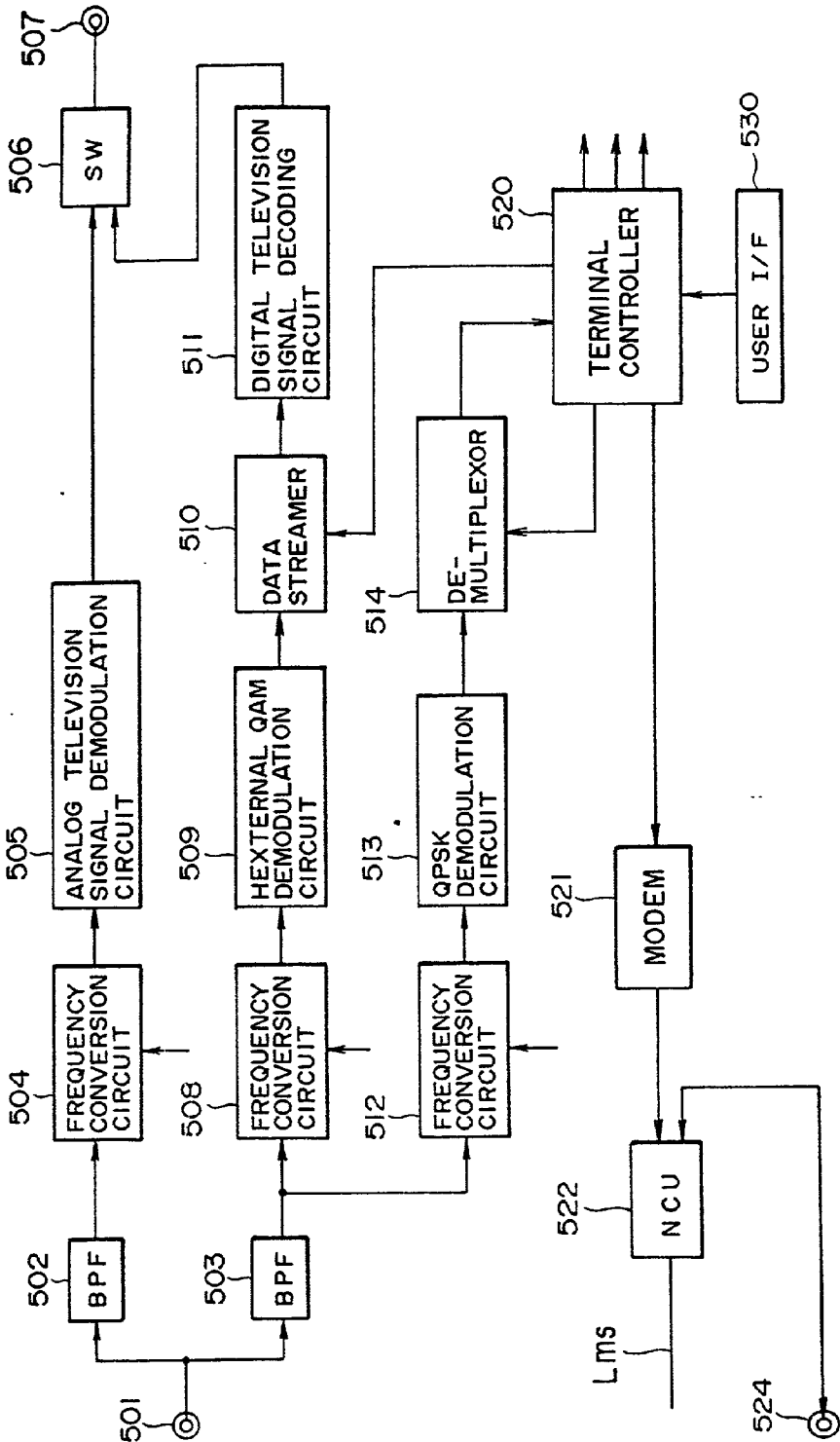


FIG. 23





## TWO-WAY INFORMATION TRANSMISSION SYSTEM, TWO-WAY INFORMATION TRANSMISSION METHOD, AND SUBSCRIBER TERMINAL

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### [0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] This invention relates to a two-way information transmission system such as video on-demand system and information on-demand system using a communication network such as cable television network.

#### [0003] 2. Description of Related Art

[0004] Not only usual analog broadcasting service but also video on-demand, home shopping, and television game service utilizing a two-way cable television network have been recently planned.

[0005] One method for realizing such services is a method in which a digital information transmission band is provided, for example, in the transmission band of the television network separately from the band for analog broadcasting service. In detail, for example in the case of video on-demand system, a user transmits a demand signal (transmission request signal) of the video on-demand to a cable television station where a video program storing sending system called video server is installed using a portion of the digital information transmission band. Upon receiving the demand signal from the user, the cable television station takes out the program requested by the user from the video server, and provides it to the requesting user in real-time using a band other than that for the above-mentioned demand signal in the above-mentioned digital information transmission band.

[0006] One of such video on-demand systems is introduced in a journal "Nikkei Electronics" issued May 23, 1994 on pages 82 to 89.

[0007] This example involves a hybrid network system comprising combined optical fiber and coaxial cable, the optical fiber connects from the cable television station to an optical fiber node, the optical fiber node performs photoelectric conversion, and the coaxial cable connects from the optical fiber node to a subscriber terminal called as set top box installed in the user home. Assuming that 16 optical fiber nodes are provided and the maximum number of subscribers connectable to a coaxial cable is 500, then one cable television station can supply to 8000 subscribers.

[0008] In assignment of transmission band of the cable television, this video on-demand system assigns the band range from 50 MHz to 723 MHz to a transmission band for going-down from the cable television station to a subscriber terminal of a subscriber, and the band range from 900 MHz to 1 GHz to a transmission band for going-up from a subscriber terminal to the cable television station, further, a transmission band between 50 MHz to 450 MHz out of the going-down transmission band is used for the existing analog broadcasting service and a transmission band between 500 MHz to 708 MHz is used for digital transmission band and the residual transmission band ranging from 450 MHz to 500 MHz is spare as shown in FIG. 1.

[0009] At most 15 digital transmission channels with a band width of 12 MHz can be provided in the digital

information transmission band ranging from 500 MHz to 708 MHz. Assuming that the transmission speed per one channel is 45 M bits/sec and, for example, the coding speed of video data is 4 M bits/sec, video data can be supplied to about 10 subscribers by way of a channel with the transmission speed of 45 M bits/sec in real-time.

[0010] Assuming that the proportion of requesting subscribers for demand to 500 subscribers is 25% in the busy time called as prime time, it is required to supply to 125 subscribers, and one channel can supply to 10 subscribers, therefore 15 channels can supply to 150 subscribers and thus the requirement is satisfied.

[0011] In the case of this example, the control channel is assigned near the frequency of 500 MHz, and the going-down channel to be used for supplying a video program data desired by a user through demand is informed to the set top box using this control channel. The set top box fetches only a desired going-down data in the cable television station based on the data of the control channel, and functions to display it on a television. The transmission speed of the control channel is 1.5 Mbits/sec, and 45 channels and 1 channel are for going-up and for going-down respectively.

[0012] FIG. 2 shows how the transmission capacity of going-down line is allocated to respective subscribers, the left half of the figure shows so-called prime time and the right half shows the midnight time zone.

[0013] In FIG. 2, the top half shows the transmission channels for analog television broadcasting service, each long rectangle represents one analog television program PGa. In this case, 50 channels of analog television broadcasting service are possible to be transmitted if one channel has a band width of 6 MHz. Each subscriber can select and view a desired program from programs being broadcasted by way of analog channels any time.

[0014] The bottom half of FIG. 2 shows the digital information channels for video on-demand, an arrow Tdm represents a demand generating time point from a user, and a long rectangle represents a one digital video program PGd. In response to a demand from a user, one channel is occupied by the user for a time of the service.

[0015] Since charging always for real-time transmission is generally performed in case of video on-demand, the charged rate does not vary according to time zones, but is often constant. As shown in FIG. 2, therefore in prime time, the audience rating of analog broadcast programs is high and also many demands for digital video programs are generated. On the other hand, late at night, the audience rating of analog TV broadcast programs is low and few demands for digital video programs are generated.

[0016] As described hereinbefore, in the conventional video on-demand system, video programs are supplied in real-time to all the demands. Therefore, in the time zone like so-called prime time when many demands are requested from subscribers, many programs should be transmitted at a time as shown in the left side of FIG. 2.

[0017] For construction of a video on-demand system, the network capacity and transmission system are deployed so that programs are supplied to subscriber homes as soon as possible in real-time in the busiest time zone when many demands are requested.

[0018] To cope with such situation, the conventional system is involved in a problem that ① the network capacity should be large, and ② the scale of video server should be large in order to supply many programs simultaneously (for example, assuming the number of subscribers is 8000 and 25% of these subscribers request their demand in prime time, the simultaneous transmission stream are 2000 streams). The capacity investment for enlargement of an existing facility is required, and an expensive large scale video server should be introduced. Unless a program transmission fee is specified to be high, these expenditure can render the business substantially unprofitable.

[0019] As described herein above, many demands are generated very frequently in prime time, on the other hand, a few demand is generated sporadically in the time zone of early morning and midnight, the problem is inefficient use of the network facility having a large capacity deployed so as to match with busy demand in prime time, the capacity utilization ratio is low.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] It is an object of the present invention to provide a two-way information transmission system capable of solving the above-mentioned problem especially in consideration of a charging method.

[0021] A two-way information transmission system comprising an information distribution transmission center and a plurality of subscriber terminals connected to an information distribution transmission center through going-up lines and going-down lines, the subscriber terminal requesting an information to the information distribution transmission center through the going-up line, and the information distribution transmission center transmitting the requested information in response to the request for the transmission;

[0022] the information distribution transmission center having;

[0023] transmission planning means for planning a transmission plan to transmit the information based on an information distribution transmission request from the subscriber terminal,

[0024] transmission implementation means for implementing the transmission of the requested information based on the transmission plan planned by the transmission planning means, and

[0025] going-down control data sending means for sending a going-down control data including an information involving the transmission implementation plan planned by the transmission implementation means to the subscriber terminal before the transmission implementation means implements the transmission; and

[0026] the subscriber terminal having:

[0027] transmission plan receiving analysis means for being informed of the transmission plan based on the going-down control data sent from the information distribution transmission center,

[0028] distribution transmission request sending means for sending the information distribution

transmission request including at least information for identifying the demand subscriber terminal and information for identifying the requested information, and also including a request for information transmission shared with the information when the received information transmission plan contains own desired information.

[0029] Further, the information distribution transmission center charges the lower fee for the share transmission request than the fee for usual transmission.

[0030] In the two-way information transmission system of the present invention with the above configuration, the information distribution transmission center makes the transmission plan based on the transmission request made by the subscriber terminal and sends the information specified as the going-down control data to the subscriber terminal. The subscriber terminal can issue a share transmission request included in the transmission information when there is a desired program to be transmitted in the obtained transmission plan.

[0031] The information distribution transmission center transmits information to the subscriber terminals according to the transmission plan behind the time when the subscribers terminal make the transmission requests. In this case, the center implements information transmission to all the subscriber terminals who made the share transmission requests when the subscriber terminals make share transmission requests of information to be transmitted. The center can therefore implement information transmission at a time in response to a plurality of information transmission requests, thus enabling traffic reduction. Since the lower fee is charged for a subscriber terminal which makes a share transmission request than the fee for usual transmission, more share transmission requests are expected, and transmission capacity can be used effectively.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0032] FIG. 1 is a diagram for describing an example of transmission frequency band assignment in a two-way information transmission system.

[0033] FIG. 2 is a diagram for illustrating the use of going-down information transmission channels in the conventional video on-demand system.

[0034] FIG. 3 is a diagram for illustrating an example of a network structure of one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0035] FIG. 4 is a diagram for illustrating an example of a cable television station structure as an information transmission center in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0036] FIG. 5 is a block diagram for illustrating a partial structure of the cable television station facility shown in FIG. 4.

[0037] FIG. 6 is a block diagram for illustrating an interchanging equipment in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0038] FIG. 7 is a block diagram for illustrating an interchanging equipment in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0039] FIG. 8 is a block diagram for illustrating a structural example of a subscriber terminal in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0040] FIG. 9 is a block diagram for illustrating a partial structure of the subscriber terminal shown in FIG. 8.

[0041] FIG. 10 is a functional block diagram of a selected portion for illustrating one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0042] FIG. 11 shows an example of the list of programs to be transmitted.

[0043] FIG. 12 shows an example of the table of charges for transmission in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system of the present invention.

[0044] FIG. 13 is a diagram for illustrating the use of the going-down transmission channels in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0045] FIG. 14 is a flowchart for describing an example of demand transmission processing from a subscriber terminal in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0046] FIG. 15 shows an example of part of the input screen on demand in one embodiment of the present invention.

[0047] FIG. 16 is a flowchart for describing an example of demand receiving processing in a cable television station in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0048] FIG. 17 is a flowchart for describing an example of receiving processing of going-down digital transmission data at a subscriber terminal in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0049] FIG. 18 is a flowchart for describing an example of information reading (reproduction) processing at a subscriber terminal in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0050] FIG. 19 is a flowchart for describing an example of reproduction request receiving processing in a cable television station in one embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0051] FIG. 20 is a diagram for describing an example of the network structure in another embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0052] FIG. 21 is a diagram for describing an example of transmission frequency band assignment in another embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0053] FIG. 22 is a block diagram for illustrating a structural example of a cable television station in another embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

[0054] FIG. 23 is a block diagram for illustrating structural example of a subscriber terminal in another embodiment of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0055] Embodiments of the two-way information transmission system in accordance with the present invention will be described in detail referring to the drawings for the example of video on-demand system. The direction from a subscriber to a cable television station is referred to as going-up, and the inverse direction is referred to as going-down in the description hereinafter.

[0056] FIG. 3 shows the outline of a network structure used for realizing a video on-demand of an embodiment of the two-way information transmission system. This example has the same structure as that of the two-way cable television system described in the chapter of related art.

[0057] The cable television station HE called head end provides analog television broadcast programs always during the broadcasting time zone and also video programs in response to the demand from subscribers and other programs.

[0058] The cable television station HE can cover, for example, 8000 subscribers as described herein above, 8000 subscribers are divided into 16 sections and each section covers 500 subscribers MS. One interchange equipment IM called as optical fiber node (referred to as optical fiber node IM hereinafter) is installed for each section. An optical fiber node IM performs mutual conversion between optical signal and electric signal.

[0059] In the case of this embodiment, an optical fiber cable FB connects between each section and the television station HE in order to transmit a signal without degrading in quality across a long distance. In each section, one coaxial cable CB is connected to an optical fiber node IM, and each subscriber MS is connected to the coaxial cable through a coaxial confluent distributor MPX. At most 500 subscribers MS are connectable to one coaxial cable CB as described hereinbefore.

[0060] The cable television station HE has information sources including video server, and is connected to an optical fiber trunk SHW in order to fetch digital information from the optical fiber trunk SHW and provide it to the subscribers in addition to digital data from the digital information source of the cable television station HE itself. Further, a parabola antenna AT is provided for receiving satellite broadcast, and received television broadcast is supplied to respective subscribers as analog television broadcast.

[0061] FIG. 4 shows an example of facility components of the cable television station HE, and in this example, the facility comprises the above-mentioned analog television broadcasting facility not shown in FIG. 4, for example video server 21 and tape information library system 22 as a digital

information source equipment, high speed ATM (non-synchronous transfer mode) exchanger **23**, HE controller **24** for controlling the whole system of the cable television station HE, and 16 node controllers **25a** to **25p** provided between 16 respective optical fiber cables FB and ATM exchangers.

[0062] In this example, the video server **21** obtains, for example, 400 streams as a bit stream of simultaneous transmission video signal. The coding rate of each bit stream data is, for example, 4 Mbits/sec, and, for example, MPEG is used as a data compression system. In this case, two video servers may be provided as the video server **21** if, for example, simultaneous transmission stream quantity is 200 streams. Data VA of each video stream from the video server **21** is supplied to ATM exchanger **23**.

[0063] The tape information library system **22** is provided with a multi-shelf container rack **22L** in which many video tapes are placed on respectively specified positions, a plurality of video tape players VTR1 to VTRn, and a retrieving transferring mechanism (not shown in the figure) which is successively operated for retrieving in the horizontal and vertical direction to find out the position of a requested video tape in the container rack **22L**, for fetching the video tape, setting the video tape into any one of video tape players VTR1 to VTRn to playback the video tape, such tape information library system **22** is so-called as cart machine. In this example, 160 video tape players are deployed. Therefore, the number of bit streams of the simultaneous transmission video signal is 160.

[0064] Data VB of the digital video data stream of respective video tape players VTR1 to VTRn has a transmission rate of, for example, 45 M bits/sec. The data VB is supplied to the ATM exchanger **23**.

[0065] The tape information library system **22** provides programs more and easier than the video server **21**.

[0066] The HE controller **24** controls the whole cable television station HE including the control of the video server **21**, control of the tape information library system **22**, and control of the ATM exchanger **23**, generates a going-down control data DM to be transmitted to a subscriber and supplies it to the ATM exchanger **23** in response to an operation input from an operator to the HE controller **24** and a going-up control data UM (data such as a demand signal of the video on-demand) from a subscriber terminal supplied through the ATM exchanger **23**.

[0067] Also digital data VC obtained from the optical fiber trunk SHW is supplied to the ATM exchanger **23**.

[0068] The ATM exchanger **23** exchanges the above-mentioned digital data VA, VB, and VC, and going-down control data DM and divides or gathers them to generate information necessary for respective transmission sections. The ATM exchanger **23** also transfers a going-up control data UM from a subscriber terminal to the HE controller **24**.

[0069] Respective 16 node controllers **25a** to **25p** receive the analog television broadcast signal AV and going-down information from the ATM exchanger **23**, and converts them to a signal having the frequency band previously assigned and converts an electric signal to light signal, and send it to the optical fiber FB as described in FIG. 1. The respective 16 node controllers **25a** to **25p** convert a going-up control data UM from a light signal to electric signal, and transfer it to the ATM exchanger **23**.

[0070] Every node controllers **25a** to **25p** have the same structure. FIG. 5 is a block diagram for illustrating the structure of one node controller out of the node controllers **25a** to **25p**. The optical fiber FB comprises three optical fibers fb1, fb2, and fb3.

[0071] The analog television information AV is supplied to a band pass filter **102** through an input terminal **101**, and converted to information having a frequency band of 50 MHz to 450 MHz, and supplied to the electric-to-light converter **103**.

[0072] The analog television information Av is supplied to the band pass filter **102**, converted to an information having a frequency of 50 MHz to 450 MHz, and supplied to the electric-to-light converter **103**. The electric-to-light converter **103** converts it to a light signal and sends it to the optical fiber fb1.

[0073] In this example, as shown in the above-mentioned FIG. 1, 15 channels are allocated for the going-down digital transmission data of 45 M bits/sec per one channel. Therefore, the node controller has 15 digital transmission data input terminals **104<sub>1</sub>** to **104<sub>15</sub>**. The ATM exchanger **23** switches directly the digital data such as video stream from the tape information library system **22** to any one of 15 input terminals **104<sub>1</sub>** to **104<sub>15</sub>** of a node controller corresponding to the section of the addressee subscriber.

[0074] The ATM exchanger **23** switches a digital data of 4 M bits/sec bit stream from the video server **21** in a manner that at most 10 streams are multiplexed and allocated to one channel.

[0075] Respective 45 M bits/sec digital data transmitted through the input terminals **1041** to **10415** are supplied to hexternal QAM (Quadrature Amplitude Modulation) modulation circuits **105<sub>1</sub>** to **105<sub>15</sub>** respectively and modulated. The output data from the hexternal QAM modulation circuits **105<sub>1</sub>** to **105<sub>15</sub>** are converted by the frequency conversion circuits **106<sub>1</sub>** to **106<sub>15</sub>** respectively to signals of 15 channels which are signals of 15 frequency bands with no superposing each other in the frequency band ranging from 500 MHz to 708 MHz as shown in FIG. 1. The output data from the frequency conversion circuits **106<sub>1</sub>** to **106<sub>15</sub>** are supplied to the adding circuit **107** and the frequency of the data is converted.

[0076] A node controller has an input terminal **110** for receiving 1.5 M bits/sec going-down control data DM of one channel. The control data DM which passed through the input terminal **110** is supplied to QPSK (Quadrature Phase Shift Keying) modulation circuit **112** through the multiplexing circuit **111**, and subjected to QPSK modulation, and then supplied to a frequency conversion circuit **113** and converted to a signal of the going-down control channel near 500 MHz shown in FIG. 1. Subsequently, the signal is supplied to the adding circuit **107** and subjected to frequency multiplexing.

[0077] The frequency multiplexed data from the adding circuit **107** is supplied to the band pass filter **108** and subjected to band restriction to a signal in a frequency band ranging from 500 MHz to 708 MHz, and supplied to the electric-to-light converter **109**. The electric-to-light converter **109** converts it to a light signal, and sends it to the optical fiber fb2 as a digital transmission data.

[0078] The optical fiber fb3 is used for the going-up control channel, a going-up control signal such as a demand

of a subscriber which is QPSK modulated and includes 45 channels by frequency multiplexing is supplied to a light-to-electric converter **121** through the optical fiber fb3, and the signal is converted from a light signal to an electric signal. The output signal from the light-to-electric converter **121** is supplied to a band pass filter **122** and subjected to the band restriction, and then only the going-up control data having a frequency band ranging from 900 MHz to 972 MHz is fetched.

[0079] The control data from the band pass filter is supplied to 45 frequency conversion circuits **123<sub>1</sub>** to **123<sub>45</sub>** corresponding to frequency bands of 45 channels and subjected to frequency conversion, the frequency converted data are processed as modulation data for respective channels. The modulation data for each channel from the frequency conversion circuits **123<sub>1</sub>** to **123<sub>45</sub>** is demodulated in a QPSK demodulation circuit **124<sub>1</sub>** to **124<sub>45</sub>** to a control data of 1.5 M bits/sec. The control data is subjected to time slicing multiplexing in the multiplexing circuit **111**, and it is sent to the ATM exchanger **23** through an output terminal **125** as a going-up control data UM.

[0080] Next, the structure of the optical fiber node IM is described. FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an example of an optical fiber node.

[0081] A light-to-electric converter **201** receives an analog television signal through the optical fiber fb1 for the analog television broadcast line and converts it to an electric signal, thereafter supplies it to a band pass filter **202**. The band pass filter **202** fetches only an analog television signal in a frequency band ranging from 50 MHz to 450 MHz from the input signal, and supplies it to an adding circuit **203**.

[0082] A light-to-electric converter **204** receives a going-down digital transmission data of 15 channels through the optical fiber fb2 and converts it to an electric signal, and supplies it to a band pass filter **205**. The band pass filter **205** fetches only a digital transmission data in a frequency band ranging from 500 MHz to 708 MHz from the input data, and supplies it to the adding circuit **203**.

[0083] The adding circuit **203** adds the analog television broadcast signal and digital transmission data for frequency multiplexing, and supplies the frequency multiplexed signal to a band pass filter **207** through an amplifier **206**. The band pass filter **207** performs band restriction within 50 MHz to 708 MHz frequency band on the input signal, and thereafter sends the frequency multiplexed signal to the coaxial cable CB.

[0084] A data sent from a subscriber terminal through the coaxial cable CB is supplied to a band pass filter **208**. The band pass filter **208** performs band restriction within 900 MHz to 972 MHz on the input data and fetches a going-up control data, and supplies it to an electric-to-light converter **210** through an amplifier **209**. The electric-to-light converter **210** converts the going-up control data to a light signal and sends it to the optical fiber fb3.

[0085] Next, a structural example of a coaxial confluent distributor MPX is described referring to FIG. 7. In detail, a going-down line data from the coaxial cable CB of the optical fiber node IM side is supplied to a band pass filter **211**. The band pass filter **211** performs band restriction on the input signal within a band ranging from 50 MHz to 708 MHz, and supplies it to a distributor **212**.

[0086] The distributor **212** supplies the going-down line data to a subscriber terminal connected to the coaxial confluent distributor MPX. Also, the distributor **212** supplies the going-down line data to a band pass filter **214** through an amplifier **213**. The band pass filter **214** performs band restriction on the going-down line data for down-stream subscribers within a frequency band ranging from 50 MHz to 708 MHz, and sends it to the down-stream side coaxial cable CB.

[0087] A data from the down-stream side coaxial cable CB is supplied to a band pass filter **215**. The band pass filter **215** performs band restriction on the input data within a frequency band ranging from 900 MHz to 972 MHz to allow the going-up control data to pass, and supplies it to a synthesis circuit **216**. The synthesis circuit **216** adds the going-up control data from down-stream subscribers and the going-up control data from the subscriber connected to the coaxial confluent distributor MPX, and supplies the synthesized data to a band pass filter **218** through an amplifier **217**. The band pass filter **218** performs band restriction on the input data within a frequency band ranging from 900 MHz to 972 MHz and sends it to the up-stream coaxial cable CB.

[0088] The frequency band for control data of respective subscribers is previously assigned so as not to overlap each other in one section.

[0089] Next, a structural example of a subscriber terminal ms provided in a subscriber's house MS is described referring to FIG. 8 and FIG. 9.

[0090] In detail, a going-down channel data from the coaxial confluent distributor MPX is fed to an input terminal **301**. A going-up control data is sent from an output terminal **302** to the coaxial confluent distributor MPX. The coaxial input terminal **301** and coaxial output terminal **302** are connected to a demodulation/modulation unit.

[0091] The demodulation/modulation unit **303** has the structure shown in FIG. 9. In detail, a going-down line data from the coaxial input terminal is supplied to a band pass filter **304**. The band pass filter **304** extracts an analog television broadcast signal in a frequency band ranging from 50 MHz to 450 MHz and supplies it to a frequency conversion circuit **305**.

[0092] The frequency conversion circuit **305**, which corresponds to a mixer circuit of a tuner, converts a signal of the broadcast program (broadcast channel) selected by a user out of received analog television broadcast signals to a signal having a frequency which can be demodulated by a subsequent analog television demodulation circuit **306** in response to a channel select control signal corresponding to a channel select operation of the user supplied from a terminal controller **320** described hereinafter, and supplies it to an analog television demodulation circuit **306**. The demodulation circuit **306** supplies the demodulated television signal to a television through a switch circuit **315** and video output terminal **316** shown in FIG. 8.

[0093] Further, a going-down line data from the coaxial input terminal **301** is supplied to a band pass filter **307**. The band pass filter **307** extracts a going-down digital data having a frequency in the band ranging from 500 MHz to 708 MHz and supplies it to a frequency conversion circuit **308** and frequency conversion circuit **309**.

[0094] The frequency conversion circuit **308** converts only the signal of the channel to which a video program delivered in response to the demand from the demand subscriber terminal based on a channel select control signal from the terminal controller **320** to a prescribed frequency which can be demodulated. A digital transmission data such as a video program data addressed to the demand subscriber terminal from the frequency conversion circuit **308** is supplied to a hexternal QAM demodulation circuit **310** and demodulated. The 45 M bits/sec digital data from the demodulation circuit **310** is supplied to the de-multiplexing circuit **317**.

[0095] The frequency conversion circuit **309** frequency-converts the frequency of a control channel data assigned previously to the demand subscriber terminal to a frequency which can be demodulated based on a channel select control signal from the terminal controller **320**. The going-down control data from the frequency conversion circuit **309** is supplied to a QPSK demodulation circuit **311** and demodulated. The 1.5 M bits/sec control data from the demodulation circuit **311** is supplied to the de-multiplexing circuit **317**.

[0096] A QPSK modulation circuit **312** of the demodulation/modulation unit **303** receives a going-up control data, which will be described hereinafter, through the de-multiplexing circuit **317**, and modulates it, and supplies it to a frequency conversion circuit **313**. The frequency conversion circuit **313** frequency-converts the frequency of the input signal to a frequency of the control channel assigned to the demand subscriber terminal in a frequency band ranging from 900 MHz to 972 MHz. The going-up control data from the frequency conversion circuit **313** is sent to the coaxial cable CB through a band pass filter **314** for band restriction in 900 MHz to 972 MHz and through the output terminal **302**.

[0097] The de-multiplexing circuit **317** extracts a 4 M bits/sec digital transmission data addressed to the demand subscriber terminal from a 45 M bits/sec output data supplied from the hexternal QAM demodulation circuit **310** based on the control signal from the terminal controller **320** if the digital transmission data is a 4 M bits/sec immediate real-time transmission data, and supplies it to a digital television signal decoding circuit **319** through a switch circuit **318**.

[0098] The switch circuit **318** receives a switching control signal from the terminal controller **320**, selects digital data from the de-multiplexing circuit **317** during real-time transmission, and selects the read data as an output and supplies the data to the digital television signal decoding circuit **319** when data is read from the temporary memory means **330** in response to a reading request inputted by the user.

[0099] The digital television signal decoding circuit **319** decodes the digital data and converts it to an analog television signal, and supplies the analog television signal to a television through the switch circuit **315** and video output terminal **316**.

[0100] In the embodiment, the digital television signal decoding circuit **319** is provided with the circuit section for removing copying prohibiting processing of the information to be transmitted for which copying prohibiting processing is specified to enable the copying of the information transmitted in real time or the information stored in the temporary

memory means **330**, as described later, when the user makes a request for removing copying prohibiting processing of the information.

[0101] The control signal for removing the copying prohibiting processing is sent from the cable television station through the going-down control line. Then, the terminal controller **320** receives the control signal for removing the copying prohibiting processing and transfers the control signal to the digital television signal decoding circuit **319** to make the circuit **319** remove the copying prohibition processing. In this case, processing applied to recording information of a currently available video cassette tape is used as the copying prohibiting processing.

[0102] The de-multiplexing circuit **317** sends the digital transmission data which is to be transmitted to the demand subscriber terminal to the temporary memory means **330** and stores it temporarily in the case that the digital transmission data is a delaying transmission data referring to a control data from the terminal controller **320**. In this case, the delaying transmission data may be 4 M bits/sec rate or 45 M bits/sec rate as described hereinafter.

[0103] A semiconductor memory **331** which is a data memory device having a large capacity (about 1 G bits) and high speed transmission rate, hard disk device **332** (about 10 G bits), or data streamer **333** (about 200 G bits) is used as the temporary memory means **330**. The temporary memory means **330** has such a mechanism that the memory medium such as a semiconductor memory, disk, or tape cannot directly be removed from the outside, that is, from the inside of the body of the subscriber terminal. In other words, for example, the whole of the temporary memory means **330** is contained in a shielded cabinet. Or, devices **331**, **332**, and **333** are contained respectively in different cabinets and so structured that each memory medium cannot be removed.

[0104] In the embodiment, the user cannot issue a write (record) instruction and a read (reproduce) instruction to respective devices **331** to **333** of the temporary memory means **330** directly via the interface **321**, but such instructions can be issued under the control from the cable television station.

[0105] According to a storing instruction issued from the cable television station through the terminal controller **320**, the digital transmission data from the de-multiplexing circuit **317** is therefore stored in the temporary memory means **330**, while, according to a reading instruction issued from the cable television station through the terminal controller **320**, the stored data is read, and the read data is supplied to the digital television signal decoding circuit **319** through the switch circuit **318**.

[0106] In this case, as described hereinafter, the terminal controller **320** determines which memory means is to be selected among the plurality of memory means of the temporary memory means **330** as the memory for storing the going-down digital data dependently on the random access potential and transmission format (such as data transmission rate) of the digital data to be stored which are specified by the going-down control data or determined by the demand sent by the demand subscriber terminal.

[0107] For example, if the data transmission rate is 4 M bits/sec and the data has a low random access potential such

as usual video program, then the data is stored in the data streamer device **333** which uses tapes as the recording medium, on the other hand, if the data has high random access potential such as stock market information, then the data is stored in the hard disk device **332**, and if the data is a transmission data with a data transmission rate of 45 M bits/sec, then the data is written in the semiconductor memory **331** capable of high speed writing, as described herein, the memory means in which a data is to be stored is controlled and selected.

[0108] The de-multiplexing circuit **317** supplies a going-down control data from the QPSK demodulation circuit **311** to the terminal controller **320** by controlling the terminal controller **320**.

[0109] The terminal controller **320** analyzes the going-down control data fed to the terminal controller **320** through the de-multiplexing circuit **317**, and if the control data is addressed to the demand subscriber terminal, the terminal controller **320** generates various control signals as described herein above based on the control data. For example, the terminal controller **320** acquires various information that when the video data demanded by the demand subscriber terminal will be transmitted by way of what channel out of 15 going-down channels in what transmission format, from the received going-down control data, and prepares for receiving. The channel select control signal to the frequency conversion circuit **308**, the control signal for multiplexing to the multiplexing circuit **317**, and the select control signal for selecting a memory device in the temporary memory device **330** which are described herein above are generated from this going-down control data.

[0110] Further, the terminal controller **320** receives an operational input by a user through a user interface **321** comprising a remote control device and key operation board, generates a going-up control data, namely demand signal of video on-demand, and supplies it to the de-multiplexing circuit **317**. The terminal controller **320** controls the whole subscriber terminal ms.

[0111] A going-up control data such as video program demand sent from the terminal controller **320** to the de-multiplexing circuit **317** is supplied successively to the QPSK modulation circuit **312** of the demodulation/modulation unit **303**, frequency conversion circuit **313**, and band pass filter **314**, modulated as described hereinbefore, frequency-converted to a signal of the control channel assigned to the demand subscriber terminal, and sent to the cable television station HE.

[0112] The de-multiplexing circuit **317** is connected to CATV telephone terminal (not shown in the figure) through the terminal **341** and **342**, subscribers can communicate with operators of the cable television station HE.

[0113] The information transmission mechanism and transmission of a signal in the two-way CATV system having the system structure as described above are described hereinafter.

[0114] <Analog Television Broadcast>

[0115] Analog television broadcast is transmitted from the cable television station HE to subscriber terminals ms by way of one-way transmission as usual without demand from subscribers.

[0116] When a user wants to view an analog television broadcast from the cable television station HE, the user operates channel select operation for selecting an analog television broadcast of the cable television station HE through the user interface **321** of the subscriber terminal ms. Then, the terminal controller **320** of the subscriber terminal ms supplies a channel select signal corresponding to the channel select operation of the user to the frequency conversion circuit **305** of the demodulation/modulation unit **303**, and the switch circuit **315** is switched to the mode for selecting an analog television signal from the analog television demodulation circuit **306** of the demodulation/modulation unit **303**, and thereby an analog television signal is supplied from the video output terminal **316** to a television. Thus the subscriber can view an analog television broadcast program selected by the user from the cable television station.

[0117] <Digital Information Transmission>

[0118] FIG. 10 is a block diagram for describing mainly functions which are performed at the HE controller **24** of the cable television station HE and the terminal controller **320** of a subscriber terminal ms to transmit digital information in the system of the above-mentioned embodiment in which the cable television station HE and subscriber terminals ms are connected through the going-up and going-down lines comprising optical fiber and coaxial cable.

[0119] As shown in FIG. 10, the cable television station HE provided as an information distribution transmission center is connected to a plurality of subscriber terminals ms through the going-up line Cu which is the line for transmission toward the cable television station and the going-down line Cd. As described above, the going-down line contains a line for program information to be transmitted and a line for the going-down control data.

[0120] The cable television station HE functionally comprises digital information source **1**, going-down information signal generator **2**, information transmission control means **3**, transmission planning means **4**, demand receiving analysis means **5**, control information generating means **6**, charging means **7**, and authentication information and charging information database **8**.

[0121] The digital information source **1** includes video server **21**, tape information library device **22**, and so on. The going-down information signal generator **2** comprises an ATM exchanger **23** and node controllers **25a** to **25p**.

[0122] The demand receiving analysis means **5** receives and analyzes the contents of the demand from a subscriber terminal ms and passes the analyzed contents to the information transmission control means **3** and the transmission planning means **4**. The transmission planning means **4** make a transmission plan according to the results of the demand analysis. Such a plan is made that for a A-class demand, a fee channel is found from among the going-down lines prepared for real-time transmission, and information is transmitted through the channel, and that for a B- and C-class demands, at the time behind the demands, fee channels are found from among the going-down lines prepared for respective demands, and the fee channels are allocated one by one. The transmission planning means **4** passes the transmission plan to the control information generating means **6** and the information transmission control means **3**.

[0123] The information transmission control means **3** controls the transmission of going-down digital information and the sending of going-down control data by controlling the digital information source **1**, the going-down information signal generator **2**, and the control information generating means **6**.

[0124] The control information generating means **6** generates going-down data based on the control information and necessary information from the information transmission control means **3** and the transmission planning means **4** and information from the data base **8**. The time of the transmission plan for each demand, the authentication information for copying permission, a reproduction start control signal in response to the reading request (reproduction request) from the subscriber terminal described later, deletion instruction signal, and the list of programs to be transmitted included in the transmission plan information are referred to as an example of the going-down data.

[0125] The list of programs to be transmitted is, for example, as shown in FIG. 11, indicates the information transmission plan in response to the demands all the subscriber terminals are going to send behind at the time after delay. The list of programs to be transmitted is created, for example, at a preferable time intervals, and the created list is sent to the subscriber terminal when the subscriber terminal makes a request for the list of programs to be transmitted. Such a broadcast format may be used that the list of programs to be transmitted is sent to all the subscriber terminals for use as going-down control data.

[0126] The subscribers can receive programs by specifying the programs in the program list, in such a way that information transmission for the already issued demands is shared with the current information transmission. If the results of the analysis by the demand analysis means **5** are that the demands from the subscriber terminals are share demands, the information transmission control means **3** specifies a plurality of information transmission destinations so that simultaneous information transmission is performed also for the subscriber terminals who made share demands during the transmission of information for which share information transmission is specified.

[0127] The charging means **7** performs charging based on the results of the demand analysis received from the transmission planning means **4** and the information on charging from the database **8**. A charge for share information transmission is specified as lower than a charge for usual transmission.

[0128] The data base **8** holds the authentication information for the permission of the copying of transmission information and the table of charges to be used when the charging means **7** performs charging.

[0129] The information transmission control means **3**, transmission planning means **4**, analysis section of the demand receiving analysis means **5**, and charging means **6** are realized as functions of the HE controller **24** (realized by software).

[0130] Respective subscriber terminals ms receive the going-down control data of their own destinations from the demand sending means **11** for sending a demand (transmission request) to the going-down Cu, the temporary memory means **12** with a large capacity, and the going-down line Cd,

and each subscriber terminal is provided with a transmission plan receiving analysis means **13** for analyzing the transmission plan information included in the going-down control data, a transmission information receiving control means **14**, and a copying enabled conversion means **15**.

[0131] The transmission information receiving control means **14** receives the digital transmission data of own destination from the going-down line Cd, demodulates the data, supplies the demodulated output to a monitor/television set, not shown, through the copying enabled conversion means **15** when real-time reproduction is required, or stores received transmission information of own destination in the temporary memory means **12** when no real-time reproduction is required.

[0132] The copying enabled conversion means **15** is a circuit section included in the above-mentioned digital television decoding circuit **319** and, as described above, removes copying prohibition processing, what is called, a copy guard applied to the video program information to be transmitted.

[0133] The demand transmission means **11** receives a demand of a user through the user interface such as a remote controller or key board, generates a distribution transmission request signal (demand signal), and sends it to the going-up line Cu.

[0134] A demand signal includes a user ID which is an identification code of each subscriber, transmission program specifying information (program identifying data) for specifying a video program requested for distribution, request time information which is a information relating to the urgency of the requested information transmission such as the time when the program is desired to be transmitted or the time when the subscriber wants to view, and transmission format specifying information for specifying which format of 4 M bits/sec digital information or 45 M bits/sec digital information is desired.

[0135] In this case, the information of the time may be used as it is as the request time information, however in this embodiment, several classes are defined depending on the urgency of a request, and the request time information specifies a class. In detail, ① if a user wants to view the program immediately, then the program is demanded as A-class urgency, ② if a user wants to view later, then the program is demanded as B-class urgency, and ③ if a user wants to view within a half or one day, then the program is demanded as C-class urgency.

[0136] In this embodiment of the present invention, downstream digital information transmission channels include digital television broadcast channels, and thus the subscriber can watch the programs in the digital television broadcast channels immediately even if the subscriber does not issue any demand. The digital television broadcast channel class is called a D class hereinafter.

[0137] As described above, the demand sending means **11** also sends such a share demand that information reception is performed being shared with information transmission in response to the already issued demand.

[0138] In this embodiment, a user's command via the user interface is not directly supplied to the temporary memory means **12** in the subscriber terminal ms, and writing (record-



ing) and reading (reproducing) are enabled under the control of the cable television station HE. This prevents a free use of transmission information in the temporary memory means 12 to protect the copyright of the information.

[0139] When the user wants to read the video program information stored in the temporary memory means by the user, the demand sending means 11 receives a reading request made by the user via the user interface and sends the reading request to the cable television station HE through the going-up line Cu. The reading request includes reading request identification data, a user ID, program identification data for specifying a video program to be read. In this embodiment, as described later, it is defined that the user is permitted to copy a video program, but the copying permission request is included in the above-mentioned reading request.

[0140] The going-down control information receiving analysis means 13 receives and analyzes the going-down control data sent from the cable television station HE to examine whether information is transmitted in real time or behind time, the degree of random accessibility, whether authentication information used to permit copying is included in the control information, and suchlike. The transmission information receiving control means 14 and the copying enabled conversion means 15 are controlled according to the results of the analysis.

[0141] In this case, when the authentication information for copying permission is not detected, the copying enabled conversion means 15 outputs the input signal (real-time transmission information and the information read from the temporary memory means 12) as it is, and copying prohibition processing is still applied to the input signal. When the authentication information for copying permission is detected, the copying enabled conversion means 15 operates to remove the copying prohibition processing of the input signal and outputs the signal. If the output signal is recorded with a VTR, the signal can therefore be reproduced and used as it is.

[0142] Next, charging for information transmission is described. In this embodiment, different charges are specified for each demand class. FIG. 12 is an example of the table of charges. In this example, charges vary according to the periods of time when information transmission is performed as well as demand classes. Since the information must be transmitted within the prime time when a A- or B-class demand is made in prime time, a high charge is applied to the transmission. A low charge is applied to the transmission during midnight and early morning. In addition, the higher the information transmission urgency of a class demand is, the higher charge is applied to the class demand.

[0143] In the embodiment, the share demands can be specified for B- and C-class demands, and charges for the share demands are specified as low in the same way.

[0144] When copyright fees are collected for information transmission of each program, the copyright fees are included in each charges in the above-mentioned table of charges. However, in the same way as for broadcasting, the copyright fee is charged each time a program is used. As described above, in this embodiment, it is designated that the user is permitted to copy the video program stored in the

temporary memory means 12. In this case, however, an additional fee can be collected as a copyright fee applied during copying every time a desired video program is copied, as shown in FIG. 12.

[0145] In this example, free channels are prepared so that information transmission can be performed at a time other than the prime time in response to C-class demands and real-time information transmission can be performed in prime time in response to A-class demands.

[0146] Charges are specified as described above to suppress the concentration of traffic in prime time by raising the fee for information transmission in the time zone of much traffic. Further, an appropriate additional fee is specified for copying.

[0147] In this embodiment, in the 45 MHz×15 channel transmission band for the going-down digital transmission data, the transmission capacity is allocated dynamically to the demand urgency classes dependently on the actual traffic condition of respective time zones in a day in order to use efficiently the transmission capacity.

[0148] For example, in prime time zone, when many A-class demands are generated, the capacity is allocated as described hereinafter.

[0149] Transmission to A-class demand: 45 M bits/sec×5 channels

[0150] Transmission to B-class demand: 45 M bits/sec×8 channels

[0151] Transmission to C-class demand: No allocation

[0152] Transmission to D-class: 45 M bits/sec×2 channels

[0153] In midnight time zone when a few demands are generated, the capacity is allocated as described herein under.

[0154] Transmission to A-class demand: 45 M bits/sec×2 channels

[0155] Transmission to B-class demand: 45 M bits/sec×2 channels

[0156] Transmission to C-class demand: 45 M bits/sec×10 channels

[0157] Transmission to D-class: 45 M bits/sec×1 channel

[0158] It is considered that many demands for video programs are requested in prime time, no program is transmitted to C-class demands and more number of channels is allocated for transmission to A-class and B-class demands in order to transmit programs with a waiting time as short as possible.

[0159] Two channels are allocated to D-class transmission in order to provide many digital broadcast programs in prime time.

[0160] On the other hand, it is considered that a few demands for digital television broadcast programs is requested in the midnight time zone and the number of broadcast programs may be not many, the number of transmission channels for digital television broadcast is reduced

by one channel comparing with the number in prime time zone. It is considered that a fewer demands for video programs is requested in the midnight time zone than in prime time zone, then the number of channels for transmission to A-class and B-class demands is reduced, and more transmission capacity and more channel are allocated to C-class demands so that C-class demands which have been accepted previously are transmitted.

[0161] An example of the allocation of transmission capacity for the going-down digital transmission data allocated as described herein above is shown in FIG. 13. In FIG. 13, the abscissa represents the time, and the axis of ordinate represents the allocation of 15 channel capacity for the digital transmission data.

[0162] An arrow  $\uparrow$  represents a time point of generation of a distribution transmission request instruction, and a section enclosed by a rectangle represents a program. "For broadcast" represents the transmission capacity for digital television broadcast, "real-time V. O. D." represents the transmission capacity for real-time transmission of A-class demands, "little delay V. O. D" represents the transmission capacity for digital information transmission of B-class demands, and "much delay V. O. D" represents the transmission capacity for digital information transmission of C-class demands like the above-mentioned FIG. 2.

[0163] As shown in FIG. 13, no transmission capacity is allocated for transmission of C-class demands in prime time. The allocated channels "real-time V. O. D" transmits in real-time in response to a demand, and the allocated channel "little delay V. O. D" transmit with a little delay from a demand with looking for a free channel. The transmission time of one program can be shorter than the transmission time by way of the allocated channel to "real-time V. O. D" because of 45 M bits/sec transmission in this case.

[0164] In the midnight time zone, more channels are allocated to "much delay V. O. D", and many programs are transmitted to the previously accepted C-class instructions which allows much delay. Accordingly, the midnight time zone when usually a little demand is generated is used efficiently, and the transmission is performed efficiently.

[0165] [Generation and Transmission of Distribution Transmission Request Signal]

[0166] FIG. 14 is a flowchart of routine for generation and transmission of demand signals of video on-demand at a subscriber terminal.

[0167] Upon receiving a command input for sending a distribution transmission request form a user through the user interface 321 in the subscriber terminal ms, the processing routine shown in FIG. 14 starts. In step S1, the user displays the operation menu for demand input. In the step, when the user selects the item on charges, the table of charges is displayed as shown in FIG. 15. The contents of the table are the same as those of the above-mentioned table of charges. The user can specify a class for a demand, referring to the displayed table.

[0168] As described above, the charge for a demand varies according to the demand input time. In the table of charges in FIG. 15, an applied charge is for example highlighted according to the time of the input operation of the demand. If the demand input time is in prime time, for instance, the

A- and B-class fields for the prime time zone and a C-class field are highlighted with a double frame in FIG. 15, and the user is notified of the highlighted charges for the demands.

[0169] When the subscriber wants to issue a share demand, the subscriber sends a request for the list of programs to be transmitted to the cable television station on the menu display screen. When the list of programs to be transmitted is reached at the subscriber, the list of programs to be transmitted as shown in FIG. 11 is displayed on the screen of the monitor television set. When there is a desired program to be specified as a B- or C-class demand in the program list, the subscriber specifies the program and inputs a share demand.

[0170] When the input by the user is accepted in step S1, it is determined whether the inputted demand is a share demand in the next step S2. When it is determined that the inputted demand is not a share demand, the process proceeds to step S3.

[0171] In the step S3, it is determined which class demand has been specified as request time information on the urgency of transmission. If an A-class demand is specified as request time information, the process proceeds to step S4, in which an A-class demand signal is generated, and the process proceeds to step S5, in which it is determined whether a copying permission request is inputted by the user. When a copying permission request is inputted in advance, the process proceeds to step S6, in which the copying permission request is included in a demand. The process proceeds to step S9, in which the demand signal is sent to the going-up line Cu. Unless the copying permission request is inputted in step S5, a jump is made to step S9, in which the demand excluding the copying permission request is sent to the going-up line Cu.

[0172] The distribution transmission request demand signal includes a user ID for identifying the subscriber terminal and a program identifying data for identifying a desired video program as described hereinbefore.

[0173] If the request time information is B-class or C-class, the process proceeds to the step S7, the specification of transmission format is judged to be transmission rate of the transmission data of 4 M bits/sec or 45 M bits/sec, and the specification of random access is judged. Then, the process proceeds to the next step S8, a demand signal including the judged format, random access, and urgent class is generated, and the demand signal is sent to the going-up line Cu in the step S9.

[0174] Further, in the step S2, in which when it is determined that the demand inputted by the user is a share demand, the process proceeds step S10, and the share demand including the own user ID, share program identification data, and identification data which indicates that the demand is a share demand is generated. The process then proceeds to step S9, the subscriber terminal sends the share demand to the cable television station HE through the going-up line. This is the end of the processing routine of sending a demand at the subscriber terminal.

[0175] [Receiving Processing of Distribution Transmission Request Demand]

[0176] FIG. 16 is a flowchart of processing routine for receiving a demand signal from a subscriber terminal in the HE controller 24 of the cable television station HE.

[0177] Upon receiving the demand signal sent from a subscriber terminal through the going-up line Cu, the demand receiving analysis means 5 of the cable television station HE analyses the contents and passes the request time information included in the demand signal and the user ID and program identification data to the transmission planning means 4 and the information transmission control means 3. The demand receiving analysis means 5 also passes the information on whether the received demand is a usual demand or a share demand to the transmission planning means 4 (step S11).

[0178] Further, the transmission planning means 4 determines whether the received demand is a usual demand or a share demand (step S12), in which when the means 4 determines that the received demand is a usual demand, the process proceeds to step S13.

[0179] In the step S13, the transmission planning means 4 analyzes the request time information, and determines which demand class of A-class, B-class, or C-class is included in the request time information included in the demand signal (step S13). The determination result is reported to the charging means 7.

[0180] If the request time information is determined as A-class which requests real-time transmission, then the transmission planning means 4 looks for a free going-down line transmission channel assigned to "for real-time V. O. D" shown in FIG. 13, and if the transmission planning means 4 finds a free channel, the free channel is decided to be a real-time transmission channel (step S14).

[0181] Upon receiving this decision, the information transmission control means 3 informs the subscriber who sent the demand of the real-time transmission channel to (step S15). It is determined whether a demand contains a copying permission request (step S16). When the copying permission request is contained in the demand, authentication information for copying permission is acquired from the data base 8, and the subscriber is informed of the acquired information (step S17). The video program specified by program identification data is extracted from the digital source 1, and real-time transmission is carried out (step S18).

[0182] Further, the process proceeds to step S19, in which charging is performed, and then demand receiving processing is terminated. In this case, charging is performed for the A-class demand included in a copying permission request.

[0183] As a result of determination in step S16, if no copying permission request is included in the demand, the process proceeds from step S16 to step S20, in which the authentication information for copying permission is not sent, but real-time information transmission is performed. Then, the process proceeds to step S21, in which charging is performed for the A-class demand that does not include a copying permission request.

[0184] At this time, the digital transmission data is fetched from the video server 21 and transmitted by way of the channel of the above-mentioned "for real-time V. O. D".

[0185] If the request time information judged in the step S12 is B-class and is the transmission request which allows a little delay, the transmission planning means 4 looks for a free channel from the going-down channel "for little delay

V. O. D" in FIG. 13 for B-class, and decides a transmission time so as to transmit by way of the free channel (step S22).

[0186] The transmission planning means 4 informs the information transmission control means 3 of the free channel to be used for the transmission, transmission time, and above-mentioned analysis result. The transmission planning means 4 also informs the charging means 7 of information on the transmission time. Further, the transmission planning means 4 analyzes the transmission format information included in the demand signal and random access information, and informs the information transmission control means 3 of the analysis result.

[0187] The information transmission control means 3 generates going-down control data including the free channel, transmission time (starting time and ending time), transmission format (4 M bits/sec transmission rate or 45 M bits/sec transmission rate), and random access information. The going-down control data has the user ID as header information. In addition, the information transmission control means 3 sends the going-down control data to the subscriber who sent a demand specified by the user ID, and reports the transmission time, transmission format, and so on to the terminal of the subscriber who sends the demand (step S24).

[0188] When the time comes to the transmission time (step S25), the information transmission control means 3 extracts the specified video program based on the program identifying data included in the transmission request demand and transmission format from the video server 21 in the case of the transmission rate of 4 M bits/sec or from the tape information library system 22 in the case of the transmission rate of 45 M bits/sec, and transmits it (step S26). After completion of the transmission, charging for the transmission is performed (step S27).

[0189] If the request time information is determined to be C-class in the step S12, that is, the transmission request allows much delay of a half day to one day, the transmission planning means 4 finds out a free channel from the transmission plan of the going-down line channels ("for much delay V. O. D" shown in FIG. 13) assigned to the midnight time zone, and decides a transmission time so as to transmit by way of the free channel (step S22).

[0190] Then, in the same way as for B-class demands, the transmission planning means 4 informs the information transmission control means 3 of the free channel to be used for the transmission, transmission time, and above-mentioned analysis result, and notifies the charging means 7 of the information on the transmission time. Further, the transmission planning means 4 analyzes the transmission format information included in the demand signal and random access information, and gives the analysis result to the information transmission control means 3.

[0191] The information transmission control means 3 transmits previously the free channel, transmission time (starting time and ending time), transmission format (4 M bits/sec transmission rate or 45 M bits/sec transmission rate), and random access information to the subscriber who sent the demand and is specified by the user ID as the going-down control data having the user ID header information (step S24), and when the time comes to the transmission time (step S25), the information transmission control means 3 extracts the specified video program based on

the program identifying data included in the transmission request demand and transmission format from the video server **21** in the case of the transmission rate of 4 M bits/sec or from the tape information library system **22** in the case of the transmission rate of 45 M bits/sec, and transmits it (step **S26**). After completion of the transmission, charging for the transmission is performed (step **S27**).

[**0192**] Further, when the demand from the subscriber terminal is a share demand in step **S12**, the process proceeds to step **S28**, in which the transmission planning means **4** adds a user ID included in the share demand for use as the transmission destination of the program indicated by the program identification data included in the share demand.

[**0193**] Next, the process proceeds to step **S25**, in which, at the time of information transmission, the corresponding information programs are transmitted to all of a plurality of the subscribers whose identification data are stored for use as destinations. Then, the process proceeds to step **S27**, in which share fee is applied for the subscribers. In this case, the share fee is also applied to the user who first sent an usual demand. However, a usual fee may be applied to the user who first sent an usual demand. Accordingly, the processing routine ends.

[**0194**] [Receiving Processing of a Control Data and Transmission Data in a Subscriber Terminal]

[**0195**] FIG. 17 is a flowchart of a processing routine performed when the terminal controller **320** of a subscriber terminal receives a going-down control data and transmission digital data.

[**0196**] The subscriber terminal receives a control data of the transmission plan addressed to the demand subscriber terminal referring to the user ID in the going-down control data from the going-down line Cd (step **S31**), analyzes it (step **S32**), and judges whether it requires the immediate real-time transmission referring to the analysis result (step **S33**). The judgment may be based on, for example, no inclusion of transmission time data in the going-down control data. Alternately, a class information or flag which indicates whether it requires the real-time transmission or does not is included in the going-down control data, and the judgment may be performed based on the class information or flag.

[**0197**] When the determination result based on the analysis indicates real-time information transmission, it is determined whether the authentication information for copying permission is received (step **S34**). If the authentication information is received, the copying enabled conversion means **15** operates to control the digital television decoding circuit **319** in order to remove copying prohibition processing (step **S35**).

[**0198**] According to the results of the analysis in step **S32**, the terminal controller **320** detects a transmission channel, supplies a select signal to the frequency conversion circuit **308** to convert the going-down digital transmission data of the transmission channel to data having a frequency band which can be demodulated, switches the switch circuit **318** so as to select 4 M bits/sec data from the de-multiplexing circuit **317**, and switches the switch circuit **15** so as to select the television signal from the digital television decoding circuit **319** to supply it to a television set through the output

terminal **316** (step **S36**). Copying prohibition processing is removed from the video signal of this case, and so the signal can be copied.

[**0199**] When, as a result of the determination in step **S34**, it is determined that the authentication information for copying permission is not received, the process bypasses step **S35** and proceeds to step **S36**, in which transmission information is received in real time to supply the information to the television set, then the receiving processing routine ends. Copying prohibition processing is still applied to the video signal of this case.

[**0200**] If the determination result in the step **S33** does not show an immediate real-time transmission, then the terminal controller **320** recognizes the transmission time, transmission channel, transmission format, and random access information based on the analysis result of the above-mentioned going-down control data, and prepares for receiving (step **S37**). The terminal controller **320** waits for the transmission time of the transmission information (step **S38**), and when the time comes to the transmission time, the terminal controller **320** supplies a select signal for converting the going-down digital transmission data of the transmission channel to a data having a frequency band which can be demodulated to the frequency conversion circuit **308**, and starts to receive the digital transmission data according to the transmission format (step **S39**).

[**0201**] Further, any one medium to be used for storing the transmission information is selected previously from the semiconductor memory, hard disk, data streamer, and digital VTR in the temporary memory device **330** according to the transmission format included in the going-down control data and random access information (step **S40**), and the received transmission information is stored in the selected temporary memory device based on the memory permission information which is going-down data to be sent prior to transmission information, then the receiving processing routine ends.

[**0202**] The cable television station HE stores the history of the programs transmitted to each subscriber which, as described later, is used for references when the subscribers send reading requests to the cable television station HE.

[**0203**] In this case, if the transmission format specifies high speed transmission and the semiconductor memory is selected as the temporary memory means, the transmission information is transmitted with the high speed transmission rate of 45 M bits/sec, and the transmission data is stored in the semiconductor memory **331** which serves as the temporary memory means as it is high speed transmission rate.

[**0204**] For example, if the transmission rate of a compressed digital data is 1.5 M bits/sec and a program is a two-hour program, the program compressed to 45 M bits/sec rate is transmitted, then the transmission requires only about 4 minutes, and alternately if the transmission rate is 4 M bits/sec, the transmission of a two-hour program requires only about 11 minutes.

[**0205**] In the case that the transmission data rate is 4 M bits/sec due to the transmission format, the selection of a temporary memory means depends on random access, and the hard disk device is selected for high random access and the data streamer device **333** is selected for low random access as the temporary memory means.

[0206] High fee may be applied to the request for low rate format transmission in real-time, on the other hand, low fee may be applied to the request for high speed rate because the transmission time is short.

[0207] As described herein above, the receiving processing of the transmission information is performed in a subscriber terminal. The television signal received in real-time transmission is supplied to a television without storing in the temporary memory device. Therefore, a user can view the program with a slight delay from the demanding.

[0208] On the other hand, the video data stored in the temporary memory device 330 is reproduced at the arbitrary time and provided to the subscriber in response to a reading request (reproduction request) from the subscriber through the user interface 321. FIG. 18 shows a flow of an example of the reproduction processing routine.

[0209] For the case that a plurality of video programs is registered in the temporary memory device due to a plurality of demands, in this example, the terminal controller 320 of a subscriber terminal ms is provided with a function to display the menu of accumulated video programs on the television monitor, the user can select and view any program from the menu. The terminal controller 320 stores program identification data of each transmission program (called program IDs hereinafter) and memory devices in which the transmission programs are stored, between which a correspondence has been established.

[0210] When a subscriber specifies the program transmitted after delay via the user interface 321 and inputs a reproduction request including a copying permission request as the need arises, the routine in FIG. 18 starts, and in step S51, the user's reproduction request is accepted. Next, the process proceeds to step S52, in which it is determined whether the copying permission request is included in the user's reproduction request.

[0211] When it is determined that the copying permission request is included in the user's reproduction request in step S52, the process proceeds to step S53, the reproduction request command including an own user ID, the program ID of a program selected by the user from the information stored in the temporary memory device 330, and the copying permission request is sent to the cable television station HE through the going-up line.

[0212] The process proceeds from step S53 to step S54 and waits for the authentication information for the copying permission to be received from the cable television station HE. When it is confirmed that the authentication information for the copying permission is received in step S54, the process proceeds to step S55, in which the copying enabled conversion means of the digital television signal decoding circuit 319 is made operable. Then, the process proceeds to step S57 and waits for the reproduction start control signal (including a program ID) to be received from the cable television station HE.

[0213] When it is determined that the copying permission request is not included in the user's reproduction request in step S52, the process proceeds to step S56, the reproduction request command including the own user ID and the program ID of the program specified by the user and excluding the copying permission request is sent to the cable television station HE through the going-up line. After the step S56, the

process proceeds to step S57 and waits for the reproduction start control signal to be received from the cable television station HE.

[0214] When it is confirmed that the reproduction start control signal is received from the cable television station HE in step S57, the process proceeds to step S58, in which the terminal controller 320 reproduces (reads) the program information identified with the above-mentioned program ID from the medium of the temporary memory device 330 in which the program information specified with the program ID is stored.

[0215] Upon receiving the reproduction instruction, the temporary memory device reads the corresponding digital video data of the program, and supplies it to the digital television decoding circuit 319 through the switch circuit 318. In this case, the rate of the read digital data is 4 M bits/sec. The video signal from the decoding circuit 319 is supplied to a television through the output terminal 316, and provided to the user. When information copying is permitted, the video signal from the output terminal 316 can be recorded in VTR or suchlike.

[0216] Then, the process proceeds to step S59 and waits for the reproduction end instruction to be received through the user interface 321 of the subscriber. When the reproduction end instruction is confirmed in step S59, the process proceeds to step S60, in which a deletion request including the own user ID and program ID is sent to the cable television station HE through the going-up line. When the deletion instruction control signal is received from the cable television station HE in step S61, the process proceeds to step S62, in which the used transmission program is deleted from the above-mentioned temporary memory device, then the reproduction processing routine ends.

[0217] Next, an example of receiving a production request from the subscriber is described referencing the flowchart in FIG. 19.

[0218] The processing routine in FIG. 19 starts when the cable television station HE receives a reproduction request from the subscriber, and the production request is accepted in step S71. Next, the process proceeds to step S72, in which it is determined by a program ID whether the program has really been transmitted or whether the program should have already been deleted. In this case, as described above, since the cable television station HE retains the history of the transmitted programs for each user ID, the determination processing is performed referencing the retained information.

[0219] When it is determined that the program has not been transmitted yet or should already have been deleted in step S72, the processing routine ends.

[0220] When it is determined that the program has been transmitted and has not yet been deleted in step S72, the process proceeds to step S73, in which it is determined whether the copying request is made. When the copying request is already made, the process proceeds to step S74, in which the authentication information for the copying permission is fetched from the data base 8 and the fetched information as going-down control data is sent to the subscriber who made the copying request. In the next step S75, an additional fee for the copying permission is charged for the corresponding subscriber.

[0221] Next, the process proceeds to step S76, in which the reproduction start control signal specifying a program to be reproduced with a program ID is sent to the subscriber who made the reproduction request. Thus, the reproduction request receiving processing ends.

[0222] When the deletion request including a user ID and a program ID is received from the subscriber, as described above, the cable television station HE sends the deletion control signal to the corresponding subscriber.

[0223] In the above example, the user makes a request for the permission of copying a program to be transmitted after delay at the same time when the user makes a request for reproducing the program. However, the copying permission request may be included in a program. When the user already makes the copying permission request, transmission demand. In this case, when the user makes a request for reproducing the transmitted program, the cable television station determines whether the user makes a copying permission request during the program demand. The cable television station sends the authentication information for the copying permission to the user before the reproduction start control signal.

[0224] Further, in case of making a copying permission request during such a demand, the instruction of whether the user wants to use the same program again is included in the reproduction end instruction. After the reproduction end instruction is confirmed, it is determined whether the reusing request is made. When no reusing request is made, the used transmission program is deleted from the above-mentioned temporary memory device. When it is determined that a reusing request is made, the used transmission program is not deleted, and the reproduction processing routine is terminated, thus enabling the use of the same program more times than once. In this case, an additional fee is charged for the copying permission whenever the program is reproduced.

[0225] Since consideration is given to copying in the above example, the deletion instruction is issued before instructions to be issued by the cable television station. In the system in which copying is impossible, however, reproduction is performed at the subscriber terminal, and it may be specified that, after a program is used, the program can be deleted without fail only under the control by the subscriber terminal.

[0226] In the first embodiment described herein above, a user can demand not only the immediate real-time transmission but also the delayed transmission, therefore, a user who wants to view the program in prime time zone can demand for the program to be transmitted during the midnight time zone and the program is stored in the temporary memory device, and the user can view the demanded program at the desired time.

[0227] The above-mentioned demand-delayed view system favors the demand for immediate real-time transmission in prime time to decrease.

[0228] Since demands are classified into various types according to the classes which indicate the urgency of information transmission, and for example, the lower fee to the demand allowable of delayed transmission than that to the demand for immediate real-time transmission is applied

according to the delay time length, such fee system favors the demand in prime time to decrease.

[0229] Such suppressed generation of the immediate real-time transmission in prime time allows the cable television station to be provided with a smaller scale facility in comparison with the conventional cable television station which transmits programs only in real-time.

[0230] Transmission capacity of going-down digital transmission data is allocated to an independent plurality of transmission channels depending on the information relating to the class which indicates the urgency of information transmission in the demand and many channels are allocated to the immediate real-time transmission in prime time. On the other hand, many channels are allocated to the delayed transmission in midnight, and such change of allocation depending on the time zone allows the transmission capacity to be used efficiently.

[0231] In the above-mentioned embodiment, high speed transmission is possible for delayed transmission in comparison with real-time transmission, and the time required for transmission of one program is shortened in comparison with the conventional method, in this aspect also, the transmission capacity is used efficiently. Accordingly, charges for the subscriber can be reduced to low rates, and it is expected that the wide use of the video on-demand systems are promoted.

[0232] After the transmission program is used, the program stored in the subscriber terminal is automatically deleted, thus enabling the sure protection of the copyright of the program. In addition, since an additional special fee is charged for program copying, effective copyright protection can be expected.

[0233] [Example of Change]

[0234] In the above-mentioned first embodiment, allocation of the number of transmission channels depending on the information relating to the urgency class of the demand is changed in the time zone in a day, but the allocation may be changed dependently on days in a week, or may be changed in combination of time zone and week.

[0235] In the above-mentioned first embodiment, the allocation of transmission channels depending on the information relating to the urgency class of the demand is changed within only the transmission capacity of the going-down digital information data, but, because the audience rate of analog television broadcast decreases, the transmission band of analog television broadcast is reduced and the reduced transmission band is used as the transmission band of digital information data.

[0236] In this case, a program table including channel assignment different between prime time and midnight is prepared for analog television broadcast, and this program table is transmitted to subscribers previously to inform the change of program channel depending on the time zone.

[0237] A plurality of data compression systems of digital transmission data is provided in the cable television station, for example, depending on requested degree of resolution, and any one of data compression systems may be selected by way of the demand from a subscriber terminal. In this case, a plurality of decoders are provided in a subscriber terminal depending on the above-mentioned plurality of data com-

pression systems, the information including compression system information in the going-down control data from the television station is sent to the subscriber terminal, and the decoder is switched dependently on the compression system information.

[0238] In this case, the compression rate is low and the amount of data is large, but the charges for high-resolution and high-quality video program transmission are specified as high in consideration of the long transmission time. On the other hand, for a high compression rate, a small data amount, and short transmission time, the charges can be specified as low.

[0239] In the above-mentioned embodiment, B-class demand is stored necessarily in the temporary memory means, but because it is possible to display the transmission time sent from the station on a display of a subscriber terminal and to inform it to a user, a mode for specifying real-time transmission reproduction for B-class demand without storing in the temporary memory means may be provided.

[0240] Further in the above-mentioned embodiment, the temporary memory means is selected based on the transmission format and random access relating information in the going-down control data in a subscriber terminal, but alternately a demand signal sent from a subscriber terminal is stored in the subscriber terminal, and the temporary memory means may be selected for the transmitted transmission data depending on the stored demand signal. In this case, an identification data ID for identifying the demand signal may be added in the demand signal to judge the demand. In this case, the information relating to transmission format and random access is not necessarily included in the going-down control data.

[0241] [Second Embodiment]

[0242] The second embodiment shows an example in which an existing CATV cable network is used. In a conventional CATV cable network, a cable television station is connected to a plurality of subscriber terminals by way of coaxial cable, and provides mainly analog television broadcast to each subscriber terminal by way of coaxial cable.

[0243] In the second embodiment, a facility for transmission of digital data such as video data is added to a cable television station without change of the conventional transmission line facility using coaxial cable, and a receiving unit for receiving digital data provided with a large capacity temporary memory device is added to a subscriber terminal. The public phone network is used as the going-up line for transmission of digital data demand.

[0244] FIG. 20 shows the whole network structure of the embodiment. In a cable television station 40, an analog television broadcast signal Va from the above-mentioned analog television broadcast facility 401 and digital data Vb such as digital video data from the digital transmission data transmission facility 402 are synthesized to generate a frequency multiplexed signal, and sent to the coaxial cable CB through an amplifier 404.

[0245] A plurality of telephone lines L1 to Ln is connected to the public phone network PSTN, and a station side controller 405 for receiving demands from subscribers

through the telephone lines L1 to Ln and for sending video programs corresponding to the demand from the digital data transmission facility 402.

[0246] Also in this embodiment, the station side controller 405 generates a going-down control data Vc including a user ID for specifying the addressed subscriber terminal which receives the digital data, program ID, transmission channel, and transmission time information in order to send the digital data to the subscriber terminal which transmitted the demand, supplies it to a synthesizer 403 to frequency-multiplex the information for transmission of the going-down control data Vc, and sends it to a subscriber terminal.

[0247] FIG. 21 shows the frequency assignment of frequency multiplexed signal for transmitting in the coaxial cable CB, 50 MHz to 450 MHz frequency band is used for analog television broadcast signals as it is used conventionally. The frequency band around 500 MHz is used for the going-down control data having a transmission rate of 1.5 M bits/sec as it is used in the above-mentioned embodiment. Two frequency bands in higher frequency are used for transmission of the going-down digital data having a transmission rate of 45 M bits/sec. In other words, two channels are assigned to digital data.

[0248] Subscriber terminals 50 are connected to the coaxial cable CB through coaxial confluent distributors 60 as it is so connected in the sectional network in the above-mentioned embodiment. The coaxial confluent distributor 60 comprises an input buffer amplifier 61 for receiving information from the coaxial cable CB connected to the coaxial confluent distributor connected in front, a distributor 62 for identifying the signal between a signal to be distributed to the subscriber terminal connected to the coaxial confluent distributor and a signal to be distributed to subscriber terminals in the down stream, and an output buffer amplifier 63 for supplying output signal to subscriber terminals in the down stream.

[0249] A subscriber terminal 50 is connected to the public phone network PSTN through a telephone line Lms as shown in FIG. 20. A telephone 70 is connected to the telephone line Lms through the subscriber terminal 50, and a television 80 is connected to the subscriber terminal 50.

[0250] The cable television station 40 has in detail, for example, a structure shown in a block diagram of FIG. 22. In detail, an analog television broadcast signal Va is subjected to band restriction to generate a signal of the band for the above-mentioned analog television broadcast through a band pass filter 411, and thereafter is sent to a synthesis circuit 403.

[0251] The digital transmission data transmission facility 402 is provided with a tape information library system 412. The tape information library system 412 comprises a tape container rack 412L, a plurality of players VTRa to VTRd, a transferring mechanism (not shown in the figure) for taking out a desired cassette tape from the tape container rack and for charging it to any one of the players VTRa to VTRd as it is so structured in the above-mentioned embodiment, but in this second embodiment, two players VTR are provided to each channel, that is, total four players VTRa, VTRb, VTRc, and VTRd are provided, the facility is simplified in comparison with the tape information library system of the above-mentioned cable television station HE having the digital facility.

[0252] The station side controller **405** controls the selection of a channel out of the two channels and decides the selection of a player out of the two players by switching and controlling switch circuits **413** and **414**. Like the prescribed first embodiment, charging is performed. In details, different charges are specified according to the urgency of transmission, transmission time, and data compression rate, high rates are charged for urgent transmission and transmission in time zone of much traffic such as prime time and for low data compression rate. An additional fee is charged for the permission of copying.

[0253] Digital data from respective switches **413** and **414** is modulated in hexternal QAM modulation circuits **415** and **416** as it is so modulated in the above-mentioned embodiment, subsequently supplied to the frequency conversion circuits **417** and **418**, and frequency-converted to a signal of the band for each channel shown in FIG. 16. The output signal of the frequency conversion circuits **417** and **418** is supplied to the synthesis circuit **403**.

[0254] A going-down control data Vc from the station side controller **405** is supplied to a QPSK modulation circuit **419** and modulated, then frequency-converted to a signal of the band for control data shown in FIG. 19. The output signal from the frequency conversion circuit **420** is supplied to the synthesis circuit **403**.

[0255] A going-up demand data sent from a subscriber terminal through the telephone lines L1 to Ln is taken in the station side controller **405** through modulators **421** to **42n**. The going-down control data Vc is generated based on the going-up demand data. The demand data includes a user ID for identifying the subscriber terminal, data for identifying the requested program, and request time information described hereinafter. The demand data sometime includes a copying permission request.

[0256] Next, a subscriber terminal has a structure, for example, shown in detail in a block diagram of FIG. 22.

[0257] The going-down signal from the coaxial confluent distributor **60** is supplied to band pass filters **502** and **503** through a input terminal **501**. The band pass filter **502** has a pass band of the analog television broadcast signal frequency band shown in FIG. 18, the analog television signal obtained from the band pass filter **502** is supplied to a frequency conversion circuit **504**.

[0258] The channel selection control signal corresponding to the channel selection operation through the user interface **530** from the terminal controller **520** is supplied to the frequency conversion circuit **504**, and the analog broadcast program channel signal selected by a user is converted by the frequency conversion circuit **504** to a signal of a frequency which can be demodulated by the subsequent analog television demodulation circuit **505**. The output signal from the frequency conversion circuit **504** is supplied to the analog television demodulation circuit **505**, and the television signal of the above-mentioned selected analog television broadcast program channel is demodulated. The demodulated television signal is supplied to an output terminal **507** through a switch circuit **506**.

[0259] A television **70** is connected to the output terminal **507**. A user interface **530** comprises a remote controller and key board device as it so comprises in the above-mentioned embodiment.

[0260] The going-down control data and going-down digital information data are obtained from the band pass filter **503**. The going-down control data is converted by a frequency conversion circuit **512** to a signal of a band which can be demodulated by the subsequent QPSK demodulation circuit **513**, then supplied to a QPSK demodulation circuit **513** and demodulated. The demodulated control data is supplied to a de-multiplexing circuit **514**, and only the control data of the channel given to the demand subscriber terminal by the control signal from the terminal controller **520** is taken out, and supplied to the terminal controller **520**.

[0261] The terminal controller **520** interprets the control data, judges whether the control data is addressed to the demand subscriber terminal based on the user ID included in the control data, and if the control data is addressed to the demand subscriber terminal, the terminal controller **520** analyzes the control data and informed of the above-mentioned program ID, transmission time, and transmission channel (which channel out of the digital data transmission channels).

[0262] The digital information data from the band pass filter **503** is supplied to a frequency conversion circuit **508**. In the frequency conversion circuit **508**, only the information data of the transmission channel found by analyzing the above-mentioned control data is converted to a signal of a frequency which can be demodulated by a hexternal QAM demodulator **504** based on the control signal from the terminal controller **520**. The output signal from the frequency conversion circuit **508** is supplied to the hexternal QAM demodulation circuit **509** and demodulated, the demodulated signal is supplied to a data streamer device **510** and temporarily stored.

[0263] The data streamer device **510** has such a structure that a tape medium cannot be removed from the device. The recording of data in and reproduction from the data streamer device **510** are performed under the control of the cable television station.

[0264] In the same way as for the above-mentioned first embodiment, the terminal controller **520** sends the reproduction request to the cable television station **40** in response to the reproduction request input including the program ID through the user interface **530** of the user. When the terminal controller **520** receives a reproduction start control signal from the cable television station **40**, the controller **520** issues a reproduction instruction including the program ID to the data streamer **510**. The data streamer device **510** reads and regenerates the digital information specified by the program ID out of temporarily stored information in response to the reproduction instruction.

[0265] The read digital information is subjected to error correction decode processing in a digital television signal decoding circuit **511**, converted to an analog television signal, and supplied to the switch circuit **506**.

[0266] When a copying request is included in a reproduction request, the copying enabled conversion means of the digital television signal decoding circuit **511** is made operable, and the digital television signal decoding circuit **511** outputs the signal from which copying prohibition processing is removed in the same way as for the above-mentioned first embodiment.

[0267] The switch circuit **506** is switched to the analog television signal demodulation circuit **505** side during ana-



log television broadcast receiving channel selection or to the digital television signal decoding circuit **511** side when watching the temporarily stored program dependently on the switching signal from the terminal controller **520** in response to the user input through the user interface **530**, the user can view the respective programs in the television connected to the output terminal **507**. When the user's program viewing ends, that is, program reproduction ends, the corresponding program is deleted from the data streamer **510** in the same manner as for the above-mentioned first embodiment.

[0268] The terminal controller **520** generates a demand signal as a going-up data in response to a demand input for a digital information program through the user interface **530**. The demand signal includes the user ID, ID of the demanded program, and request time information of the urgency for the demanded program as it so includes in the above-mentioned embodiment. If the same plurality of compression methods as used for digital transmission of video signal transmitted from the cable television station side is provided and a user can select the compression method dependently on the demanded information and necessary resolution, then the demand signal includes the transmission format such as data compression ratio. As described above, a request for copying may be included in the demand signal.

[0269] The demand signal from the subscriber terminal is modulated by a modulator **521**, and sent out to the telephone line Lms connected to the public telephone network through NCU (network control unit) **522**. A telephone **70** is connected to NCU **522** through the telephone terminal **524**, and the telephone **70** is used as it is used usually.

[0270] In the second embodiment, the cable television station **40** is acceptable of only transmission request for delay allowable demands corresponding to B-class and C-class demands in the above-mentioned first embodiment. More in detail, real-time transmission and digital television broadcast are not involved, two-way information transmission is realized only with adding some additional facility to the existing cable television system facility.

[0271] In this embodiment, when a user inputs a demand to the subscriber terminal, the user selects a request time information which is either B-class demand allowable of little delay or C-class demand allowable of a delay of from a half day to one day.

[0272] Upon receiving the demand from the user through the public telephone network PSTN, the cable television station **40** makes a transmission plan so as to transmit successively requested programs if the demand is B-class. In detail, if there is a free channel in the going-down digital information data band, the cable television station **40** makes the transmission plan so as to transmit the demanded program information to the subscriber terminal by way of the free channel.

[0273] Upon completion of the transmission plan, the cable television station **40** transmits previously a going-down information including the time when the requested program is to be transmitted, the channel to be used for the transmission, and the going-down control data including transmission format information to the subscriber terminal which transmitted the demand through a control data transmission channel. In the same way as for the above-men-

tioned first embodiment, the list of programs to be transmitted for a share demand is sent according to the request made by the subscriber terminal or at constant time intervals. As described above, charging is performed according to B- and C-class demands and transmission time zones, and charging for share demands and additional fee charging for copying permission requests are performed.

[0274] The subscriber terminal **50** acquires the control data addressed to the demand subscriber terminal, and is informed of previously the time to be transmitted, channel to be used for the transmission, and transmission format, and prepares for receiving. Monitoring the time for finding the transmission time, the subscriber terminal **50** receives the digital information data transmitted with a address to the demand subscriber terminal **50** through the above-mentioned band pass filter **503**, frequency conversion circuit **508**, and hexternal QAM demodulation circuit **509**, and stores the received digital information data in the data streamer device **510**.

[0275] When the user input at an arbitrary time a reproduction request for the selected specified program out of temporarily stored programs through the user interface **530**, the terminal controller **520**, as described above, sends the reproduction request to the cable television station **40** and waits for a reproduction start control signal to be incoming. When the reproduction start control signal is incoming, the terminal controller **520** sends a reproduction instruction of the specified program to the data streamer device **510**. The data streamer device **510** reads and regenerates the specified program in response to the reproduction instruction, and supplies the television signal to the television through the output terminal **507**, and the user can view the program. When the user's program viewing ends, the corresponding program is automatically deleted.

[0276] In the second embodiment, processing and charging are performed for the permission of copying a transmitted program in the same way as for the first embodiment.

[0277] As described herein above, in the case of the second embodiment, the real-time transmission is not necessary, the introduction of a large scale system such as video server is not necessary, the video on-demand system is realized with a relatively small investment, the digital information data can be transmitted with a delay efficiently during the time zone such as midnight when traffic is infrequent, thus the transmission band can be used efficiently.

[0278] A demand signal is sent to the television station through the public telephone network, therefore it is unnecessary to provide extra transmission line for going-up data, thus extra investment for this purpose is not necessary.

[0279] The application of this invention to the video on-demand system is described hereinbefore, however, the present invention can be applied to not only video system but also other every two-way information transmission systems which transmit various information in response to a demand.

[0280] In the above embodiment, deleting information from the memory is used as the means for disabling the reusing of the information. In addition, such a method may also be used that a specified noise is written over the corresponding information to disable the reusing of the information.

[0281] As described hereinbefore, according to the present invention, the video on-demand system can be realized without introduction of large scale system such as video server and with relatively small investment. The centralization of traffic is mitigated, and the network resource is used efficiently.

[0282] Rational charging can be performed in response to transmission requests. That is, the wide use of the two-way information transmission systems is promoted by specifying low fees for real-time transmission even for delay transmission and for a transmission request which shares another person's transmission request.

What is claimed is:

1. A two-way information transmission system comprising an information distribution transmission center and a plurality of subscriber terminals connected to an information distribution transmission center through going-up lines and going-down lines, said subscriber terminal requesting an information to said information distribution transmission center through said going-up line, and said information distribution transmission center transmitting the requested information in response to the request for the transmission;

said information distribution transmission center having:

transmission planning means for planning a transmission plan to transmit the information based on an information distribution transmission request from said subscriber terminal,

transmission implementation means for implementing the transmission of said requested information based on the transmission plan planned by said transmission planning means, and

going-down control data sending means for sending a going-down control data including an information involving the transmission implementation plan planned by said transmission implementation means to the subscriber terminal before said transmission implementation means implements the transmission; and

said subscriber terminal having:

transmission plan receiving analysis means for being informed of said transmission plan based on said going-down control data sent from said information distribution transmission center,

distribution transmission request sending means for sending said information distribution transmission request including at least information for identifying the demand subscriber terminal and information for identifying said requested information, and also including a request for information transmission shared with the information when said received information transmission plan contains own desired information.

2. A two-way information transmission system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said information transmission center charges a more inexpensive fee for said share information transmission request than that for usual information transmission.

3. A method of two-way information transmission, wherein a subscriber terminal sends an information distribution transmission request including at least information for identifying the demand subscriber terminal and information for identifying said requested information to information distribution transmission center through a going-up line,

said information distribution transmission center makes the transmission plan of the information to be transmitted based on said information distribution transmission request from said subscriber terminal, and transmits the distribution transmission plan information including the plan information in the going-down control data to the subscriber terminal prior to the transmission of the main information,

said subscriber terminal is informed of said transmission plan by receiving and analyzing said going-down control data from said information distribution transmission center and sends said information transmission request including a request for information transmission shared with the information when the transmission plan contains own demand information, and

said information transmission center transmits said requested information according to said transmission plan to the subscriber terminal which makes said transmission request through the going-down line, and, during said share information transmission request, the center sends the requested information also to the subscriber terminal which makes the share transmission request.

4. A subscriber terminal in the two-way information transmission system which comprises an information distribution transmission center and a plurality of subscriber terminals connected to an information distribution transmission center through going-up lines and going-down lines, wherein said subscriber terminal requests an information to said information distribution transmission center through said going-up line, and said information distribution transmission center transmits the requested information in response to the request for the transmission;

each subscriber terminal of said plurality of subscriber terminals having:

transmission plan receiving analysis means for being informed of the transmission plan of information to be transmitted planned by said information distribution transmission center based on said information distribution transmission request from said subscriber referring to the control data sent from said information distribution transmission center, and

distribution transmission request sending means for sending said information distribution transmission request including at least information for identifying the demand subscriber terminal and information for identifying said requested information, and also including a request for information transmission shared with the information when said received information transmission plan contains own desired information.

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