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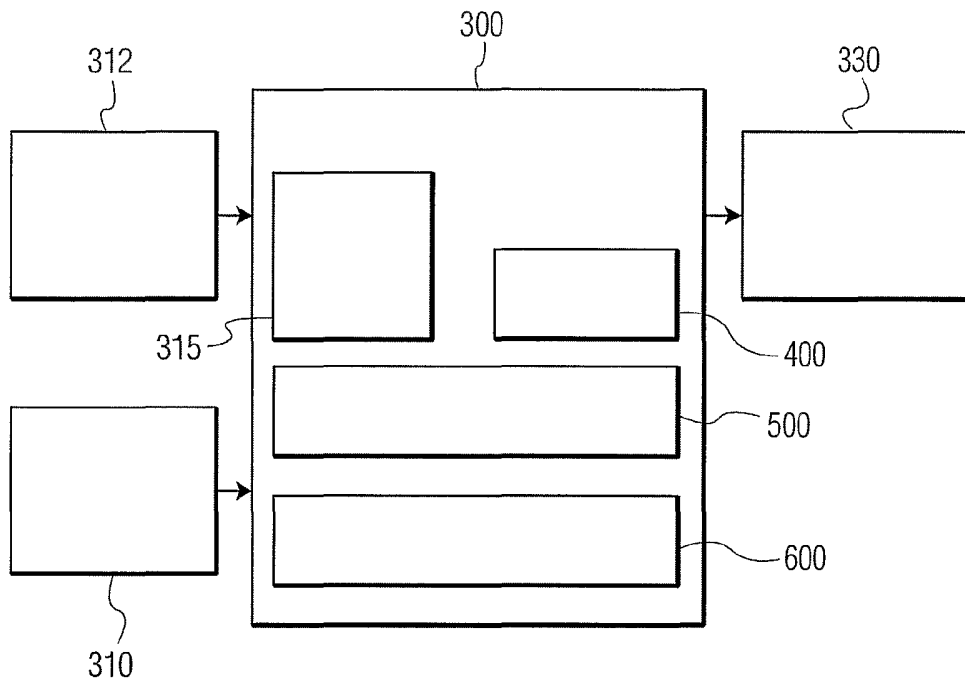
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(54) Title: INCORPORATION OF LEAD ACTOR INFORMATION FOR TV RECOMMENDERS



(57) Abstract: A program recommender (300) that receives one or more starring actor data fields for a program. The recommender adjusts one or more of the received starring actor data fields (600) by utilizing a source separate from the received starring actor data fields to identify one or more starring actors in the program. The adjusted data fields may be made available for use in creating a viewer profile (400), or alternatively may be made available for determining a recommendation (330) for the program.

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INCORPORATION OF LEAD ACTOR INFORMATION FOR TV RECOMMENDERS

The invention generally relates to TV and other recommenders. More particularly,
5 the invention relates to improvements in recommenders, including pre-processing of
certain information used in constructing the viewer profile and pre-processing of certain
information provided to the recommender for making a recommendation.

Television recommenders have been an active area of research and development,
with many techniques and devices currently available. Recommenders generally process
10 programming information such as that supplied by an electronic program guide (EPG) and
suggest those programs that might be liked by the user. Such recommendations are
typically based on certain preferences of the user regarding program attributes that are
determined, stored and utilized by the recommender when evaluating available programs.
The list of preferences or recommendation rules developed by a recommender for a user is
15 typically referred to as a viewer profile.

User preferences stored and applied by a recommender can also indicate those types
of programs that a user would not like (essentially a negative preference). Programs that
the recommender determines a user would not prefer may either be eliminated from further
consideration (i.e., not presented to the user), or may be presented with a negative
20 indication to the user (a “negative” recommendation).

Recommenders may be broadly divided into a number of categories. One general
type of recommender may be generally categorized as “implicit” television program
recommenders. Implicit television program recommenders generally generate a viewer
profile in a non-obtrusive manner based on information derived from the viewing history
25 of the user, and base subsequent television program recommendation determinations on the
viewer profile. Still other types of recommenders may generally be categorized as
“explicit” television program recommenders. Explicit television program recommenders
explicitly question users about their preferences for program attributes, such as title, genre,
actors, channel and date/time, to derive viewer profiles and generate recommendations.
30 The explicit television program recommender processes the user feedback in a known
manner to generate a viewer profile containing a set of rules that implement the preferences
of the user, which are used in providing subsequent program recommendation
determinations.

Aspects of different categories of recommenders may also be combined into a single recommender. For example, a single recommender may develop a viewer profile via implicit and explicit preferences as described above. Where there is a conflict between preferences developed implicitly and explicitly, the recommender rules may select the explicit preference, or average the two for example. Input programs would thus be evaluated based upon a composite of implicit and explicit preferences. Description of a composite recommender may be found in the co-pending and commonly owned U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 09/627,139 entitled "Three-Way Media Recommendation Method and System" having inventors Schaffer, Lee and Gutta, filed July 27, 2000, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein. Another composite recommender is described in the co-pending and commonly owned U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 09/666,401 entitled "Method and Apparatus for Generating Recommendation Scores Using Implicit and Explicit Viewing Preferences" having inventors Kurapati, Schaffer and Gutta, filed September 20, 2000, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

While existing television recommenders identify programs that may (or may not) be of interest to a given user, they suffer from a number of limitations, which if overcome, could further improve the quality of the generated program recommendation determinations. For example, recommenders usually rely on the data provided with the program for determining preferences. Such data is typically provided by the service provider or is included together with the program video itself (e.g., metadata). Such unquestioned reliance by the recommenders on the received data may result in an incorrectly identified preference and recommendations (or non-recommendations).

As a particular example, metadata for a particular movie being viewed by a user may identify the actors as Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. In an implicit type recommender, the recommender may utilize the movie genre and actors Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman as positive attributes in developing a preference profile. However, the user's favorite actor Aidan Quinn may actually be the lead (or a prominent) actor in the movie, but not included in the metadata. Thus, the recommender does not capture important information regarding a user's favorite actor in developing the user profile. Consequently, when the EPG subsequently includes a program identifying one of the actors is Aidan Quinn, the recommender may not recommend the program to the user.

In addition, the order of the names of actors provided in the metadata or other programming data by the service provider typically has no particular relevance to the prominence of the role for the actor. Thus, even if Aiden Quinn were listed for the above movie example, his name may appear in a fifth actor field when he is actually the lead actor in the movie. If the recommender utilizes only the first two actor fields in developing user preferences, or in making recommendations, for example, a similar result as described above may again occur.

In addition, in similar manner a recommender evaluating programs received in an EPG may also rely on actor data and/or ordering provided. Exclusion, improper inclusion and/or misranking of actor data for the program in the EPG may result in an improper evaluation of the program by the viewer profile, thus potentially giving an incorrect positive or false negative recommendation determination.

Among other things, the present invention includes a television program recommender that uses a separate source apart from data received for a program to identify one or more starring actors in the program, and adjusts the starring actor data received for the program to include the separately determined actor(s). The separately identified actor(s) may simply replace the actor data received for the program. As an alternative example, the recommender may first determine whether to adjust the received actor data. For example, the recommender may first determine whether a separately identified starring actor is missing from data received for the program and, if so, adjust the received data to include the missing actor. For example, the missing actor may replace one of the actor fields in the received data, or the missing actor may be included in a new field. The recommender may also determine whether a separately identified starring actor is misranked in the data received for the program and, if so, adjust the received data to properly rank the actor.

The program data may be received with a program that is used by the recommender in creation of a viewer profile. Thus, it may be received along with the video of a program that the user has chosen to watch, for example. There are a number of ways to separately identify starring actor data (and rank, where applicable) For example, for a program currently being viewed by the user, the recommender (or another module) may monitor the program's introductory text, identify key words such as "starring", and identify a name or names associated therewith. In addition, the order of appearance of the names in the video

may be accepted as reflecting the rank of the named actors. Alternatively, a separate database including program data and known to have acceptable accuracy may be consulted for actor names and ranks.

Adjusted actor data for a program will typically appear the same as received data
5 for subsequent processing by the recommender. (If a new actor data field is added, the recommender is programmed to recognize it.) Thus, the recommender may utilize adjusted actor data in the same manner as it otherwise would for actor data as received for the program when creating a viewer profile. Subsequent processing by recommender for
10 creating a viewer profile may thus incorporate a technique of a conventional recommender (e.g., a known implicit, explicit, etc. recommender). Adjusting data for programs to more accurately reflect the starring actors allows the recommender to provide a more accurate viewer profile.

Thus, in one aspect, the invention comprises a program recommender that receives one or more starring actor data fields with a program. The recommender adjusts one or
15 more of the received starring actor data fields by utilizing a source separate from the received starring actor data fields to identify one or more starring actors in the program. In another aspect, the invention comprises a method for processing data regarding a received program for use with an automated television recommender. According to the method, a separate information source containing starring actor information is accessed. The separate
20 information source is used to determine whether it identifies one or more starring actors in the program received. If so, the received data is adjusted using one or more of the identified starring actors. The adjusted received data for the program is made available for use in the creation of a viewer profile.

The invention also comprises a recommender that performs a like adjustment of
25 programming information received (such as via an EPG) that is used to make recommendations based upon a user profile. In like manner, the actor data received with a program listing may be adjusted to include separately identified actor data, which may also include a determination that the information is missing or improperly ranked in the received data. The recommender can then utilize the re-cast data for the program in
30 determining whether the program is recommended to the user. Improving the accuracy of the starring actor data included for programs in the EPG allows the accuracy of the recommendation determination to be improved.

Thus, a further aspect of the invention comprises a method for processing electronic programming data received for a program for use in automated television program recommendations. According to the method, a separate information source containing starring actor information is accessed. It is determined whether the separate information source identifies one or more starring actors in the program. If so, the received electronic programming data is adjusted using one or more of the identified starring actors. The adjusted electronic programming data received for the program is made available for use in determining an automated recommendation of the program.

It is also noted that the re-ordering of starring actors may also serve to eliminate actors having lesser roles from consideration by the recommender in creating the user profile, thus enhancing the integrity of the profile. (For example, a lesser actor is not likely to be the focal point of the user's selection of a program.) Similarly, adjusting actors in the EPG data may avoid an incorrect or disappointing recommendation to a user, and may also lead to a recommendation that might otherwise be bypassed.

Although aspects of the invention have been summarized above as part of the recommender, many different configurations may be used in implementing the invention, as noted below.

Among other things, for convenience the term "actor" is universally adopted herein to refer to both actors and actresses. Also, the term television "program" is used generically throughout and is meant to include anything that is broadcast, including movies, shows, infomercials, or the like. The order of actors provided by a source (including received programming data, such as metadata) will generally be referred to as the actor ranking, with the first actor being referred to as the lead or highest ranked actor, and the second, third, etc. listed actors being referred to as lower ranked actors. Also, as noted above, a recommender may utilize data for both selected and non-selected programs in creating a viewer profile, and the viewer profile may consequently include both positive and negative preferences. Likewise, recommendation determinations made by certain recommenders for a program under consideration may be both positive and negative, and the user may be informed of both types.

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of a recommender in accordance with the invention;

FIG. 1a is a representative diagram of a different level of the recommender of Fig. 1;

FIGS. 2a-2c illustrate examples of an adjustment of received starring actor fields according to various embodiments of the invention;

5 FIG. 3 illustrates a processing method used in creating a viewer profile in accordance with an embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 4 illustrates a processing method used in processing program information in determining a program recommendation in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

10 FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of a recommender 300 in accordance with the invention. In Fig. 1, the recommender 300 is comprised of a number of separately-depicted modules. Generally, viewer profile generation process module 315 processes a user's programming choices (user program choices input 312, which includes pertinent program data and video) to create viewer profile 400. Viewer profile generation
15 process module 315 may use both positive and negative program choices of the user that are input via input 312 (i.e., those programs selected for viewing as well as those chosen not to view). Program recommendation generation process module 500 generally receives input regarding programming data (such as via EPG input 310) and, in consultation with viewer profile 400, outputs program recommendation determinations 330 to a user.
20 Recommendations output to a user will generally include suggested programs (positive recommendations) but may also indicate that a program(s) is not recommended (negative recommendations). As described in more detail below, recommender 300 also includes starring actor adjustment process module 600, which pre-processes starring actor data relating to user program choices 312 and/or EPG 310 before further processing by viewer
25 profile generation process module 315 and/or program recommendation generation process 500, respectively.

Recommender 300 (and in particular, the various modules shown in Fig. 1 and described above) may be embodied in any computing device, such as a PC, workstation, set-top box, television circuitry, or the like. Modules included in recommender 300 thus in
30 general may reside in one or more processors and associated memory. For example, Fig. 1a provides a representative embodiment of the hardware and software components of recommender 300 that support the modules represented in Fig. 1. Thus, the modules of

Fig. 1 may reside in software 304a of memory 304 of Fig. 1a and the processing of the modules may be performed by the processor 302 in conjunction with the associated memory 304 and software 304a of Fig. 1a. (As a more particular example, various aspects of embodiments of the starring actor adjustment process module 600 discussed below (such as text and image detection and recognition, adjustment of data fields, etc.) may be stored in software 304a, and be applied using processor 302 and associated memory 304.)

Techniques used by the viewer profile generation process 315 of recommender 300 in creating the viewer profile 400 and the program recommendation generation process 500 (which generally operates in conjunction with viewer profile 400) may be in accordance with one or a combination of techniques that are well-known or conventional in the art. Thus, the viewer profile generation process 315, viewer profile 400 and program recommendation generation process 500 may adopt such processing from one or a combination of conventional explicit program recommenders, implicit program recommenders, and other program recommenders. For example, viewer profile generation process 315, viewer profile 400 and program recommendation generation process 500 may utilize the decision tree processing techniques described in U.S. Patent No. 6,727,914 B1 entitled "Method and Apparatus for Recommending Television Programming Using Decision Trees", of inventor Srinivas Gutta, issued 4/27/04, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein (and referred to as the "'914 patent"). The '914 patent utilizes data of shows that a user has viewed (or chosen not to view) to classify a number of program attributes. A hierarchical decision tree is created, where the attributes selected for nodes are determined by relative entropy measures for the attributes, and each leaf node provides either a positive or negative recommendation for a program corresponding to the particular branch. Such processing and the resultant decision tree may be incorporated as the viewer profile generation process 315 and viewer profile 400, respectively. The decision tree is thereafter applied to make program recommendations, corresponding to program recommendation generation process 500. Whatever techniques are incorporated in the recommender 300 of this embodiment, as described further below starring actors in at least some programs are used by viewer profile generation process 315 in creation of the viewer profile 400 and/or starring actors are used for at least some programs listings in the program recommendation generation process 500.

Focusing first on viewer profile 400, as noted this is created by viewer profile generation process 315 of recommender 300 based on programs elected for viewing (and for certain recommenders, not viewed) by the user. This program data is represented as input in Fig. 1 by user program choices 312, which includes pertinent program data and video. Thus, recommender 300 generally monitors the programs viewed by the user input via block 312 and utilizes the data (either directly, or after certain pre-processing described below) in viewer profile generation process 315 in the creation of viewer profile 400. Where the recommender 300 implements the decision tree technique of the '914 patent, the input program data (including the data as pre-processed) comprises the attributes and positive and negative examples utilized in creating the nodes and leaves of the tree.

Much of the program data regarding viewed (as well as non-selected) programs input at block 312 may be directly utilized by viewer profile generation process 315 in creating the viewer profile 400 according to the conventional technique utilized. This may include program genre, time of day and channel, among many other program attributes. However, portions of the received data may first be adjusted and/or new data may be added by starring actor adjustment processes 600. For example, where the received data of a program (such as metadata) input in block 312 includes starring actor fields, the starring actor adjustment process module 600 is applied before the actor data is processed further by the viewer profile generation process 315 of recommender 300. In that case, module 600 may analyze the video input available at block 312 for the program for a period of time. For example, text detection and recognition may be applied to the video for 3 minutes, corresponding approximately to the duration of an introductory credit portion of a program, and used to identify one or more starring actors. Similarly, the last three minutes of the program may likewise be monitored, where closing credits typically appear.

Detection and recognition of text in the considered portions of the video may utilize any one or a combination of known or conventional techniques. For example, certain techniques may be adopted and adapted from U.S. Patent No. 6,608,930 B1 entitled "Method And System For Analyzing Video Content Using Detected Text In Video Frames, inventors Agnihotri et al., issued 8/19/03, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein (and referred to as the "'930 patent"). Thus, starring actor adjustment process 600 may adopt techniques from the '930 patent relating to text detection and recognition, for example, to monitor the beginning or ending video of the

program for credit text as noted above. (In addition, pertinent text attribute features used for identifying program credits (such as scrolling text, identifying keywords such as “starring”, etc.) may also be adopted from the ‘930 patent to confirm that the detected text corresponds to program credits.)

5 As an alternative, starring actor adjustment process module 600 of recommender 300 may substitute the text detection technique described in “Automatic Location Of Text In Video Frames”, by Xian-Shang Hua, Xiang-Rong Chen, Liu Wenyin & Hong-Jiang Zhang, Proceedings of the 2001 ACM Workshops on Multimedia: Multimedia Information Retrieval, pp. 24-27 (ACM Press 2001), the entire contents of which are hereby
10 incorporated by reference herein.

 After detecting and recognizing credit text in this manner, adjustment process 600 may adapt it to identify starring actors included in the text. Thus, adjustment process 600 may, for example, confirm that the text includes names by comparing the text with names in a name database (which may specifically include actor names). Adjustment process 600
15 may select a lead actor based on one or more selection rules. Rules for such analysis may be as simple as determining whether the detected text includes the word “starring” adjacent to a name. According to other (or additional) rules, the text may be monitored to determine the first name that appears in text in the program video, or the name having the largest size, which typically corresponds to the lead actor.

20 Having so identified the lead actor from the video for the program using text-based techniques, the starring actor adjustment process 600 may simply replace the first name in the received starring actor fields with the identified lead actor. Fig. 2a provides an example of this basic process, where separately identified lead actor (Aidan Quinn, identified via text analysis of the program’s video) simply replaces the first ranked actor in
25 the received starring actor fields (Tom Cruise). The resulting adjusted starring actor fields comprise a more accurate lead actor. The adjusted starring actor fields thus appear in the same form as the received starring actor fields, and are made available to viewer profile generation process 315 for use with the other input data for the program in creating viewer profile 400.

30 In the particular example shown in Fig. 2a, the accuracy of the lead actor field is improved, but Aidan Quinn is also named third in the adjusted data and the received actor data for Tom Cruise is lost. Alternatively, additional processing may occur before names

are replaced. For example, the identified lead actor name may first be compared with the received names to determine whether any received names should be adjusted. If the identified lead actor name does not appear among the received actors, the name of the identified actor is inserted in the first field, the received names are all moved down one rank, and the lowest received name is dropped. If the identified actor appears in the first received actor field, no adjustment is needed. If the identified actor appears at a lower ranked received field, the name is removed from the lower field and all higher ranked names received are each shifted down one rank. This serves to shift the vacated field position to the first field, and the identified actor name is inserted in the first field. Fig. 2b exemplifies such a procedure for the scenario of Fig. 2a. In Fig. 2b, identified actor Aidan Quinn is recognized as also appearing in the third received field. His name is therefore dropped from the third field, the first and second received names (Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman) are shifted to the second and third fields, respectively, Aidan Quinn's name is inserted in the first field, and the name in the fourth field (John Goodman) remains unchanged. (Thus, Aidan Quinn's name is effectively shifted in rank from the third to first position.) Thus, the lead actor in the adjusted data more accurately identifies Aidan Quinn as the lead actor while also maintaining the identity and relative rankings of the other actors according to the received fields.

Other comparison and replacement rules will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art, depending on the relative priority to be given to the data. As noted above and also demonstrated in the outcome shown in Fig. 2b, the adjusted starring actor fields appear in the same form as the received starring actor fields, and are made available to viewer profile generation process 315 for use with the other input data for the program in creating viewer profile 400. By including program data that more accurately reflects the actual lead actor for the program, recommender 300 is capable of creating a more accurate viewer profile 400 and may subsequently make more accurate recommendation determinations using that profile.

It is noted that the exemplary embodiment described above relies on detecting credit text in the video for the first few minutes after a user tunes in to a program. This relies on the user tuning in as the program is beginning. If the user tunes in after the opening credits, for example, no text is detected, and the unaltered starring data fields received with the program are made available to the viewer profile generation process 315

in developing the viewer profile 400. (A similar result may occur if the program's ending credits may be used, but are not detected.) Alternatively, where no text is detected or recognized, starring actor adjustment process 600 may consult an internal or external database listing programs and corresponding starring actor data. (Such an internal database may also be in memory 304 of Fig. 1a, for example.) Starring actor data for programs included in such a database may be previously compiled using text-based analysis of the video as described above, they may be manually entered by trained employees of a service, etc. Adjustment process 600 may determine whether the database includes the program under consideration (which generally is identified to recommender 300 by a received title data field). If so, the lead actor may be identified for the program in the database and utilized as described above for a textually-based identification. It is noted that adjustment process 600 may utilize the database as an alternative to the text determination of potential lead actors. Also, such a database may also be used in conjunction with the text-based identification, with appropriate decision rules when there is conflicting text-based identification of a potential lead actor.

Alternative to (or in addition to) the above-noted techniques for identifying a starring actor separate from the starring actor data received with the program (e.g., metadata or the like), starring actor adjustment process 600 of recommender 300 may apply a well-known face recognition technique to the video of the program to identify actors. For example, a sample of the video for the program may be monitored and facial images captured using well-known techniques. Those faces may be identified by comparison with a database of actors' faces available to the starring actor adjustment process 600. The lead actor (and lesser actors) may be selected, for example, based on time of appearance in the sampling.

Alternative to replacing the lead name in the starring actor data field received, the name of the leading actor determined in the video by text-based techniques (or other determination) may be put into a new data field called the "lead actor" field by starring actor adjustment process 600. In that case, viewer profile generation process 315 is programmed to utilize the lead actor field when filled in the same manner that it would use the first of the starring actor data fields received with the program in creating the viewer profile 400. In addition, where the viewer profile generation process 315 is capable of utilizing starring actors as an attribute in determining the viewer profile, but a received

program does not include starring actor data fields, adjustment process 600 may identify a lead actor as described above and create a starring actor field for the program for use in developing viewer profile 400.

5 It is noted that preferably viewer profile generation process 315 is generally programmed to utilize the identities and ranks of adjusted starring actors for a program when appropriate in creating a more accurate the viewer profile 400. However, viewer profile generation process 315 does not necessarily use all data for any one particular program choice of a user in creating the viewer profile 400. Thus, for a particular program input via block 312, viewer profile generation process 315 may not necessarily use
10 adjusted starring actor fields for the program as adjusted and/or created by starring actor adjustment process 600. Further, many conventional recommenders also utilize the attributes of programs that are not selected for viewing by a user in the creation of viewer profile 400, which essentially creates negative preferences. Such negative preferences in the viewer profile 400 can be used to evaluate subsequent programs in making no
15 recommendation or an explicitly negative recommendation. Where viewer profile generation process 315 of recommender 300 constructs the viewer profile 400 using non-selected programming, starring actor adjustment process 600 may adjust the starring actor data fields for those non-viewed programs in like manner as for the viewed program described above. For example, where a text-based analysis of the video signal is used to
20 determine a starring actor, starring actor adjustment process 600 may be capable of simultaneously monitoring video signals of the selected program and one or more non-selected programs. By more accurately reflecting the starring actors in the non-selected programs, the viewer profile 400 created once again more accurately reflects the user's likes and dislikes.

25 In like manner, starring actor adjustment process 600 may separately identify more than one actor name for a received program and utilize them to adjust received starring actor fields. The multiple identified actors may be used to replace the named actors in received data fields for the program, used to populate vacant fields, or placed in newly created fields. As shown in Figs. 2a and 2b, there may be four actors named in the
30 received starring actor fields which may potentially be replaced with separately identified actors. (Although four are used in these examples, there may be more or less. The Tribune Media Service, for example, reserves a total of 6 fields for actor names.) For example, in a

manner analogous to those described above, video of a program may be analyzed to identify text containing two starring actor names. The rank of the identified actors may also be taken as being in the order detected in the video. Adjustment process 600 may replace the two names appearing in the first and second received data fields with the
5 respective identified actors. In like manner, more than two names may be identified and used to replace the received names.

Other aspects described above may also be utilized where starring actor adjustment process 600 identifies multiple starring actor names. For example, the identified names may be checked in a database to confirm that they are actually the names of actors before
10 replacing received data fields. Also, the received names may be moved down in rank by the number of identified names, so that the identified names effectively replace the lowest ranked names received. In addition, the identified names may first be compared with the received names and the comparison results used in the adjustment. For example, each identified name appearing as a received name may be removed from its received name
15 field. The remaining received names of higher rank are pushed down in sequence to fill any lower fields vacated, while also clearing the needed number of the highest fields for insertion of the identified actor names. If necessary (i.e., when less than all of the identified names appear among the received names), received names in the lowest fields may be pushed out (dropped) to make sufficient room in the top fields.

For example, as shown in Fig. 2c, two identified actors Nicole Kidman and Aidan Quinn have identified ranks 1 and 2, respectively. By comparing received and identified names, it is recognized that identified actor Nicole Kidman also appears in received field 2. Nicole Kidman is therefore removed from received field two. The name in received field one (Tom Cruise) is moved down two fields to the field 3, thus leaving fields 1 and 2
25 vacant for inserting identified actors Nicole Kidman and Aidan Quinn, respectively. Tom Cruise pushes John Goodman from position 3 to position 4, and John Goodman pushes Harvey Keitel off the list. This exemplary replacement procedure for multiple actors identified gives priority to the identified actors and rankings, avoids duplication in the lower ranks, and preserves the ranking of the received actors in the lower ranks.

As in the case of one identified actor, the comparison of names may be used to first
30 determine whether or not one or more of the received name fields needs to be adjusted. For example, the comparison may recognize when the name and rank of an identified actor

is the same as the name and rank of a received actor, thus determining that no adjustment is needed for that field. The data in such a recognized field may be maintained while adjustments are made as needed for any other retrieved names. (In the methodology described immediately above, for example, higher ranked names being pushed down to
5 make room for other identified names would skip such a field.) In the case where all identified names and ranks corresponded to their respective received names and ranks, the comparison may determine that no adjustment is needed.

As in the case of separately identifying one starring actor, other techniques apart from (or in addition to) text-based techniques may be used to identify multiple starring
10 actors in the program, such as consulting a database. Also, the "lead actor" identified may be placed in a new data field, while the second, third, etc. actors identified may replace those in the received data fields. In addition, actors identified by adjustment process 600 may be used to populate vacant data fields received for a program, not just replace or re-order names in the received data fields. Also, replacement rules may readily cover the
15 situation where more starring actors are identified than received data fields. (For the exemplary embodiment described above with respect to Fig. 2c, if five actor names were identified, the first four would appear in the four adjusted starring actor fields, unless additional data fields are created.) Similarly, where the recommender 300 programming is capable of utilizing starring actors as an attribute in determining the viewer profile, but a
20 received program does not include starring actor data fields, adjustment process 600 may identify one or more starring actors using a separate source (e.g., text-based analysis of the program video) and create data fields for the program.

Fig. 3 is an embodiment that presents a basic exemplary methodology as it pertains to creation of a viewer profile. In block 700, user program choices (including program
25 data and video) are received. In block 704, one or more starring actors are identified for a received program separately from any program data received in block 700. In block 708, starring actor data received with the program is adjusted utilizing identified starring actor data for the program in block 704. Such adjustment may be automatic or may selectively occur after a comparison between the names (and optionally the actor ranks) of received
30 starring actors with identified starring actors. The adjusted data is made available for use with any other data received for the program in creation of the viewer profile in block 712.

As noted, adjusting (or adding) the starring actor data information to better reflect the lead actor (as well as secondary actors) allows recommender 300 to create a viewer profile 400 that better reflects the user's programming preferences, including negative preferences where applicable. Programs in the EPG 310 that are subsequently evaluated using that profile may result in more accurate recommendation determinations 330.

Starring actor data included for programs listed in EPG 310 may also be adjusted where appropriate in a manner similar to that discussed above for programs used in creating the viewer profile 400. Some (or all) programs included in EPG 310 may also include starring actor data, and program recommendation generation process 500 may be programmed to utilize such starring actor data in applying the viewer profile 400 to the prospective program listing. For example, where the viewer profile 400 comprises a decision tree according to the '914 patent, it may include nodes and branches for one or more actors. Thus, actor data for a program listing may be utilized in a node or branch of the decision tree in determining a recommendation for the program.

Higher accuracy of starring actor data included with prospective programs in the EPG 310 used with such recommenders will thus also result in more accurate recommendation determinations. In an additional (or alternative) aspect of the exemplary embodiment depicted in Fig. 1, the starring actor adjustment process 600 also initially operates on program data input to recommender 300 with the program listing via EPG 310. For example, the title and, when necessary, other program information (such as program genre) included with the listing is used to retrieve the program's starring actors from an external or internal database of programs containing starring actor data. (As for the database used in creating the viewer profile 400, starring actor data for programs included in such a database may be previously compiled using the text-based analysis of video techniques described above, they may be manually entered by trained employees of a service, etc.) Adjustment process 600 may determine whether the database includes the program under consideration and, if so, retrieve one or more starring actor names and, where applicable, actor ranking.

Adjustment process 600 may then adjust the starring actor data for the program listing to include the retrieved actor(s). For example, names received with the listing may be simply replaced with the retrieved names. Alternatively, each name retrieved for the program may replace the respective name received with the program based on rank. For

example, if three names are retrieved and four names are received, retrieved names 1-3 may replace received names 1-3 and received name 4 will remain unchanged.

Alternatively, analogous to the description above for adjustment of data used in creation of the viewer profile 400, adjustment process 600 may compare the received and retrieved names. The comparison may be used in adjusting the received names, including determining whether or not to adjust a name or names. (For example, adjustment process 600 for a program listing may use procedures analogous to those described above with respect to Figs. 2b and 2c, where in this case received starring actor fields correspond to the program listing data and the retrieved actor names for the program listing are analogous to the identified lead actor or actors of Figs. 2b and 2c.) If four or more names are retrieved in the prior example, the first four may replace all of the received names, or additional data fields may be created. In addition, adjustment process 600 may add retrieved names to vacant data fields in the programming data, or create new or additional fields for retrieved names.

Of course, the received starring actor data for a program listing may accurately reflect the retrieved actor data, or the database may not include the program. In that case, the original program data is used by program recommendation generation process 500 of recommender 300 in its normal fashion to provide a recommendation determination for the program 330. When adjustment process 600 adjusts actor data received with a program listing via EPG 310, the modified program data contains more accurate starring actor data, but is otherwise is in the same form. (If the form is changed, for example, by adding a new field to the listing that includes a retrieved name, program recommendation generation process 500 is programmed to recognize it.) Thus, the adjusted program listing data is likewise used by program recommendation generation process 500 with viewer profile 400 in its normal fashion to provide a recommendation determination 330 for the program. (In that regard, it is noted that preferably program recommendation generation process 500 and viewer profile 400 are generally configured to utilize the identities and ranks of adjusted starring actors in a program listing in rendering a recommendation determination 330 for the program. However, for any particular program listed, the program recommendation generation process 500 may not necessarily utilize included starring actor data, whether or not adjusted. In addition, process 500 may generate either no recommendation for a

particular program or an explicitly negative recommendation in recommendation determination 330.)

In the particular embodiment given above with respect to adjustment of the EPG 310 program data, a database of programs is utilized for retrieving starring actors for the program and adjusting the program data received for the program in the EPG 310. However, other techniques may be used for identifying starring actor information separately from the program data received with the EPG 310. For example, adjustment process 600 may apply the above-described techniques of text-based analysis to the underlying video of programs listed in the EPG 310. The underlying video for a program may be accessed, for example, through one or more video archives accessed by the adjustment process. Because many programs are typically input via EPG 310, attempting to evaluate and adjust (or add) starring actor information in this manner for each listed program may be time consuming. Thus, adjustment process may first focus on movies beginning within one-half hour, and then expand the process to other programs. Alternatively, the EPG 310 provider may as a service conduct the initial credit text search for each program, and provide those particular video frames in order along with the other program data in the EPG 310. For each program, adjustment process 600 may very rapidly search the received frames for starring actor text, in the manner described above.

Fig. 4 is an embodiment that presents a basic methodology for the EPG aspect in accordance with the invention. Programming data for a program is received in block 740. In block 744, one or more starring actors are identified for the program separately from any programming data received in block 740. In block 748, starring actor data received with the programming data is adjusted utilizing identified starring actor data for the program in block 744. Such adjustment may be automatic or may selectively occur after a comparison between the names (and optionally the actor ranks) of received starring actors and identified starring actors. The adjusted data is made available for use with any other data received for the program in determining a recommendation of the program for the user in block 752. Such a recommendation may be a positive, negative or no recommendation.

While the invention has been described with reference to several embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to the specific forms shown and described. Thus, various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the

appended claims. For example, as noted there are many alternative techniques of text detection and recognition that may be utilized in the various embodiments, as well many different types of supporting recommender techniques that may be utilized. In addition, the recommender such as recommender 300 of Fig. 1 may be implemented as part of a television set, may be part of a set top box that interfaces with a television set, may be further upstream (for example, part of a website), or other like configuration. Similarly, the starring actor adjustment process 600 is shown as a separate module in recommender 300 in the embodiments discussed with respect to Fig. 1. It will be clear to one skilled in the art that implementation of the various processing tasks of this module as discussed above may be integrated with viewer profile generation process module 315, and/or the program recommendation generation process module 500.

In addition, the various modules supporting embodiments of the invention may be part of (and spread out amongst) a more expansive video or entertainment system. For example, adjustment processing 600 module may be implemented separately from the other modules of recommender 300 and utilize its own processor or processors. Thus, for example, a separate adjustment process for the starring actor data pertaining to user program choices 312 may be implemented upstream from the other modules of the recommender 300, and a separate adjustment process for EPG 310 may be implemented upstream from the other modules of the recommender 300. The other modules of the recommender and the adjustment processes may be performed at separate remote websites and then transmitted to a user's television, computer, or the like.

In addition, the above embodiments discussed above gave priority to the separately identified actors over the actors received with the program information. Alternatively, the recommender rules may give the received actor names priority. For example, separately identified actor(s) may be used as replacements only where they do not appear among the received actors and may only be used to replace one or a limited number of the lowest ranked fields. Such priority may be a function of rules pertaining to the reliability of the identified names.

Thus, the particular techniques described above are by way of example only and not to limit the scope of the invention.

What Is Claimed Is:

- 1) A program recommender (300) that receives one or more starring actor data fields with a program, the recommender adjusting (600) one or more of the received starring actor data fields by utilizing a source separate from the received starring actor data fields to identify one or more starring actors in the program.
- 2) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) analyzes text of the program video to identify the one or more starring actors in the program.
- 3) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) utilizes a database of programs to identify the one or more starring actors in the program.
- 4) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) inserts one or more of the starring actors identified into the first one or more of the received starring actor data fields, respectively.
- 5) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) initially determines whether to adjust one or more of the starring actor data fields received with the program.
- 6) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) selectively adjusts one or more of the received starring actor data fields based at least in part on a comparison between one or more of the identified starring actors and starring actors named in the one or more received starring actor data fields.
- 7) The recommender as in Claim 6, wherein the comparison comprises determining the names of any of the one or more identified starring actors that also appear in the received starring actor data fields.
- 8) The recommender as in Claim 1, wherein the recommender (300) resides in at least one processor (302) and at least one associated memory (304).

9) A method for processing data regarding a received program (700) for use in creating a viewer profile for making automated television recommendations, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) accessing a separate information source containing starring actor information;
- b) determining whether the separate information source identifies one or more starring actors in the program received (704);
- c) adjusting the received data using one or more of the identified starring actors if the separate information source contains the identity of one or more starring actors in the program (708); and
- d) making the adjusted data for the program available for use in the creation of the viewer profile (712).

10) The method as in Claim 9, wherein accessing the separate information source comprises accessing the video of the received program.

11) The method as in Claim 10, wherein determining whether the separate information source contains the identity of one or more starring actors in the program received (708) comprises applying text-based analysis to the received video.

12) The method as in Claim 11, wherein the text is searched for the names of starring actors in the program.

13) The method as in Claim 10, wherein determining whether the separate information source contains the identity of one or more starring actors in the program received (708) comprises detecting faces in the video received.

14) The method as in Claim 9, wherein accessing the separate information source comprises accessing a database including program information.

15) The method as in Claim 9, further including the step of initially determining whether to adjust data regarding one or more starring actors received with the program.

16) The method as in Claim 9, wherein adjusting the received data using the identified one or more starring actors (708) comprises determining whether to change at least one of a name and a rank of one or more starring actors included with the received data.

17) The method as in Claim 16, wherein determining whether to change at least one of a name and a rank of one or more starring actors included with the received data comprises comparing one or more of the identified starring actors with one or more of the received starring actors.

18) The method as in Claim 9, wherein adjusting the received data using the identified one or more starring actors (708) comprises inserting one or more of the identified starring actors as the first one or more starring actors included with the received data.

19) The method as in Claim 9, wherein the method for processing data regarding a received program is part of a television recommender (300).

20) An automated recommendation system component, comprising at least one processor (302) that receives program data of a program, said at least one processor (302):

- a) accessing a separate information source containing starring actor information;
- b) determining whether the separate information source identifies one or more starring actors in the program (600);
- c) adjusting the received data using one or more of the identified starring actors if the separate information source contains the identity of one or more starring actors in the program (600); and
- d) making available the adjusted data for the program for use in the creation (315) of a viewer profile (400).

21) The automated recommendation system component of Claim 20, wherein accessing the separate information source containing starring actor information comprises receiving video of the program (312).

22) The automated recommendation system component of Claim 21, wherein determining whether the separate information source identifies at least one starring actor in the program received comprises analyzing the received video of the program for text of starring actor names (600).

23) The automated recommendation system component as in Claim 20, wherein accessing the separate information source containing starring actor information comprises accessing a database containing program information.

24) The automated recommendation system component as in Claim 20, wherein making available the adjusted data for the program for use in the creation (315) of a viewer profile (400) comprises making the adjusted data available to a television recommender (300).

25) The automated recommendation system component as in Claim 20, wherein processing tasks a-d are part of a television recommender (300) embodied in the at least one processor (302) and at least one associated memory (304), the television recommender (300) also creating the viewer profile (400).

26) A method for processing electronic programming data (740) received for a program for use in automated television program recommendations, the method comprising:

- a) accessing a separate information source containing starring actor information (744);
- b) determining whether the separate information source identifies one or more starring actors in the program (744);

c) adjusting the received electronic programming data using one or more of the identified starring actors if the separate information source contains the identity of one or more starring actors in the program (748); and

d) making the adjusted electronic programming data for the program available for use in an automated recommendation determination of the program (752).

27) The method as in Claim 26, wherein accessing the separate information source comprises accessing a database.

28) The method as in Claim 26, wherein adjusting the received data is further a function of whether the received data for the program also includes one or more of the identified starring actors.

29) The method as in Claim 26, wherein the method further comprises an initial determination of whether to adjust the received data.

30) The method as in Claim 26, wherein the method for processing electronic programming data (740) is part of an automated television recommender (300).

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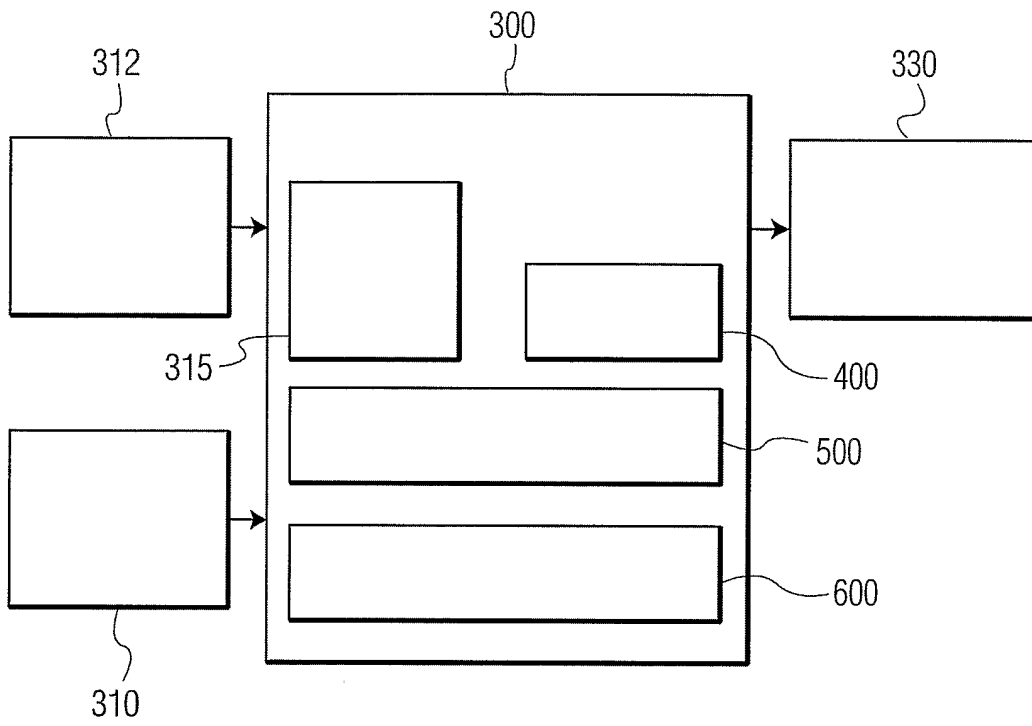


FIG. 1

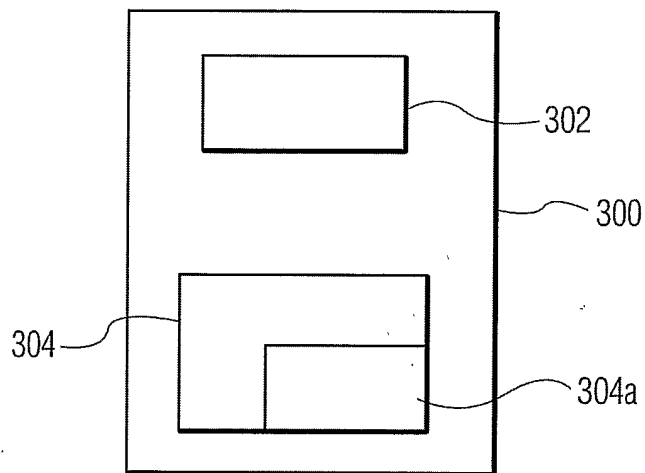


FIG. 1A

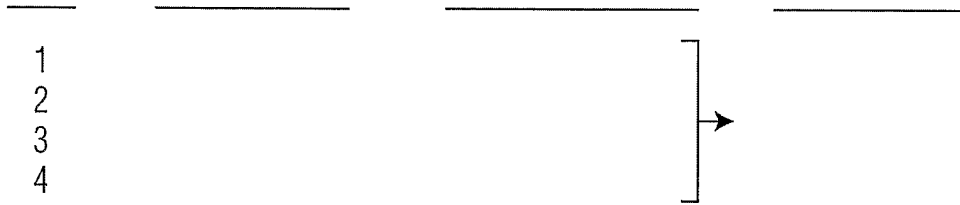


FIG. 2A

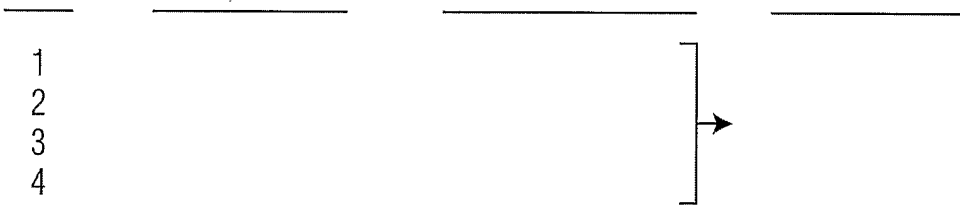


FIG. 2B

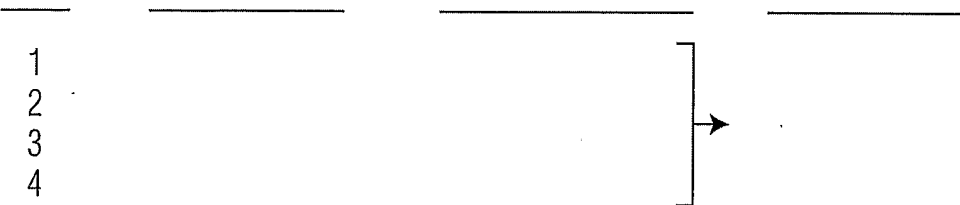


FIG. 2C

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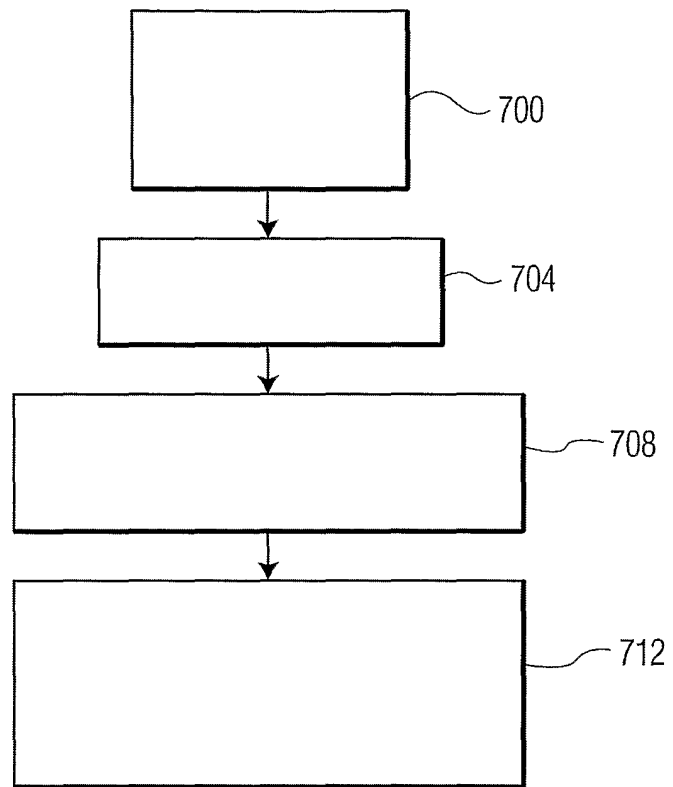


FIG. 3

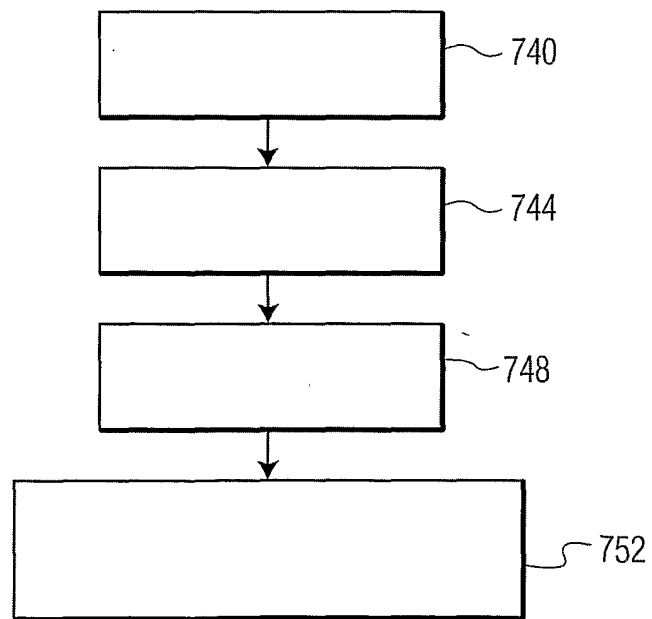


FIG. 4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
 PCT/IB2005/053560

<p>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER H04N5/445</p> <p>According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC</p>														
<p>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</p> <p>Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) H04N</p> <p>Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched</p> <p>Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal</p>														
<p>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category °</th> <th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th> <th>Relevant to claim No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>X</td> <td>US 2004/003403 A1 (MARSH DAVID J) 1 January 2004 (2004-01-01) abstract paragraphs '0201! - '0207!, '0213! - '0215! figures 3,6,7</td> <td>1,9,20,26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A,P</td> <td>US 2005/102696 A1 (WESTBERG THOMAS E) 12 May 2005 (2005-05-12) abstract paragraphs '0009!, '0087!, '0100!, '0110!, '0124! figure 15</td> <td>1-30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>EP 1 387 583 A (NTL GROUP LIMITED) 4 February 2004 (2004-02-04) abstract paragraphs '0014!, '0014!, '0044!</td> <td>1-30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.	X	US 2004/003403 A1 (MARSH DAVID J) 1 January 2004 (2004-01-01) abstract paragraphs '0201! - '0207!, '0213! - '0215! figures 3,6,7	1,9,20,26	A,P	US 2005/102696 A1 (WESTBERG THOMAS E) 12 May 2005 (2005-05-12) abstract paragraphs '0009!, '0087!, '0100!, '0110!, '0124! figure 15	1-30	A	EP 1 387 583 A (NTL GROUP LIMITED) 4 February 2004 (2004-02-04) abstract paragraphs '0014!, '0014!, '0044!	1-30
Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.												
X	US 2004/003403 A1 (MARSH DAVID J) 1 January 2004 (2004-01-01) abstract paragraphs '0201! - '0207!, '0213! - '0215! figures 3,6,7	1,9,20,26												
A,P	US 2005/102696 A1 (WESTBERG THOMAS E) 12 May 2005 (2005-05-12) abstract paragraphs '0009!, '0087!, '0100!, '0110!, '0124! figure 15	1-30												
A	EP 1 387 583 A (NTL GROUP LIMITED) 4 February 2004 (2004-02-04) abstract paragraphs '0014!, '0014!, '0044!	1-30												
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.</p>														
<p>° Special categories of cited documents :</p> <p>*A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>*E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>*L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>*O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>*P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> <p>*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.</p> <p>* & * document member of the same patent family</p>														
<p>Date of the actual completion of the international search 19 January 2006</p>		<p>Date of mailing of the international search report 27/01/2006</p>												
<p>Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016</p>		<p>Authorized officer Lauri, L</p>												

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

.../IB2005/053560

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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