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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR MANAGING A PERSISTENT VIRTUAL AVATAR WITH MIGRATIONAL ABILITY**

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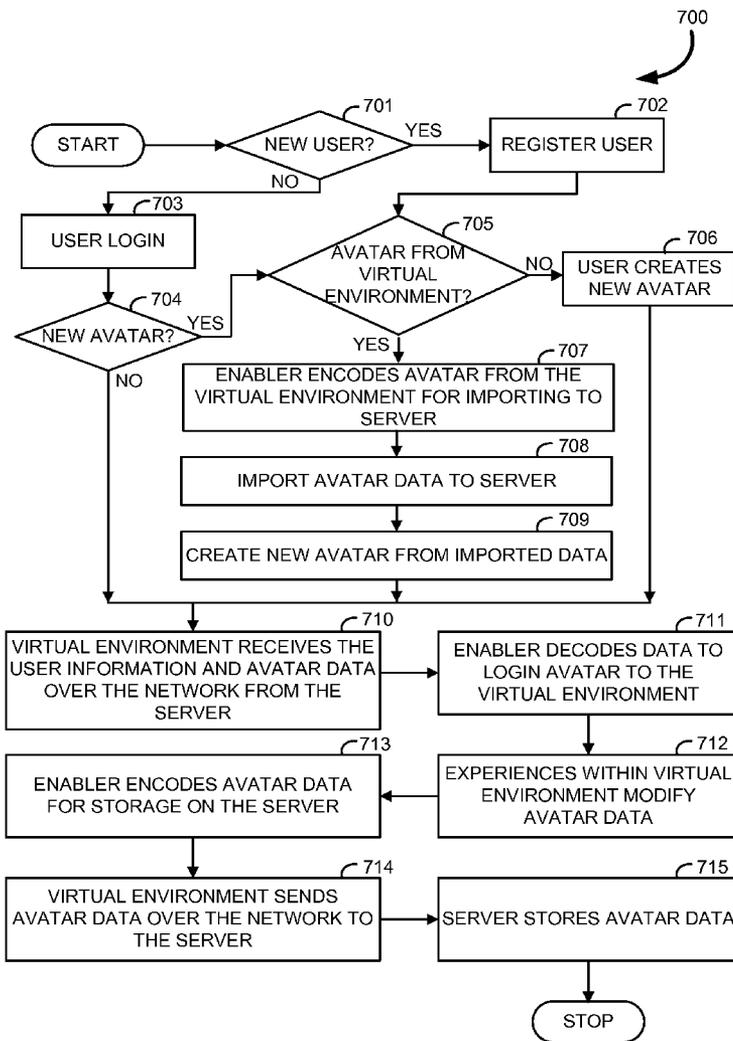
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
Systems and methods for managing a virtual avatar with migrational ability, and brokering information, are provided. The persistent avatar exists in a plurality of virtual environments and includes attributes generated by an attribute generator, an enabler for enabling virtual environments to access the stored attribute data, and a migrator for allowing the avatar to migrate from one virtual environment to another while the attributes of the persistent avatar remain substantially constant. The enabler utilizes at least one client based on protocol suite. Stored attribute data is modifiable by experiences in any virtual environment. User of the persistent avatar is notified when events occur in any virtual environment, or within real life, by monitoring for events with a monitor, assessing importance of the event with an assessor, and notifying the owner with an informer of the event if it exceeds a threshold of importance.

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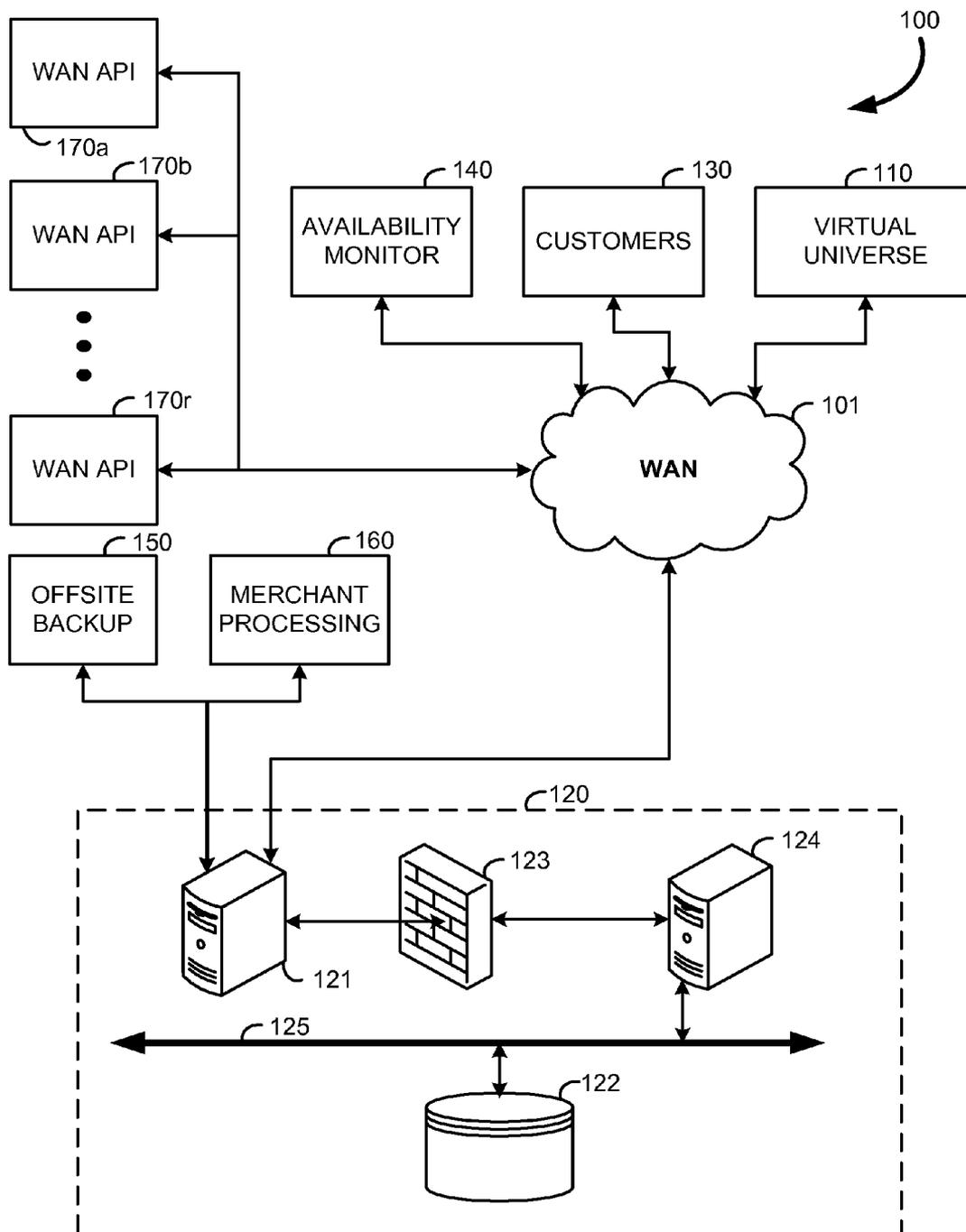


FIG. 1A

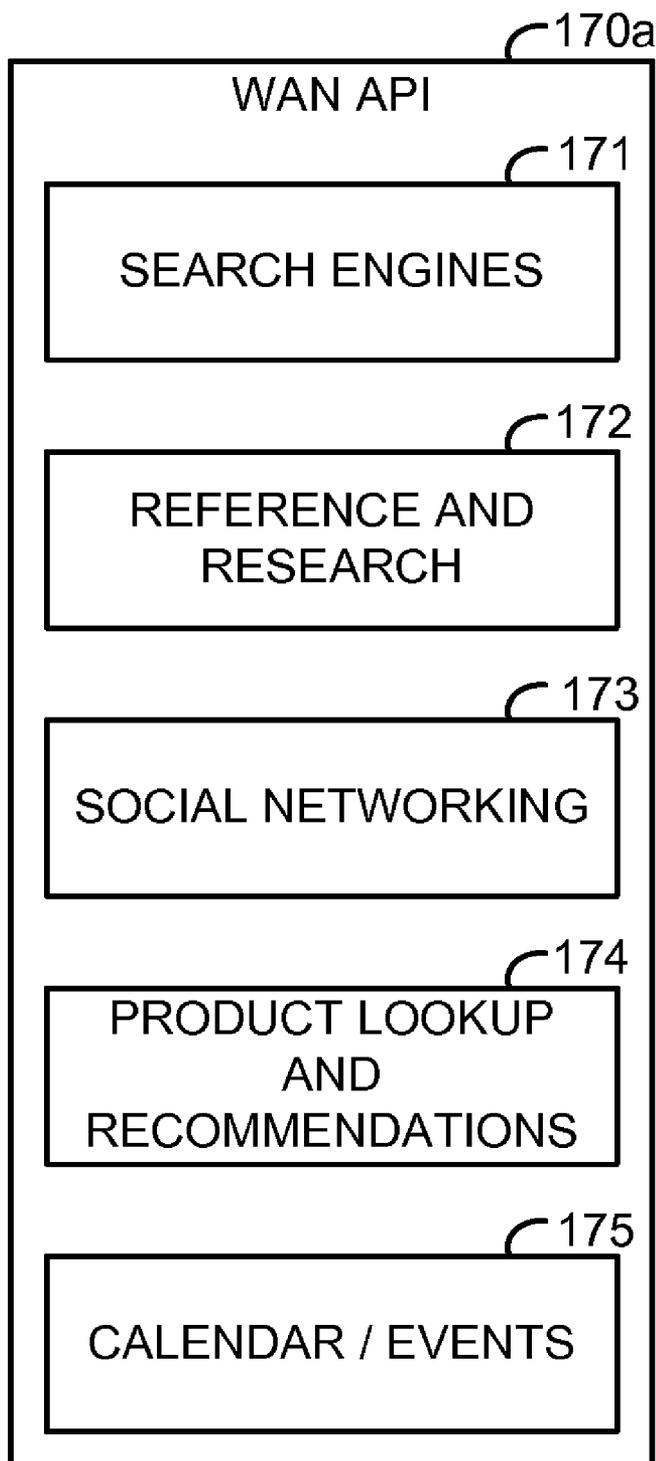


FIG. 1B

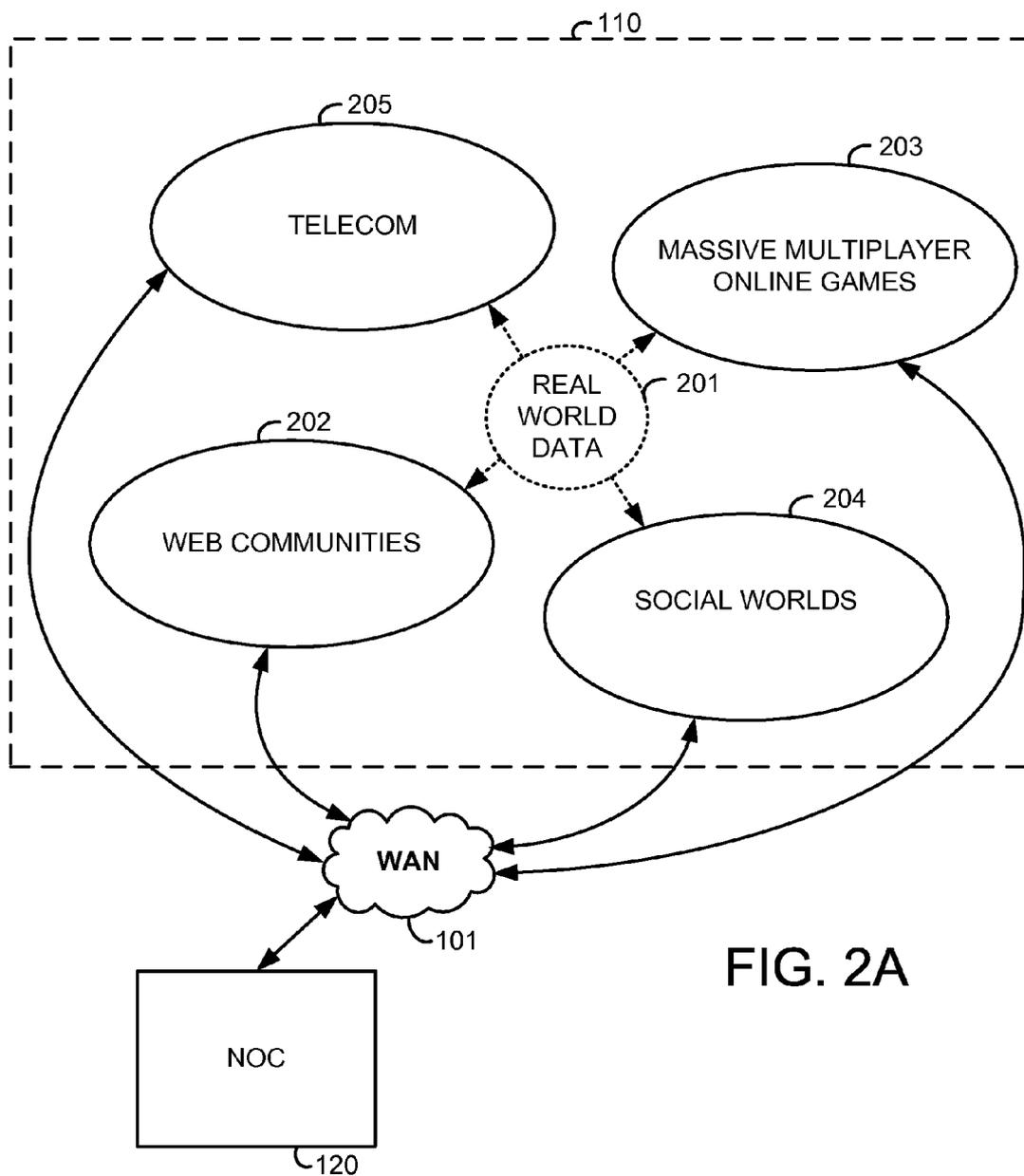


FIG. 2A

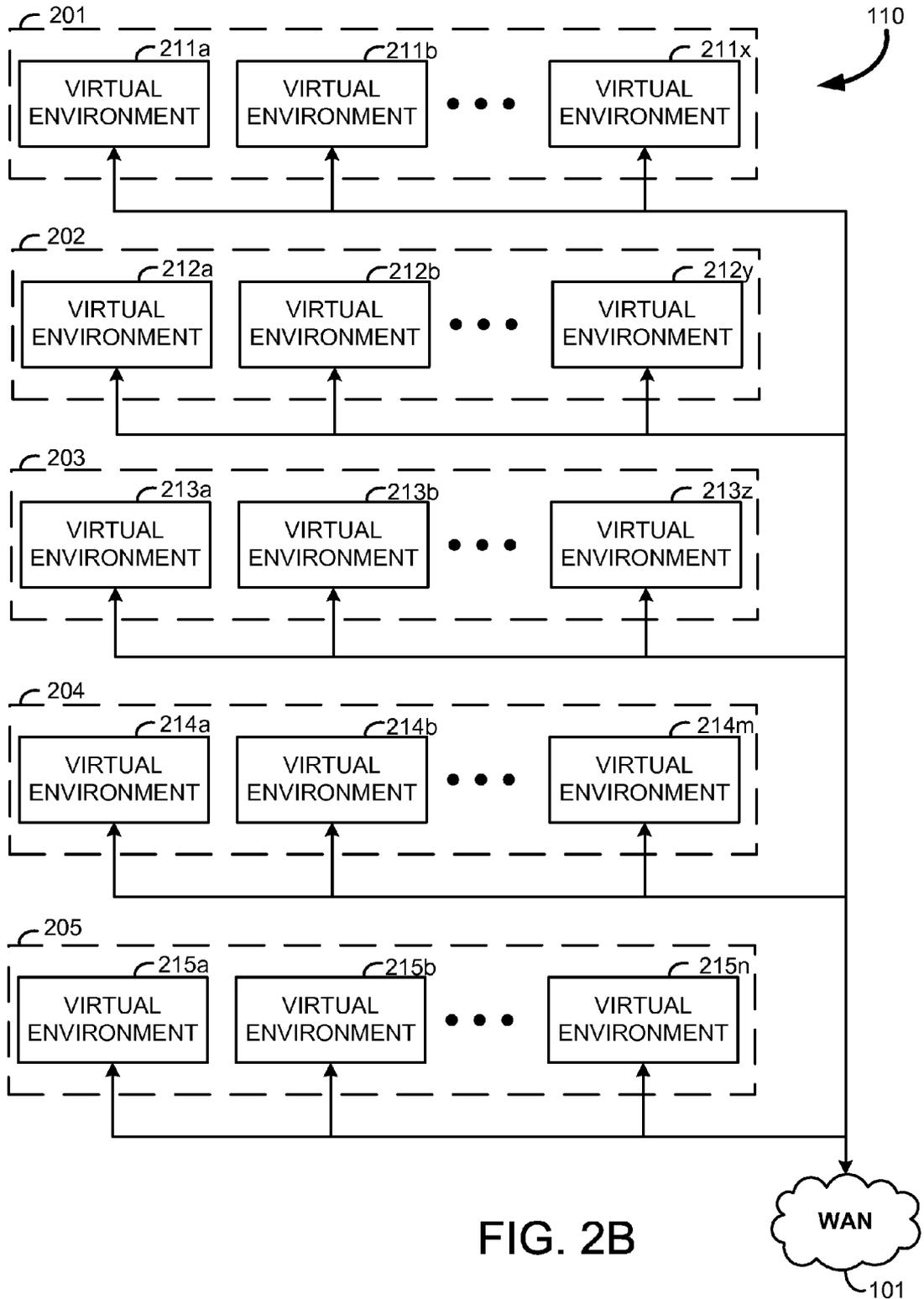


FIG. 2B

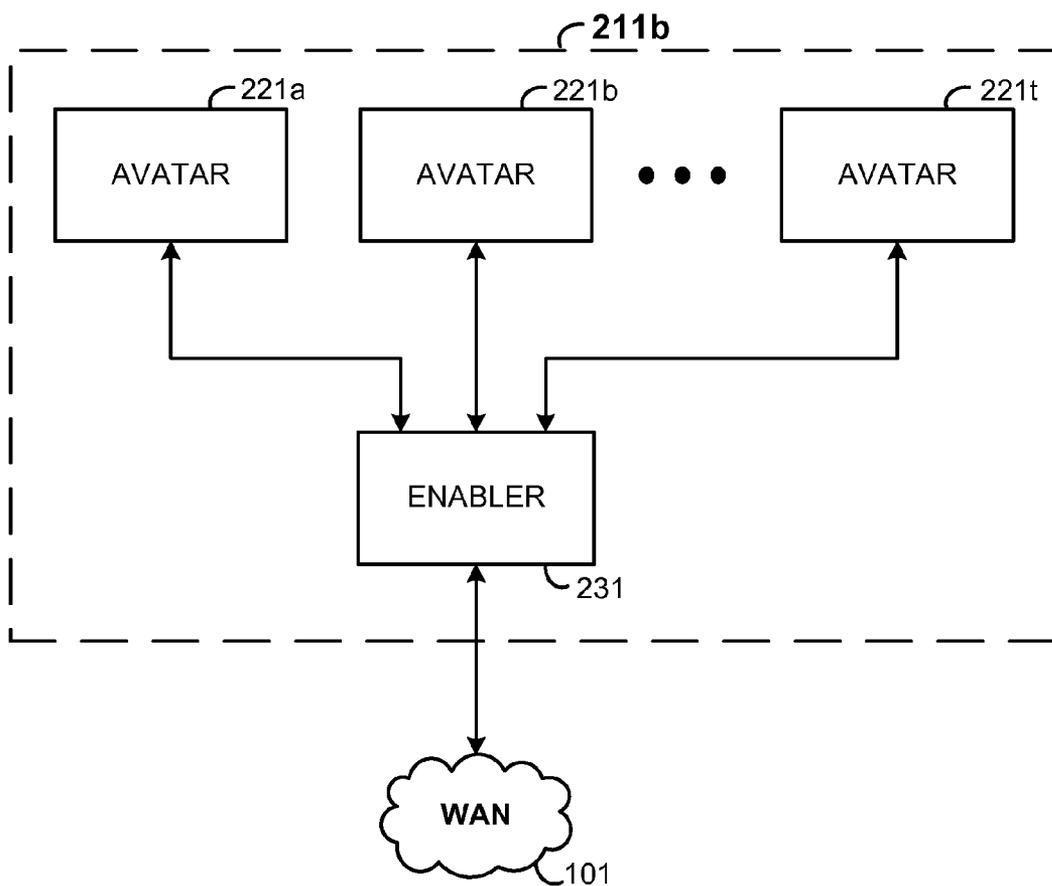


FIG. 2C

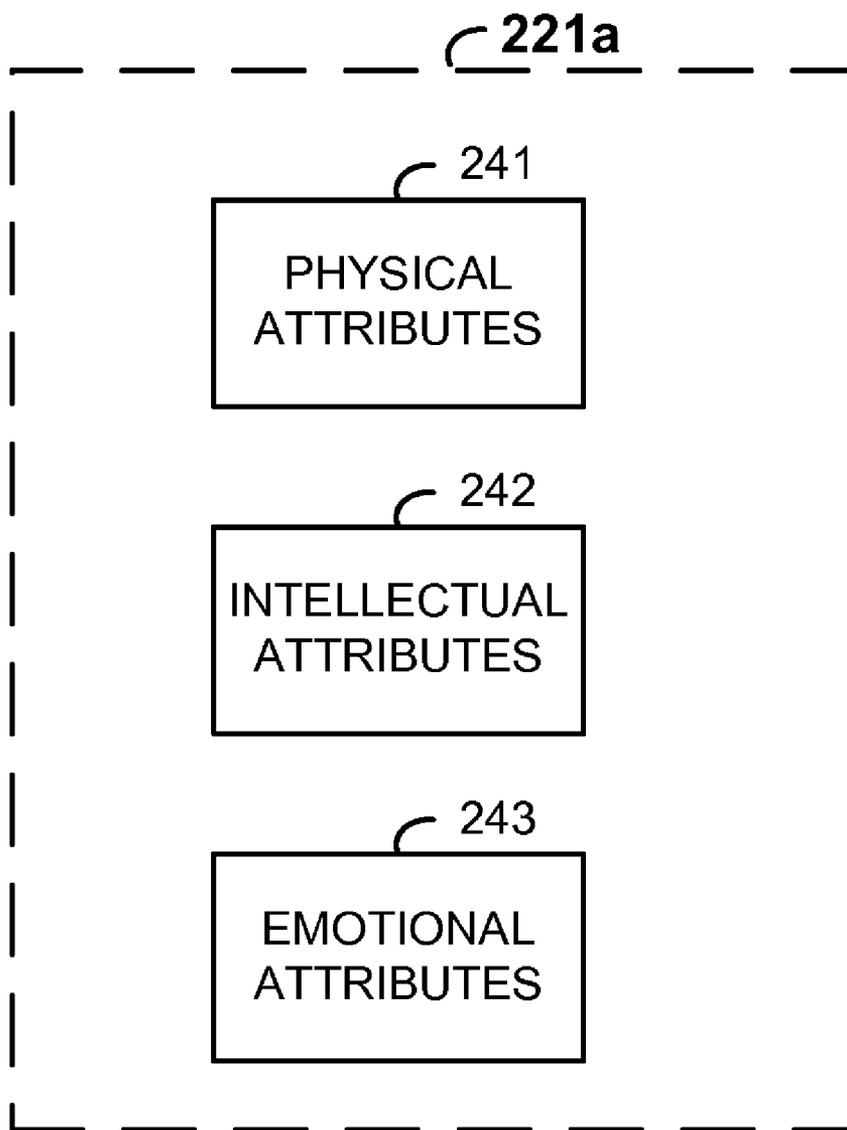


FIG. 2D

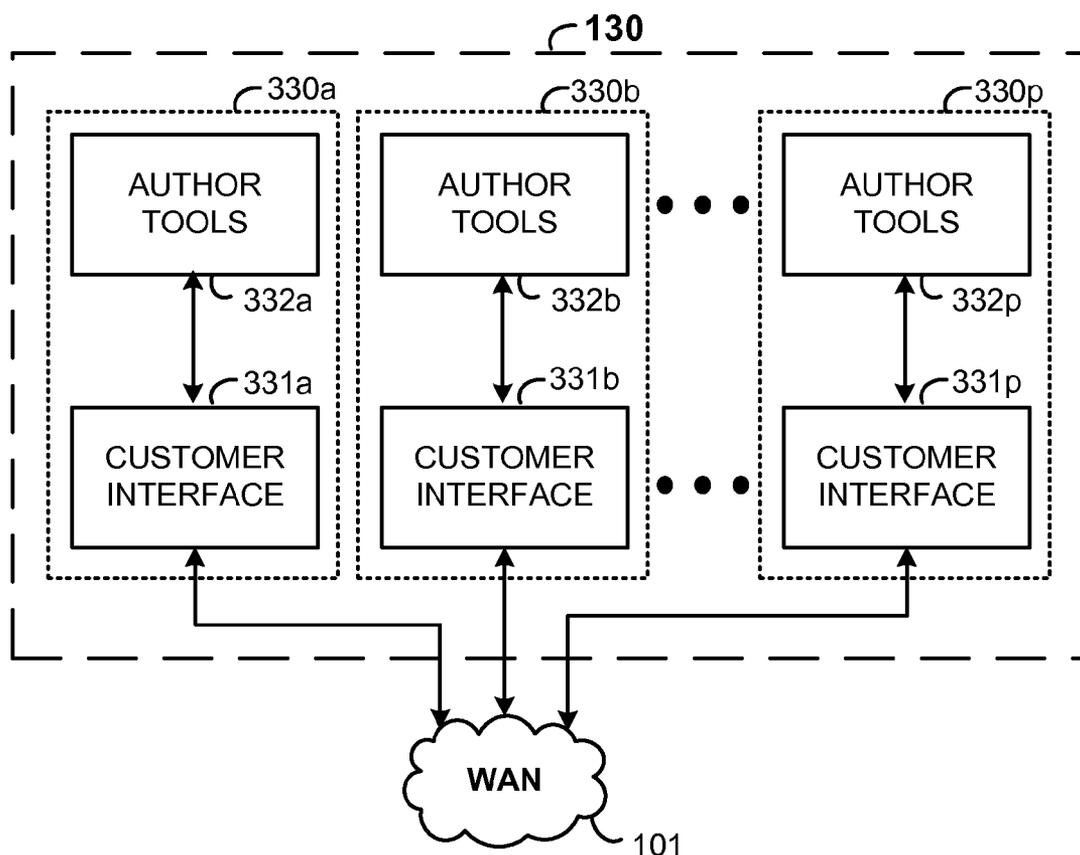


FIG. 3

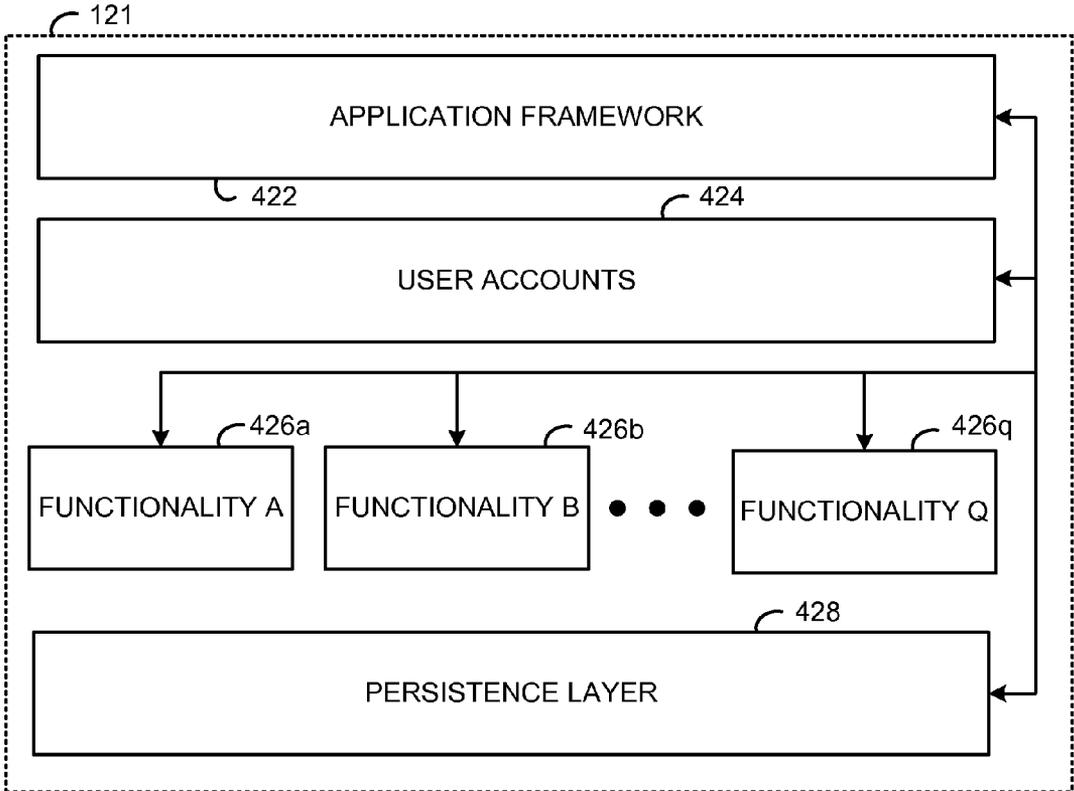


FIG. 4A

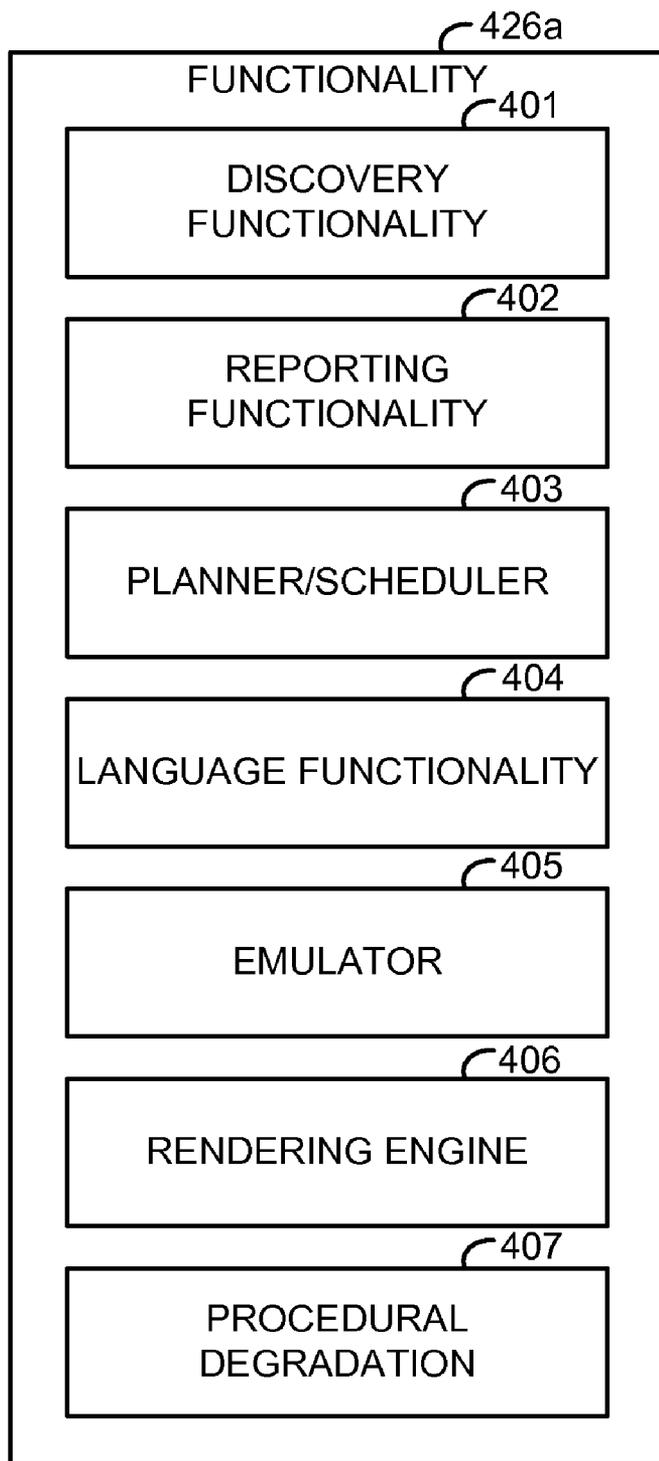


FIG. 4B

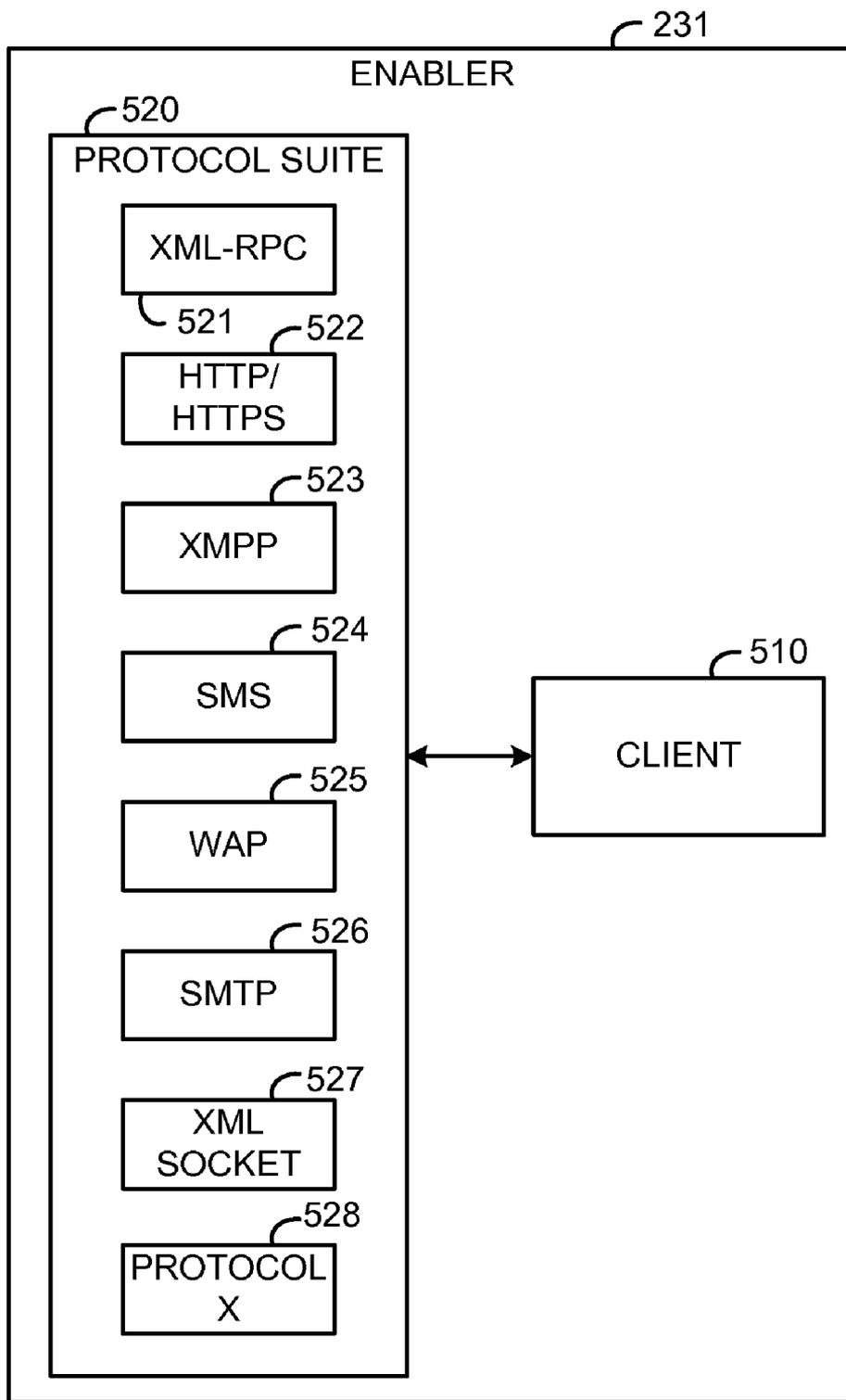


FIG. 5

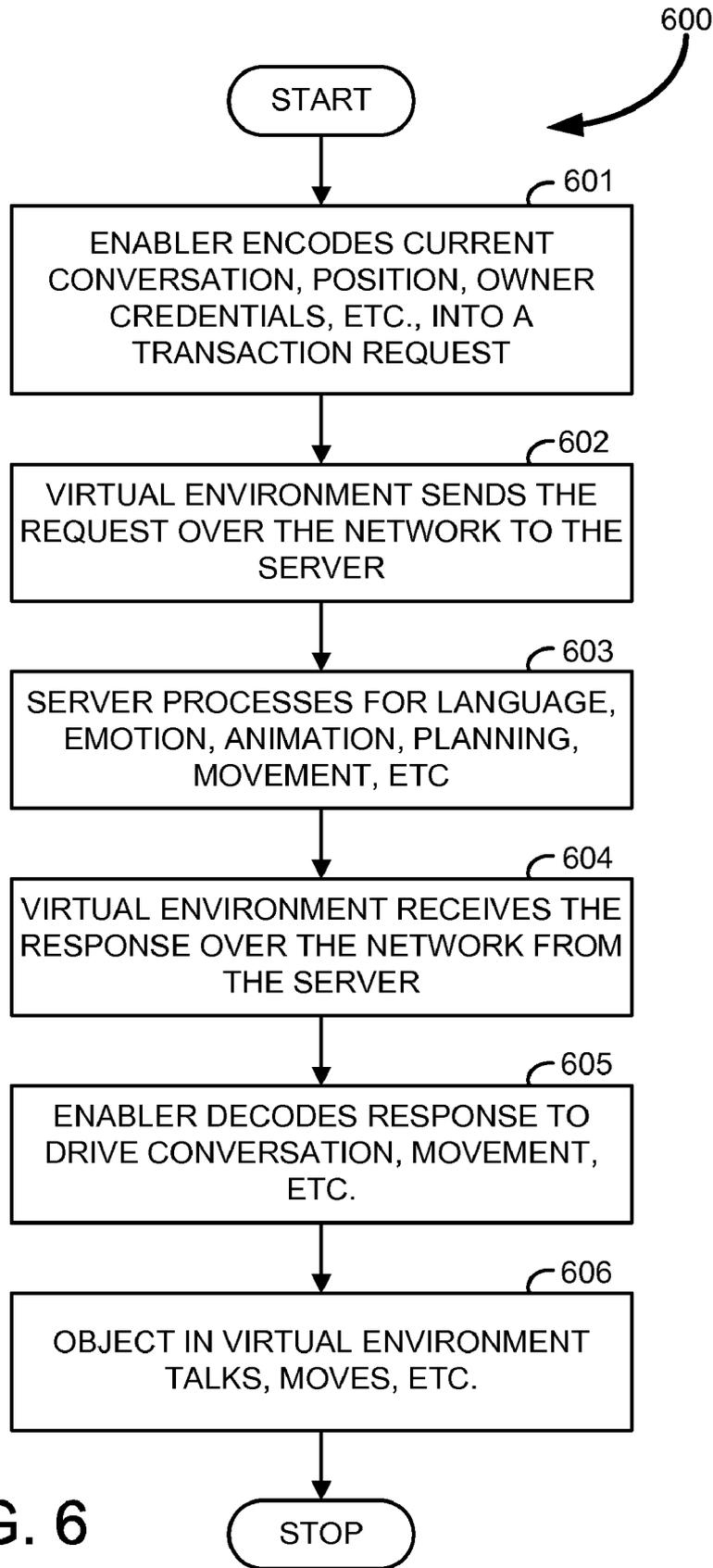


FIG. 6

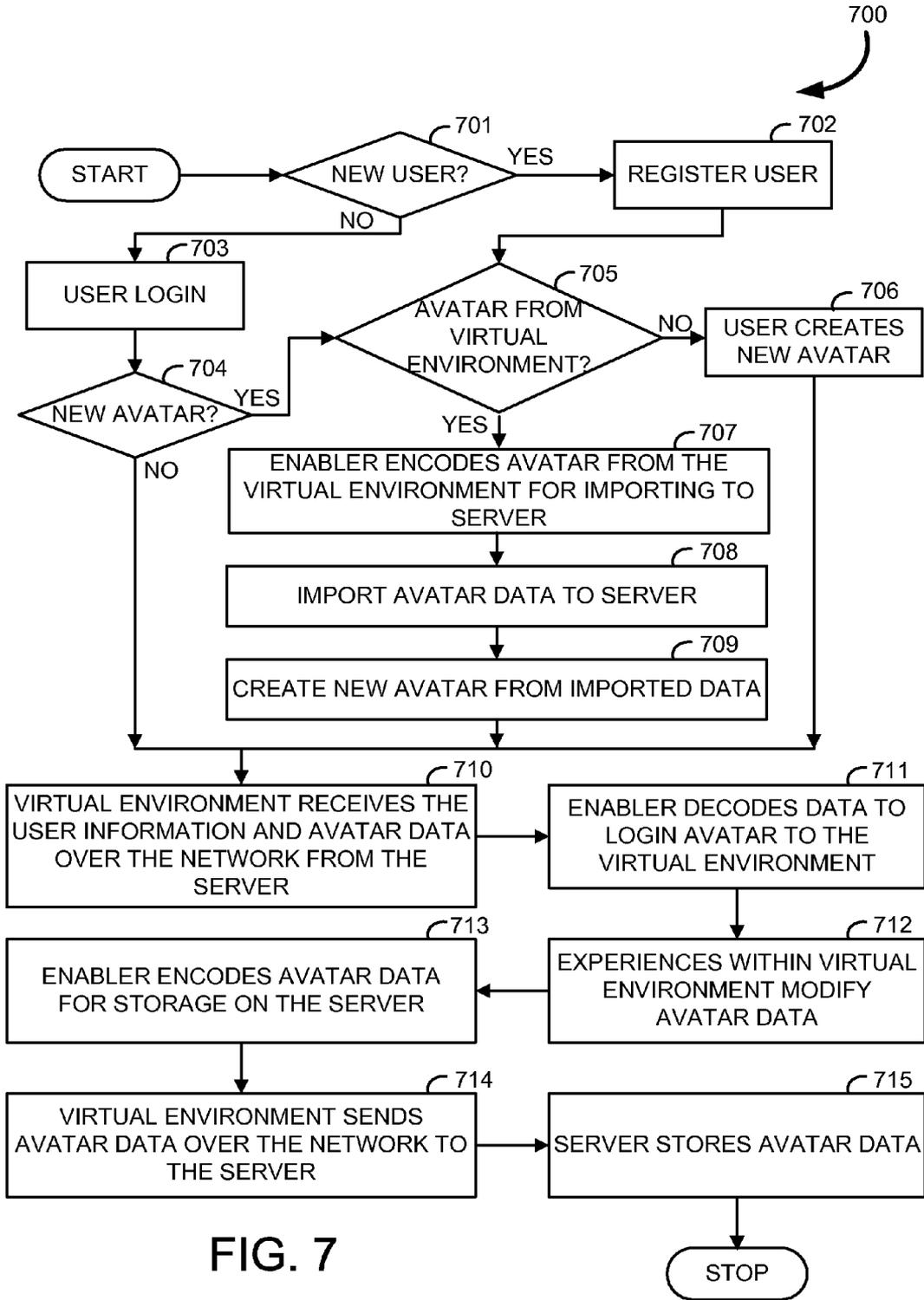


FIG. 7

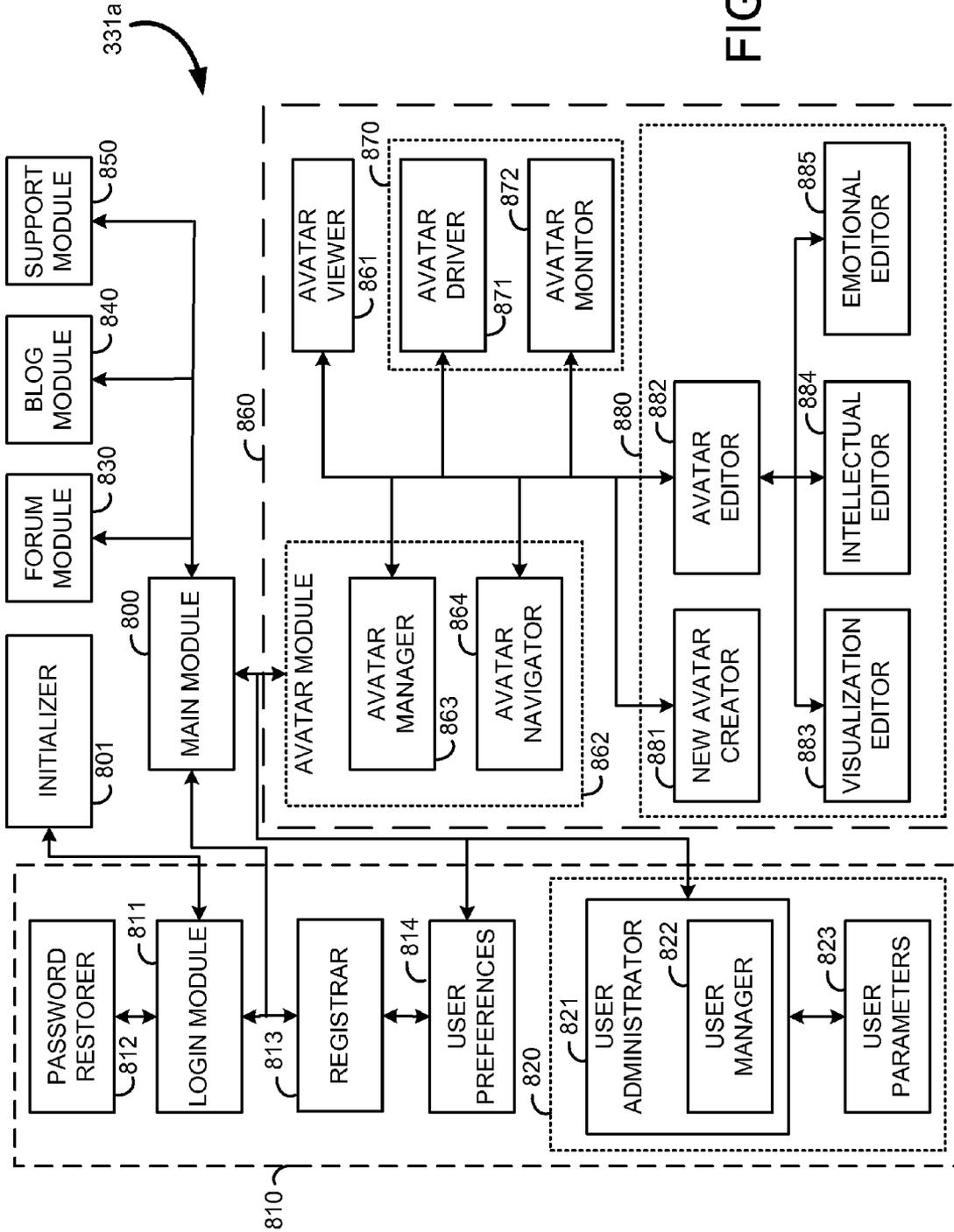


FIG. 8

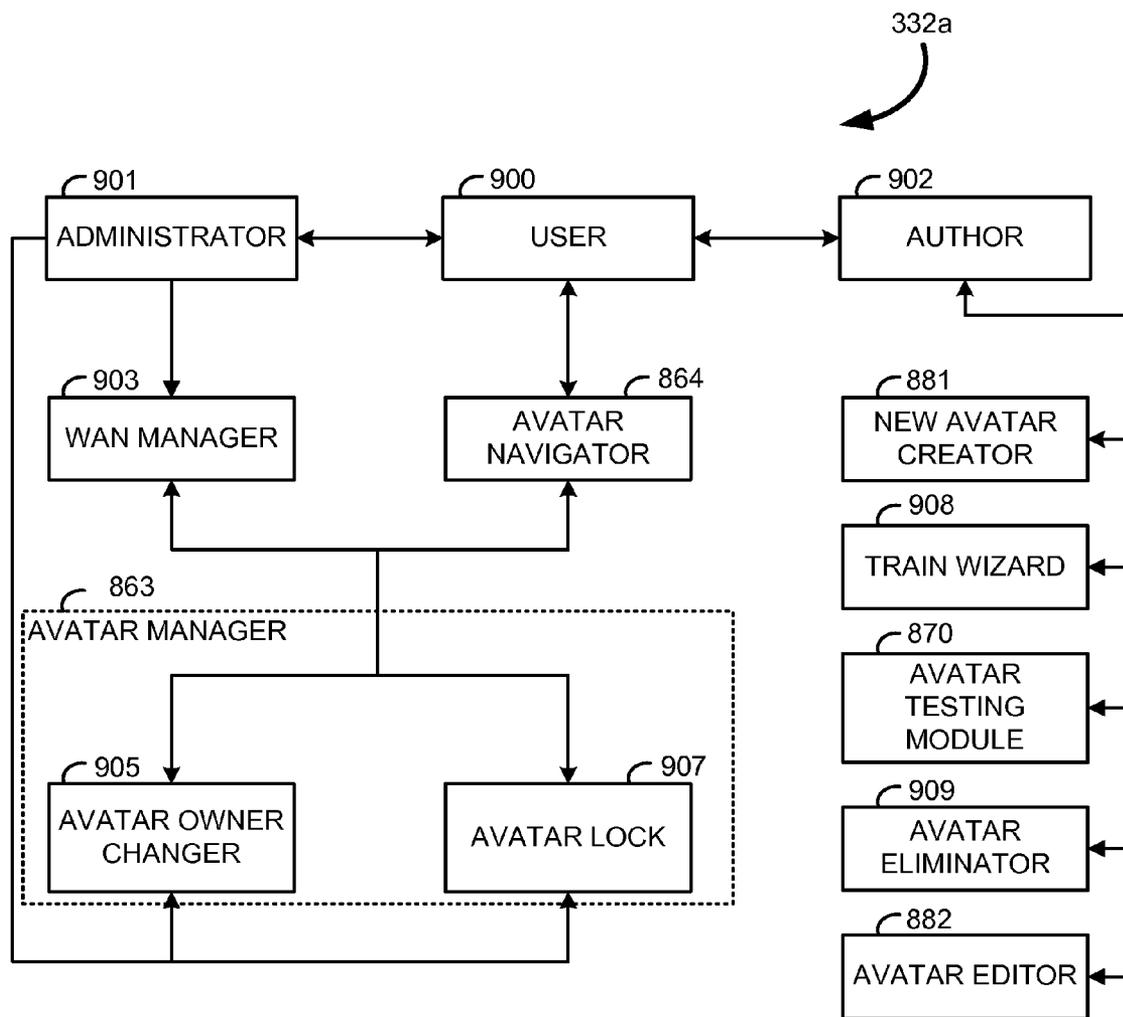


FIG. 9

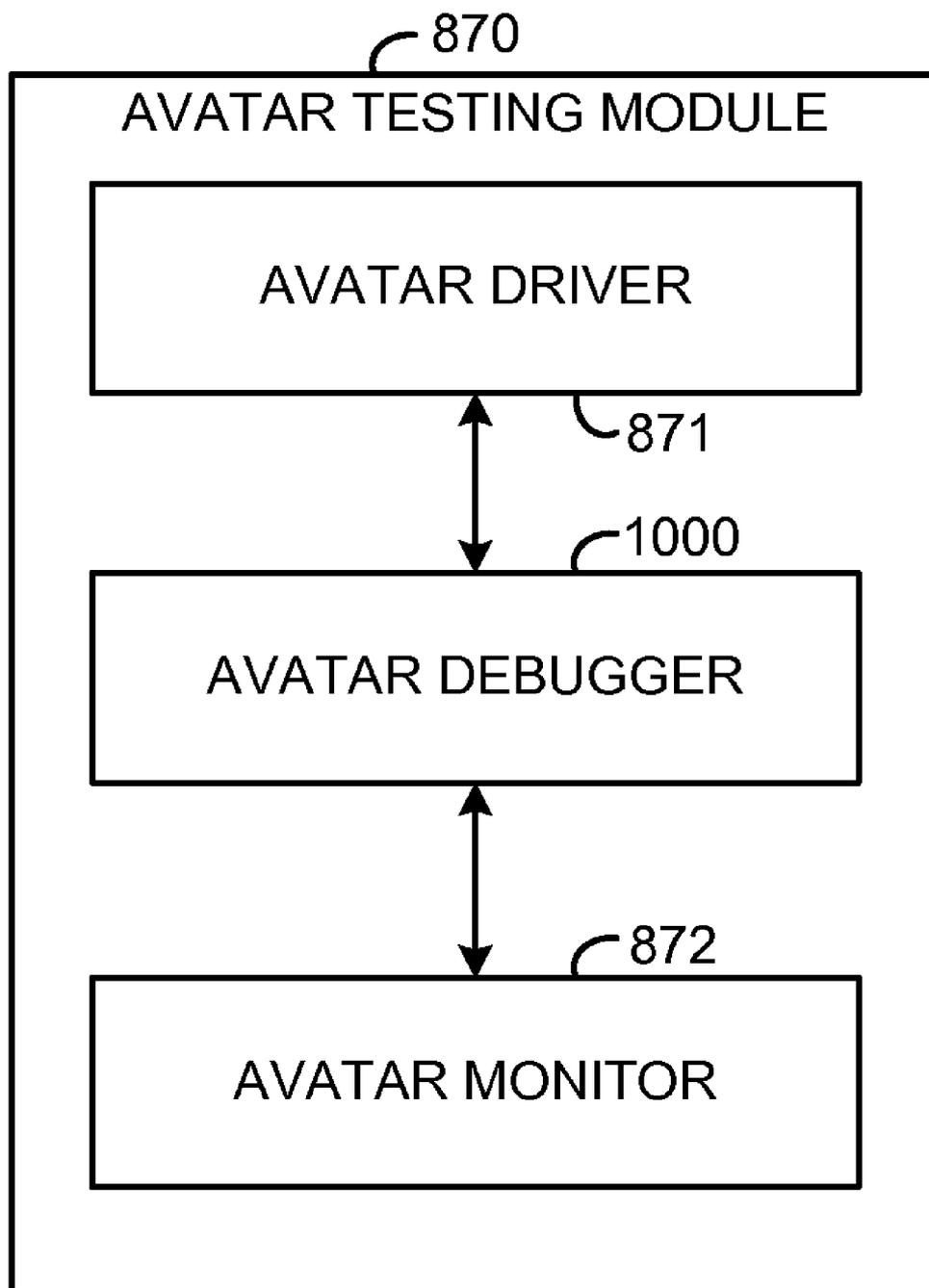


FIG. 10

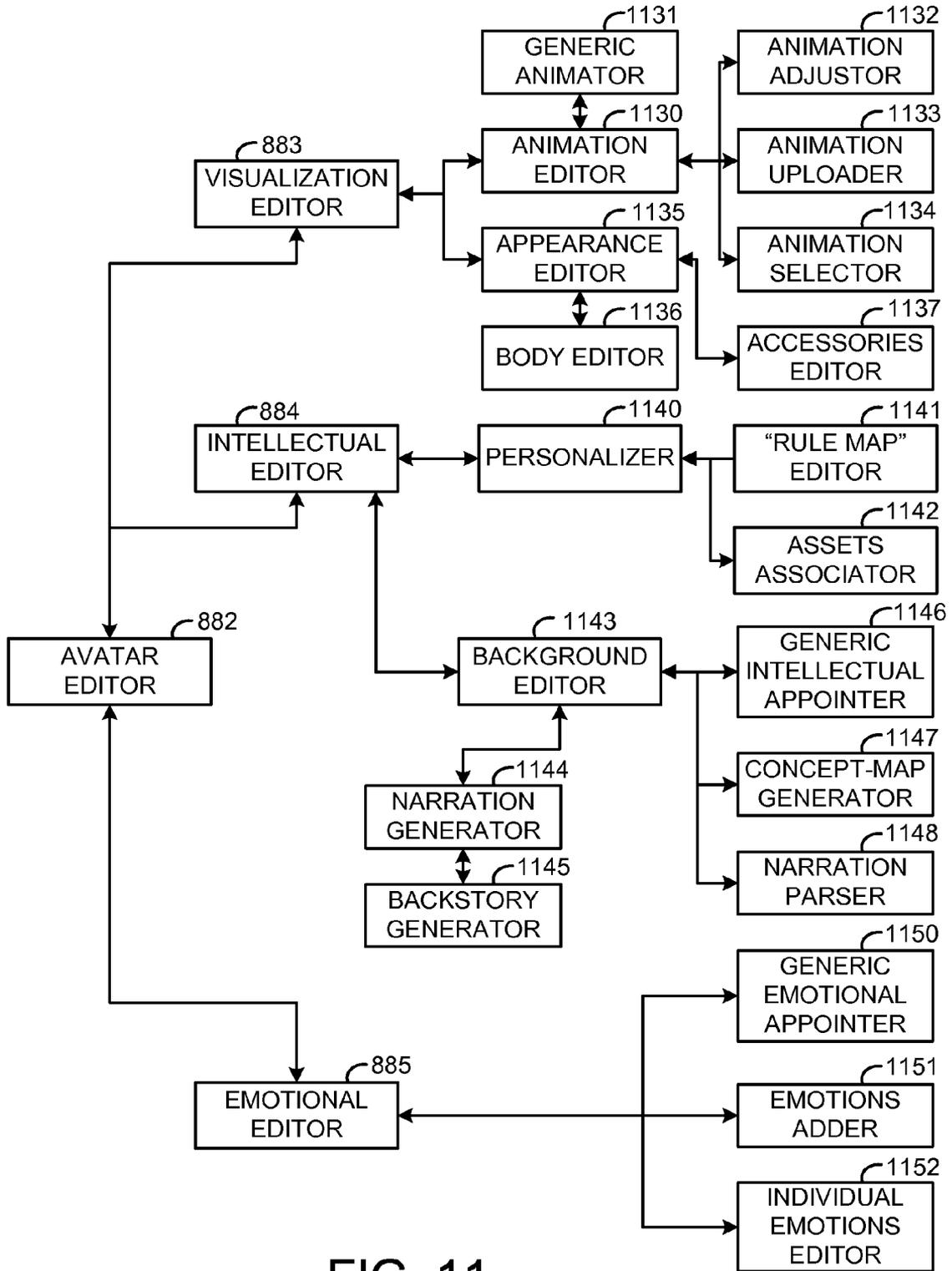


FIG. 11

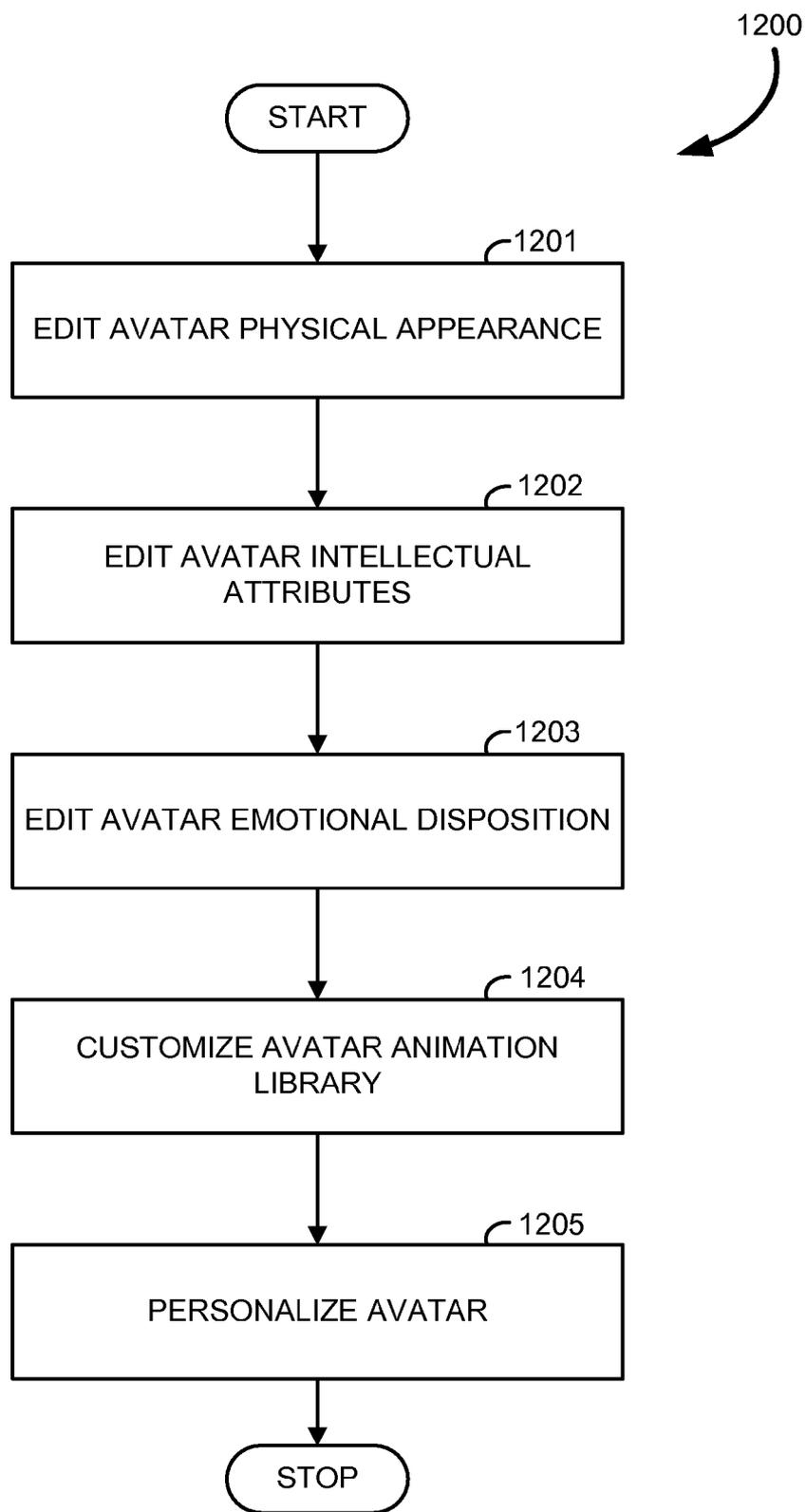


FIG. 12

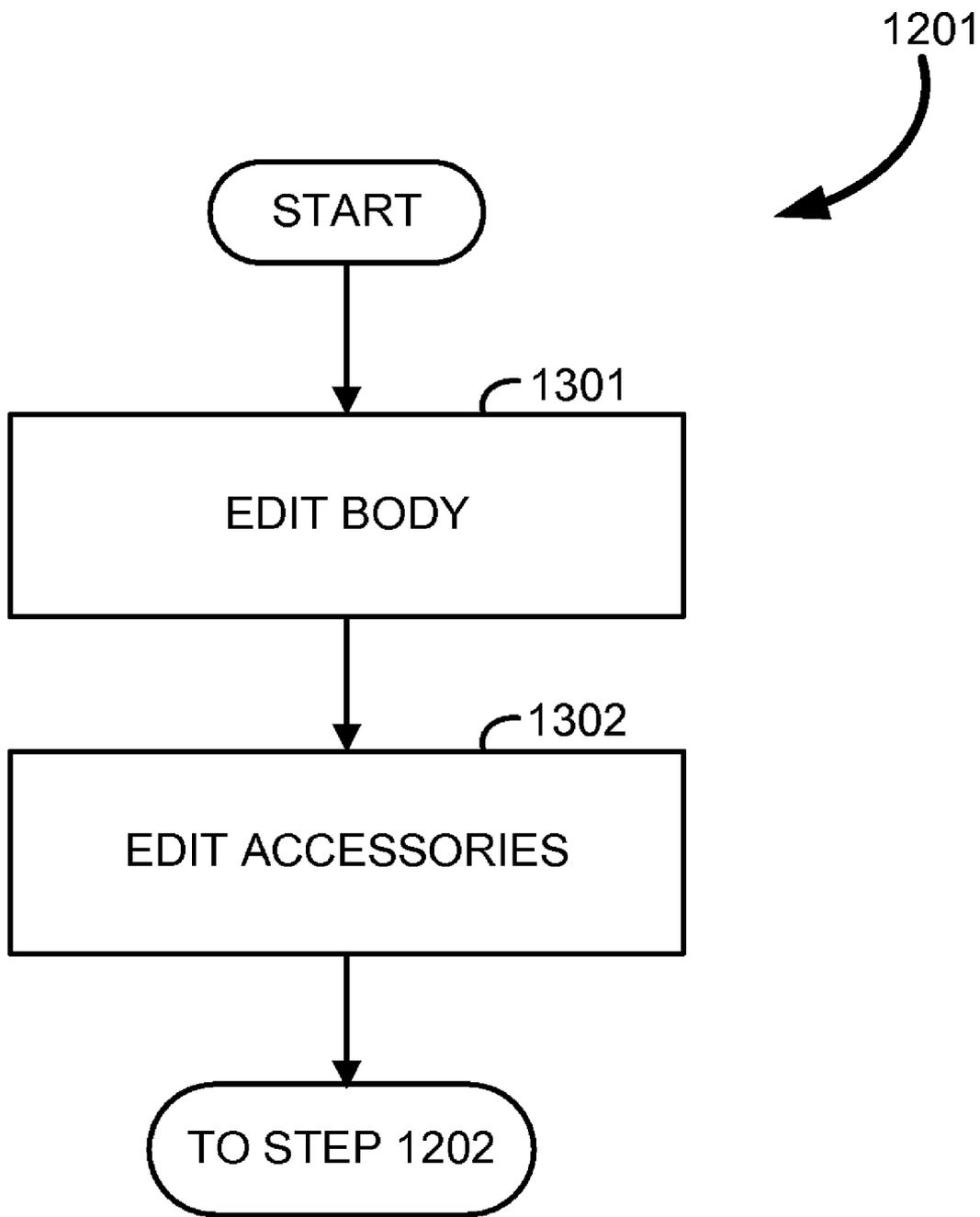


FIG. 13

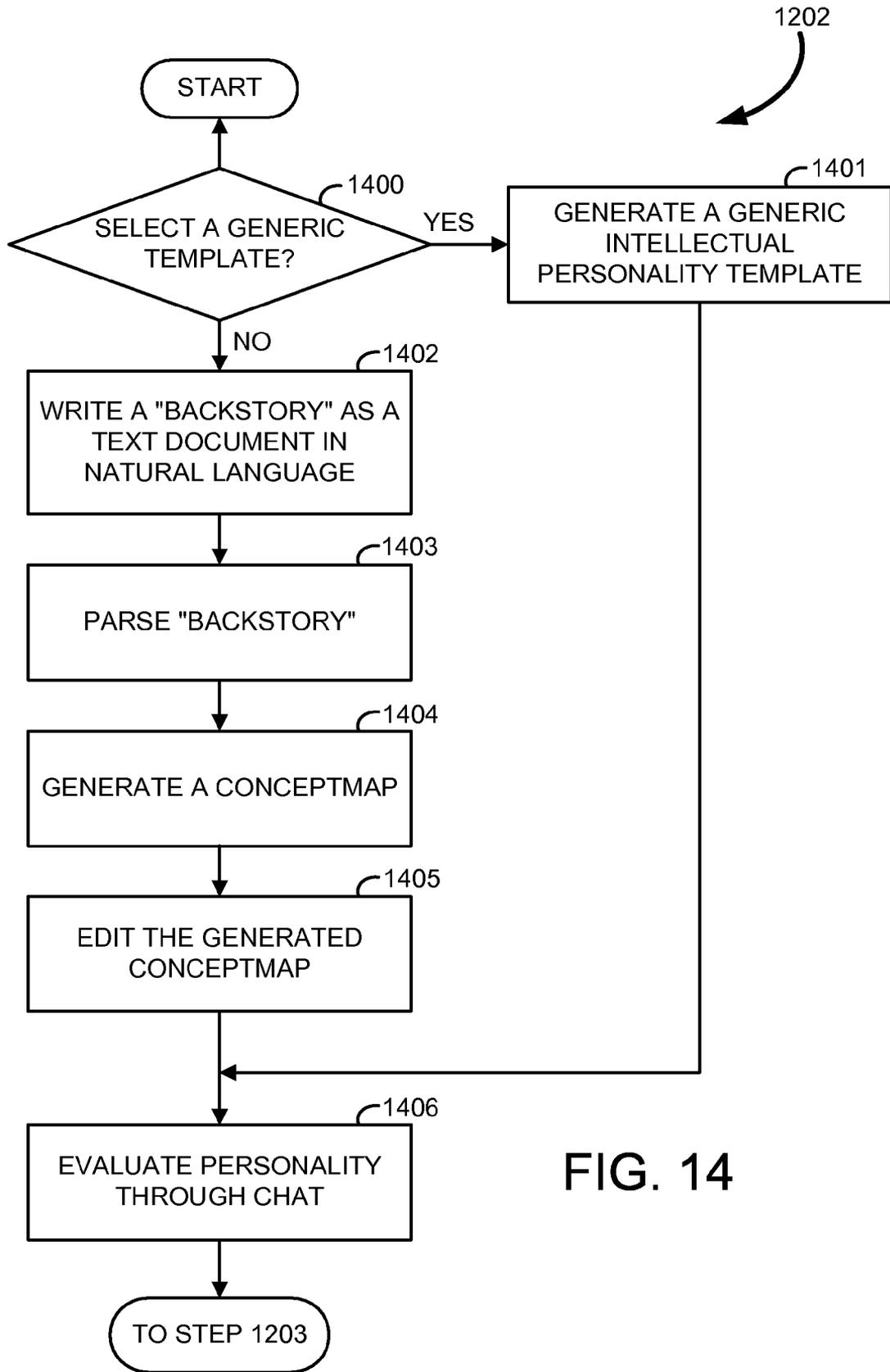


FIG. 14

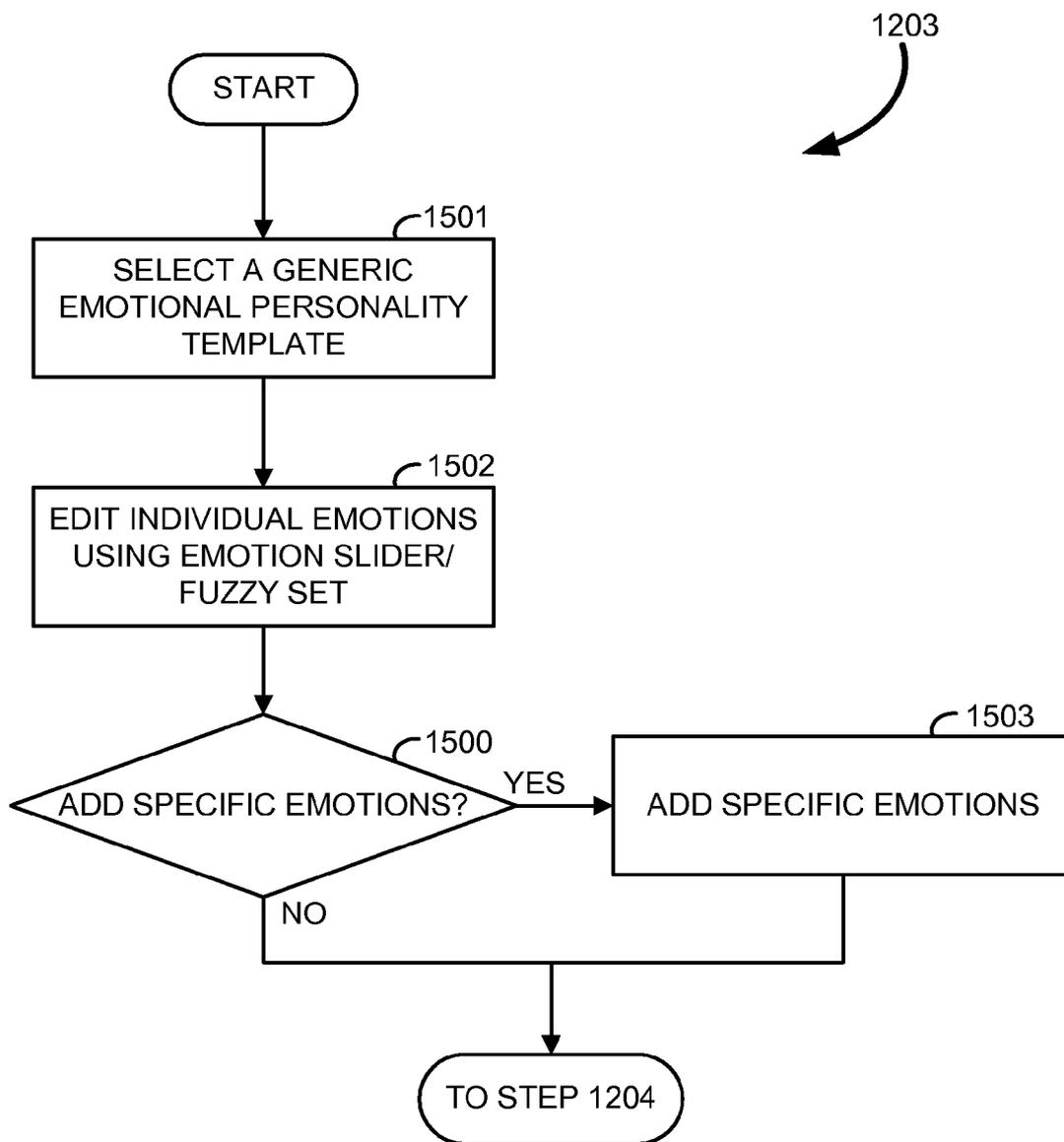


FIG. 15

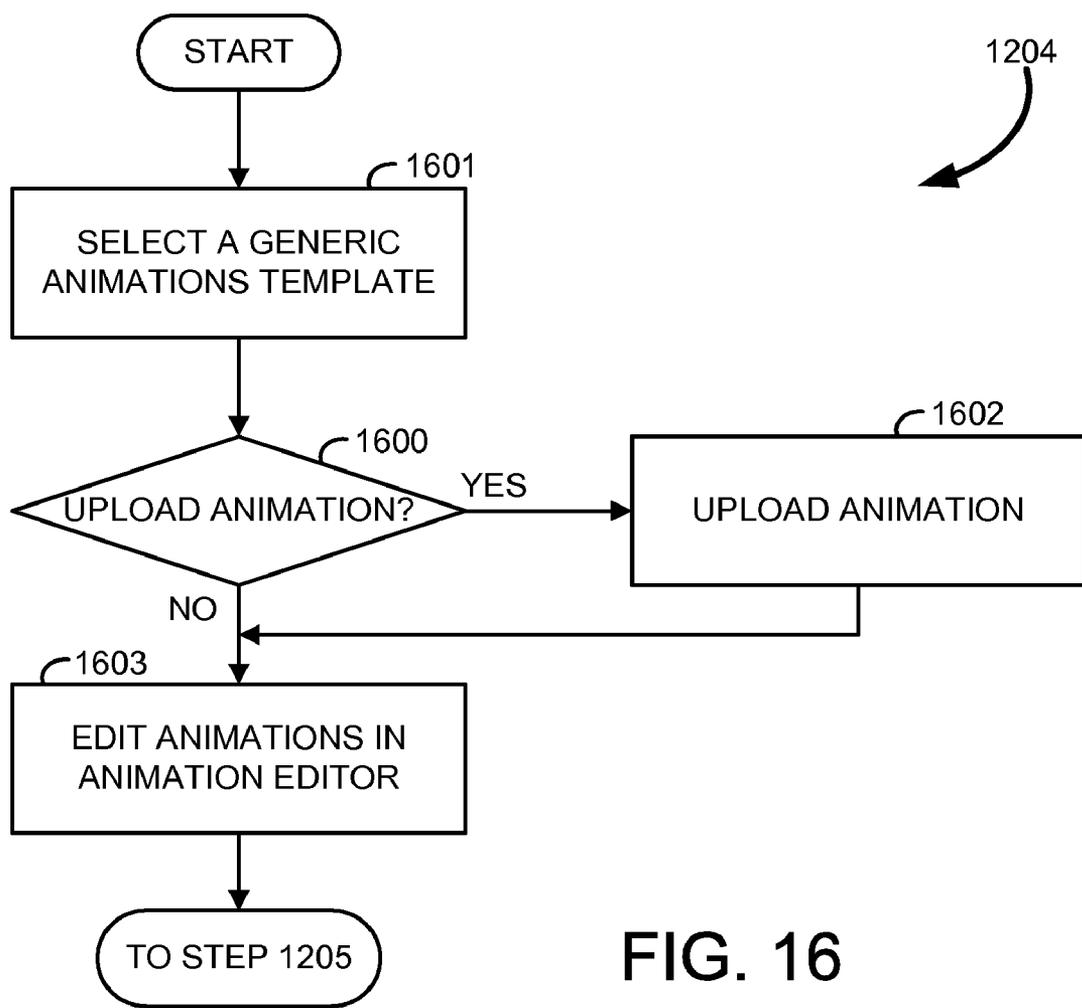


FIG. 16

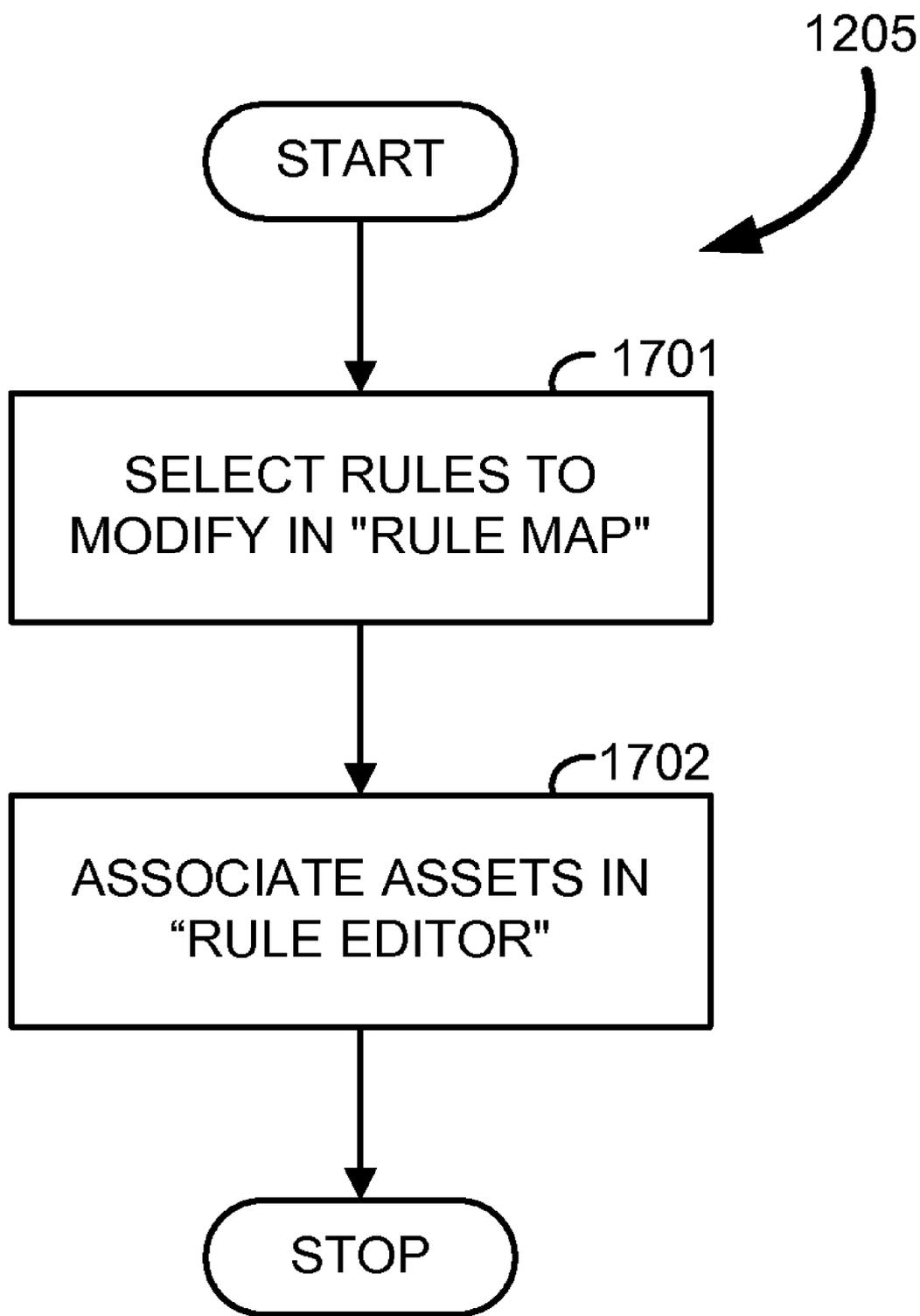


FIG. 17

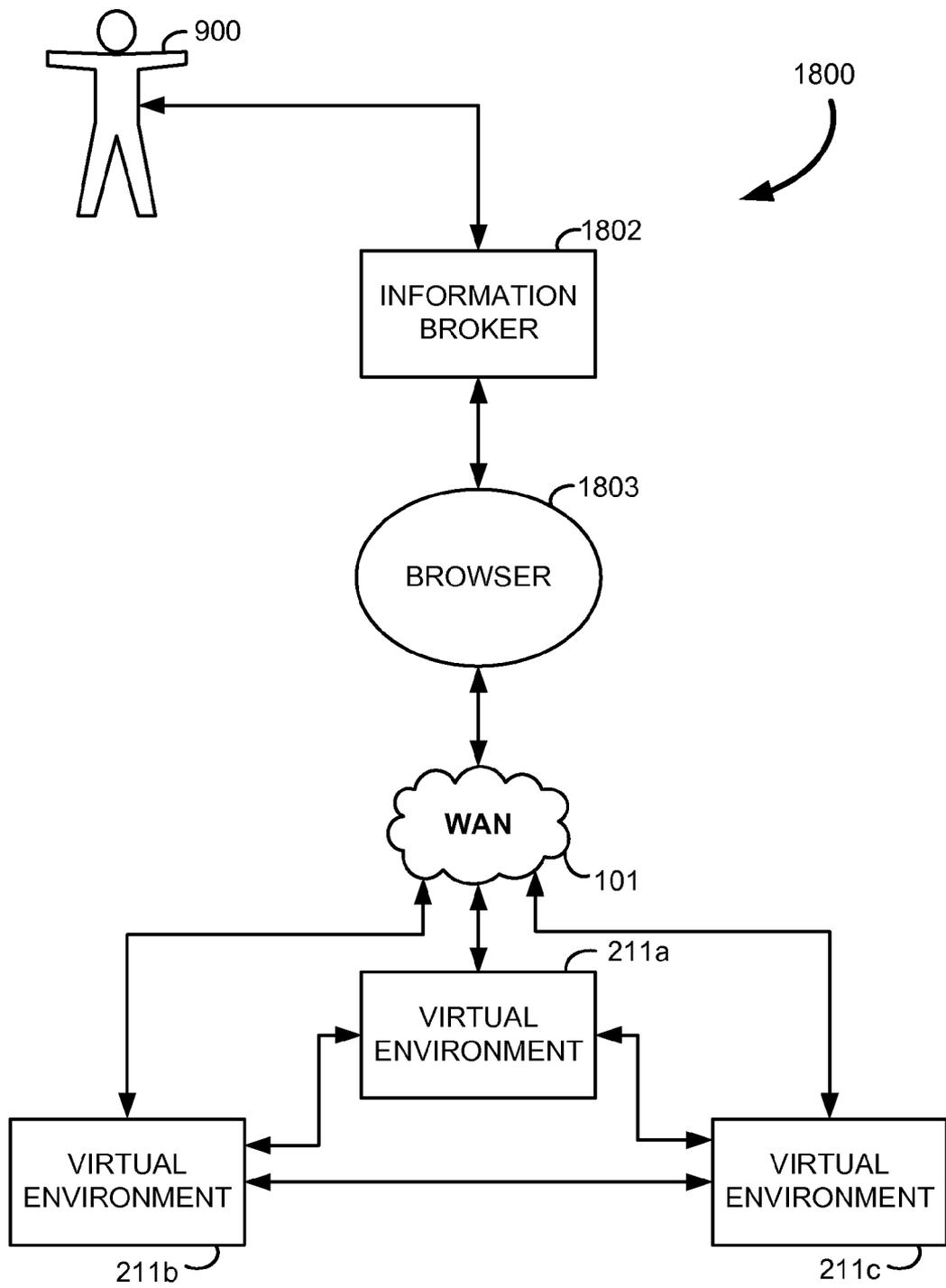


FIG. 18

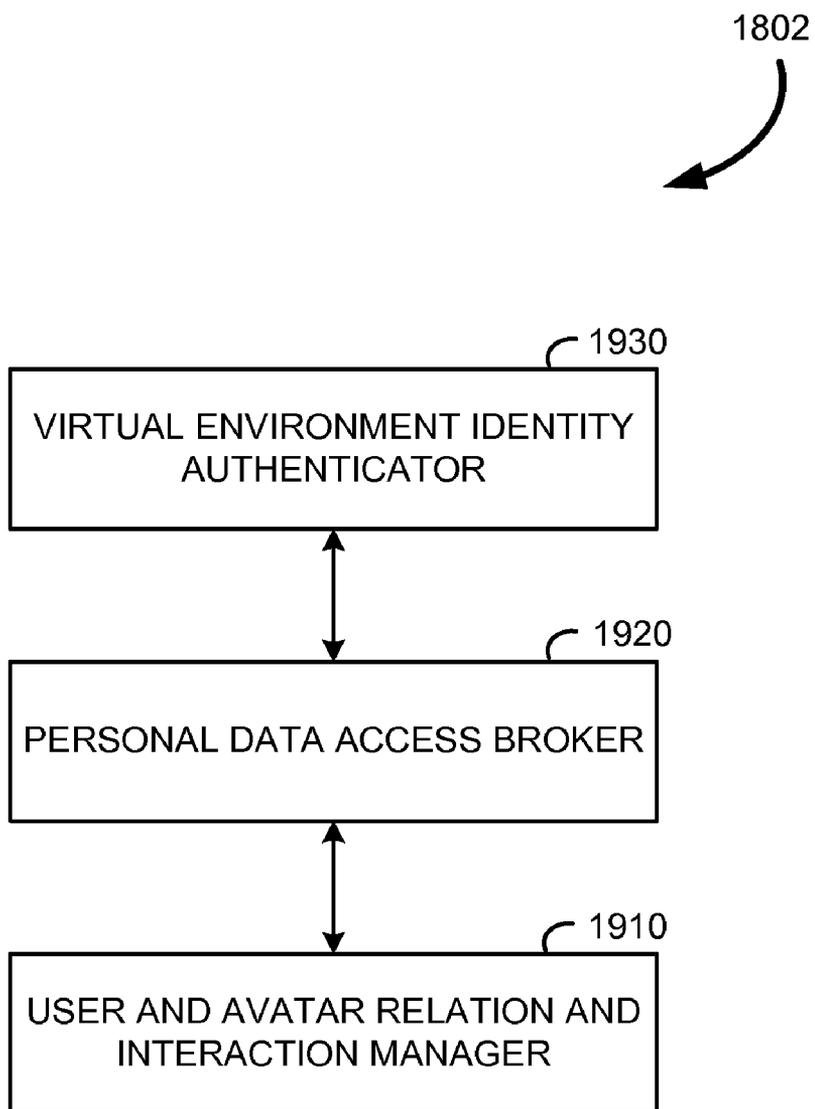


FIG. 19

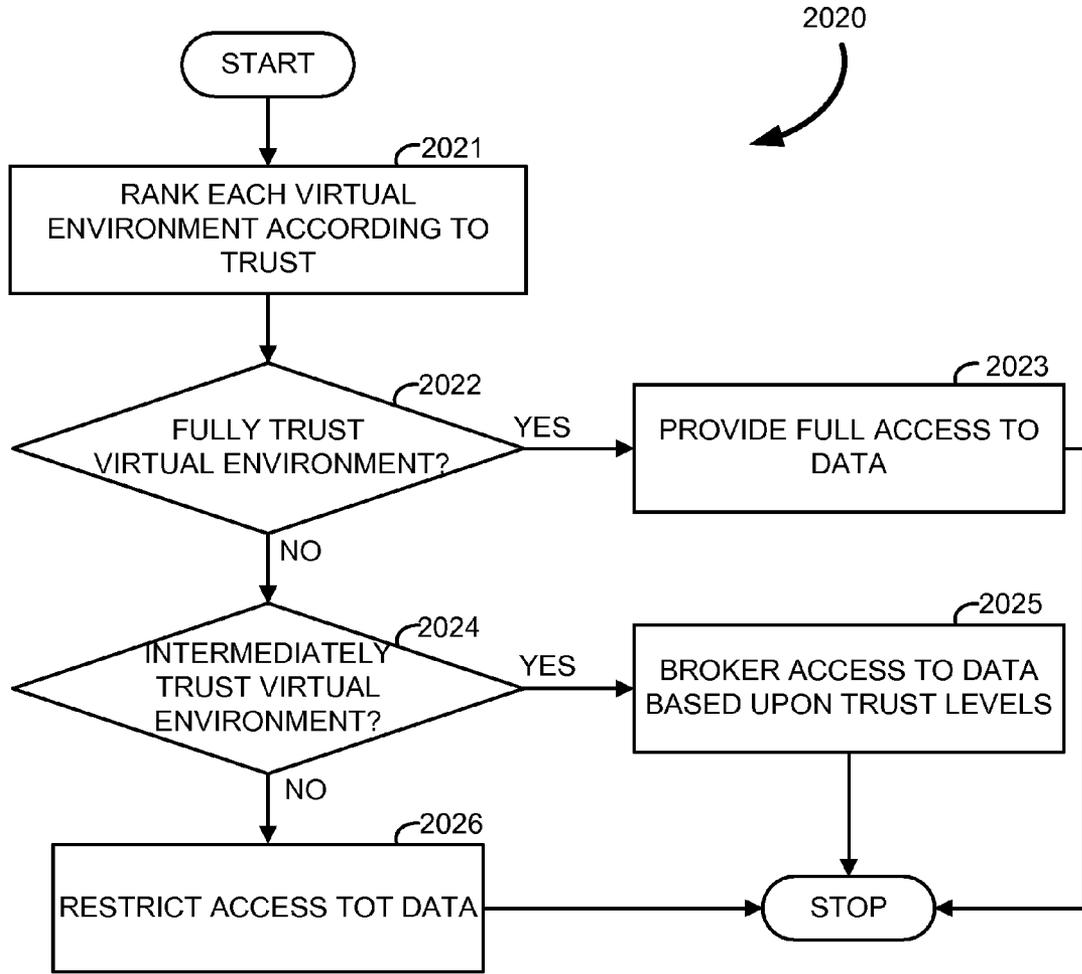


FIG. 20

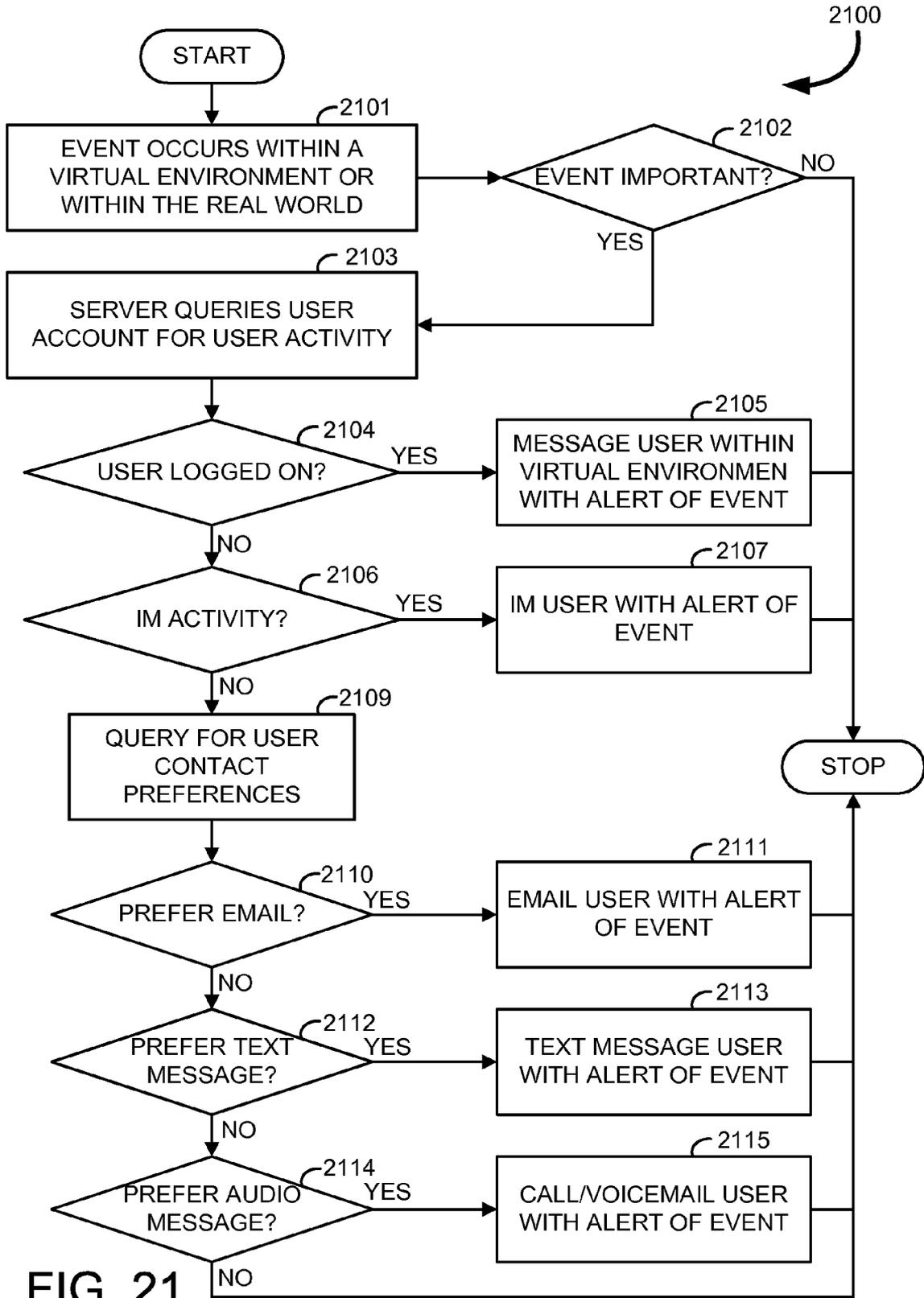


FIG. 21

**SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR MANAGING
A PERSISTENT VIRTUAL AVATAR WITH
MIGRATIONAL ABILITY**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a system and method for managing a persistent virtual avatar, and more particularly a persistent virtual avatar that has the ability to migrate between virtual environments, and have cross-membrane capacity. Such an avatar is useful in conjunction with Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), virtual worlds, online social networks, virtual classrooms, virtual healthcare advice, and virtual personal assistants. Currently most virtual environments are compiled in a unique and specific language. The fact that the virtual worlds are disparate, with dissimilar native languages makes the movement of data from one virtual environment to another technically difficult.

[0002] As known to those skilled in the art, an avatar is a virtual representation of an individual within a virtual environment. Avatars often include physical characteristics, statistical attributes, inventories, social relations, emotional representations, and weblogs (blogs) or other recorded historical data. Avatars may be human in appearance, but are not limited to any appearance constraints. Avatars may be personifications of a real world individual, such as a Player Character (PC) within a MMOG, or may be an artificial personality, such as a Non-Player Character (NPC). Additional artificial personality type avatars include personal assistants, guides, educators, answering servers and information providers. Additionally, some avatars may have the ability to be automated some of the time, and controlled by a human at other times. Such Quasi-Player Characters (QPCs) may perform mundane tasks automatically, but more expensive human agents take over in cases of complex problems.

[0003] Avatars often are the products of much labor and effort by their authors, since they often provide a unique creative outlet for the author and self-expression. The avatar is a representation of the author, not simply a tool, and as such the author's desires and essence is often reflected in the avatar. As a result, the author is often emotionally attached with her avatar, and great effort may be spent perfecting the Avatar's appearance, equipment, attributes and statistics.

[0004] Currently, in most situations, an individual owns a personal avatar that is capable of existing in one virtual environment. These virtual environments are typically hosted and maintained by companies. Additionally, these companies maintain an interface that allows the individual to control her avatar within the virtual environment. This interface utilizes the native language of the virtual environment.

[0005] Currently, the online realm is divided into three major categories: Massively Multiplayer Online Games, virtual social worlds, and web communities. In some instances the distinction between these virtual categories may become blurred as certain virtual environments have characteristics of a combination of categories. Additionally, Real World (RW) data is increasingly being digitized and may bleed into the traditional three categories as RW representations. Moreover, telecommunication devices may also be considered a medium for virtual text-based environments. However, with the advances in cellular phone, Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) and BlackBerry devices these virtual environments may evolve significantly in the future.

[0006] The number of active subscribers to MMOGs is at least 10 million people. Each person pays \$15 and up a month

to play these games, and maybe and additional 20 million people login occasionally. Estimates are that players spent about \$1 billion in real money in 2005 on virtual goods and services for MMOGs combined. Moreover, at least 1.5 million people subscribe to virtual worlds. In January, 2006, inside one such virtual social world, people spent nearly \$5 million in some 4.2 million transactions buying or selling clothes, buildings, and the like. Moreover, participants in web communities number in the multiple tens of millions.

[0007] Often participants have accounts in multiple different virtual environments. And whereas the subscription to these various virtual environments may be enormous, there is little to no connectivity between different virtual environments; largely due in part to disparate native languages and jealous territoriality by the virtual environments themselves. A character in a MMOG is unable to make an appearance within a second MMOG, much less in a virtual social world. There is strong user pressure, however, to allow assets and information from one virtual environment into another virtual environment. Examples of this include the emergence of weblogs, or blogs, discussing the exploits of a MMOG within a web community. Convergence describes this joining of virtual environments. Similarly, crossing the membrane, or cross-membrane, describes the movement of Real World data into a virtual environment, and vice versa.

[0008] The frontier of convergence and cross-membrane offers many possibilities for mapping, exploring, and populating what is unknown territory. Given the effort put into the creation of avatars, and the emotional attachments associated with them, it is logical that a paramount issue of convergence and cross-membrane will be the persistence of these avatars between virtual environments. Such movement by an avatar between multiple virtual environments is known as migration. Systems for managing persistent avatars across virtual environments as they migrate do not currently exist.

[0009] Additionally, with the migration of avatars across virtual environments it will become necessary that the users' information is available to the new environment. The avatar may be halted in her migration, and prompted for the necessary information as migration occurs. However such a system is not conducive to seamless migration between virtual environments. As such, a system of ranking the trust level of a specific virtual environment, and brokering user information dependent upon such a trust rank will be beneficial.

[0010] Lastly, a natural extension of migration will include the ability to monitor all virtual environments, as well as the real world, for events that the user would take interest in. The user may then be notified of the significant event regardless of the user's virtual or physical location.

[0011] It is therefore apparent that an urgent need exists for a system and method for managing virtual avatars that integrates the ability to migrate between worlds, broker user information and containing cross-membrane capabilities. This system would be able to provide highly persistent virtual personalities for personal and corporate use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] To achieve the foregoing and in accordance with the present invention, systems for managing a virtual avatar with migrational ability, and methods for providing migration and managing the virtual avatar, and brokering information, are provided. Such systems and methods are useful for providing a highly persistent virtual avatar with seamless migratory abilities.

[0013] The persistent avatar may exist in a plurality of virtual environments and include attributes. The persistent avatar may be a character, non-player character, quasi-player character, agent, personal assistant, personality, guide, educator or representation. The plurality of virtual environments includes at least one of online games, social networks, web communities, shared simulations based on user-created content, and virtual overlays on physical world data. The persistent avatar is associated with a user.

[0014] The method and system for managing the persistent avatar includes enabling virtual environments to access the attributes. Additionally, by allowing multiple virtual environments to access the attributes the avatar may migrate from one virtual environment to another. An attribute generator generates the attribute data. A preexisting avatar may be used by the attribute generator to create the attribute data, or pre-selectable attributes may be used to generate the data from scratch. Attributes of the persistent avatar may include appearance, memories, personality, emotional attributes, intelligence attributes, physical attributes, social attributes, and avatar statistics.

[0015] Any virtual environment is enabled to access the stored attribute data. An enabler is utilized to enable this access by decoding the attributes. The enabler utilizes at least one client based on protocol suite. Another virtual environment may then dynamically access the stored attribute data by utilizing the enabler. In such a fashion the persistent avatar may migrate from the first virtual environment to the second virtual environment while the attributes of the persistent avatar remain substantially constant.

[0016] The attributes may be modified by experiences in any virtual environment. The enabler encodes data produced from experiences in the virtual environment. The data is processed and modifies the attributes.

[0017] The user of the persistent avatar may be notified when events occur in any virtual environment or within real life. The method of notifying the user may include monitoring for events, assessing importance of the event, and notifying the user of the event if it exceeds a threshold of importance. The user's preferences, degree of impact on user, scope of event, duration of event, and degree of impact on user's social network may be queried in order to help assess the importance of the event. The user may be notified by sending a message to the persistent avatar if it is in use by the user, sending an electronic mail message to the user, sending an instant message to the user, and sending a short message service to the user. A monitor may be used for monitoring for events. An assessor assesses the importance and a notifier notifies the user of the event.

[0018] Note that the various features of the present invention described above may be practiced alone or in combination. These and other features of the present invention will be described in more detail below in the detailed description of the invention and in conjunction with the following figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] In order that the present invention may be more clearly ascertained, one embodiments will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0020] FIG. 1A shows a schematic block diagram illustrating a persistent avatar management system in accordance with an embodiments of the present invention;

[0021] FIG. 1B shows a functional block diagram of wide area network application programming interfaces for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0022] FIG. 2A shows a schematic block diagram of the virtual universe for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0023] FIG. 2B shows a logical block diagram of virtual environments for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0024] FIG. 2C shows a schematic block diagram of a virtual environment for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0025] FIG. 2D shows a schematic block diagram of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0026] FIG. 3 shows a logical block diagram of end user components for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0027] FIG. 4A shows a functional block diagram of the server architecture for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0028] FIG. 4B shows a functional block diagram of the functionality modules for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0029] FIG. 5 shows a functional block diagram of an enabler for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0030] FIG. 6 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for enabling a virtual environment through the enabler for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0031] FIG. 7 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for avatar attribute generation for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0032] FIG. 8 shows a logical block diagram of a user interface system for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0033] FIG. 9 shows a logical block diagram of author tools for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0034] FIG. 10 shows a functional block diagram of an avatar testing module for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0035] FIG. 11 shows a functional block diagram of an avatar editor for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0036] FIG. 12 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0037] FIG. 13 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing the appearance of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0038] FIG. 14 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing the backstory of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0039] FIG. 15 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing the emotional disposition of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0040] FIG. 16 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing the animation of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0041] FIG. 17 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for editing the personality rules of an avatar for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1;

[0042] FIG. 18 shows a logical block diagram of user interactions with an information broker in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0043] FIG. 19 shows a logical block diagram of the information brokering in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0044] FIG. 20 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for user information brokering for the information broker of FIG. 18; and

[0045] FIG. 21 shows a flow chart illustrating the process for event notification in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0046] The present invention will now be described in detail with reference to several embodiments thereof as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, well known process steps and/or structures have not been described in detail in order to not unnecessarily obscure the present invention. The features and advantages of the present invention may be better understood with reference to the drawings and discussions that follow.

[0047] The present invention relates to systems and methods for managing persistent virtual avatars, and more particularly persistent virtual avatars that have the ability to migrate, and have cross-membrane capacity. Such avatars are useful in conjunction with Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), virtual social worlds and online web communities, generically referred to as “virtual environments”. All virtual environments may be collectively referred to as the “virtual universe”. A persistent avatar may be a character, non-player character, quasi-player character, agent, personal assistant, personality, guide, representation, educator or any additional virtual entity that requires persistence between virtual environments. In a society of ever increasing reliance and blending between real life and our virtual lives, the ability to migrate seamlessly between virtual environments with a substantially constant set of attributes is highly desirable and advantageous.

[0048] To facilitate discussion, FIG. 1A shows a schematic block diagram 100 illustrating a persistent avatar management system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. A Wide Area Network (WAN) 101 provides a medium for all other components to communicate and have access to one another. In some embodiments the WAN 101 may be the Internet, however any WAN may be used as is known by those skilled in the art. Network connections are made through 10/100/1000 Megabit/sec Ethernet cable, although other network wiring technologies, such as high speed optical cable, may also be used. Additionally, Wireless mesh networks may also be used to couple wired networks, network devices, or access points, as is well known by those skilled in the art.

[0049] Virtual Universe 110 is coupled to the WAN 101 for access by the Customers 130. The term Customers 130 includes users who use the persistent avatar, and owners who own the persistent avatars. In some embodiments the user of a particular avatar may also be the Avatar's owner. Alternatively, the owner and the user may be separate individuals. Moreover, the user and owner may include multiple individuals or organizations, such as a corporation. In some embodiments, some or all of these permutations of user and owner

may constitute the Customers 130. The Virtual Universe 110 may be accessed by the persistent avatars. Once accessed, the persistent avatar may engage in the Virtual Universe 110 in at least all capacities that a native avatar is able. Additionally, the persistent avatar may communicate with other virtual environments within the Virtual Universe 110, or with the real world.

[0050] In some embodiments, an Availability Monitor 140 also may couple to the WAN 101. The Availability Monitor 140 may provide constant monitoring of critical services for troubleshooting and downtime reduction purposes. In many cases, the Availability Monitor 140 may be located in many different geographical locations, so that a “triangulation” of service availability problems may be preformed.

[0051] A Network Operation Center (NOC) 120 includes at least one Public Server 121 coupled to an Internal Server 124 through a Firewall 123. The Internal Server 124 may couple to a Local Area Network (LAN) 125. The Firewall 123 limits access by Customers 130 and unauthorized parties into the LAN 125. Additionally, communication between the Public Server 121 and the Internal Server 124 through the Firewall 123 may utilize Network Address Translation (NAT) as is well known by those skilled in the art. Public Server 121, Firewall 123 and Internal Server 124 may be separate physical entities. Alternatively, the Public Server 121, Firewall 123 and Internal Server 124 may be housed within a single server. Additionally, Database 122 is coupled to the LAN 125. The Database 122 may include customer account information, persistent avatar attribute data and avatar conversational data for data mining. Due to the vast amount of avatar data within the Database 122 a data management system for infrequently accessed information may be utilized to increase Database 122 performance. Additional components may be coupled to the LAN 125 that are not shown. These components may include printers, additional databases, additional servers, telephone networks, fax, routers or other network devices.

[0052] The NOC 120 may be in a single location, however in some embodiments the NOC 120 may be distributed over multiple locations for increased reliability and efficiency, and reduced vulnerability to NOC 120 disruption and disaster.

[0053] The Public Server 121 couples the NOC 120 to the WAN 101. Additionally, in some embodiments, a Merchant Processing 150 and Offsite Backup 160 may independently couple to the Public Server 121. Alternatively, Merchant Processing 150 and Offsite Backup 160 may couple to the Public Server 121 through the WAN 101. Due to the variability of viable currencies existing within Virtual Universe 110 Merchant Processing 150 allows payment through unconventional means, thus increasing the available Customers 130 base. Examples of unconventional payments available through Merchant Processing 150 include, but are not limited to, PayPal, Linden Dollars and Google Checkout.

[0054] Offsite Backup 160 provides for operational data to be store in a safe means. In some embodiments, Offsite Backup 160 may include a third party. Offsite Backup 160 may include, but is not limited to disk images for each kind of server configuration, source code repositories, customized third-party software on intranet, database contents, email archives and server logs. A server state (web sites, customer services, etc.) may be recovered from Offsite Backup 160. Offsite Backup 160 acts as an insurance against disaster or other NOC 120 disruptions.

[0055] In some embodiments, the NOC 120 may access multiple WAN Application Programming Interfaces (APIs),

170a, 170b through 170r, that may be coupled to the WAN 101. The WAN APIs 170a, 170b to 170r functionalities may then be integrated into the persistent avatars capabilities.

[0056] FIG. 1B shows a functional block diagram of an exemplary Wide Area Network Application Programming Interface 170a for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. Possible WAN API 170a included within avatar capabilities includes Search Engines 171, References and Research Tools 172, Social Networking Tools 173, Product Lookup and Recommendations 174, and Calendars or Planners 175. The illustrated categories of WAN APIs 170a, 170b to 170r listed is not an exhaustive list, however. Additionally, different WAN APIs 170a, 170b to 170r may be provided to different Customers 130. In some embodiments the Customers 130 may be able to choose the WAN APIs 170a, 170b to 170r integrated into the persistent Avatar's capabilities. Moreover, in some embodiments, the WAN API 170a may only be accessible to the persistent avatar when the avatar is within particular Virtual Environment 211b.

[0057] FIG. 2A shows a schematic block diagram of the Virtual Universe 110 for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. The Virtual Universe 110 may be broken down into five subcategories: Virtual Overlays of Real World Data 201, WEB Communities 202, Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) 203, Social Worlds 204, and Telecom 205. Examples of Virtual Overlays of Real World Data 201 include, but are not limited to, Google Earth and Microsoft Flight Simulator X. Examples of WEB Communities 202 include, but are not limited to, YouTube and MySpace. Examples of MMOGs 203 include, but are not limited to, World of Warcraft, Guild Wars and Hive. Examples of Social Worlds 204 include, but are not limited to, SecondLife and Neopets. Examples of Telecom 205 include, but are not limited to, cell phones, BlackBerry Devices and Personal Digital Assistants (PDA). Additional subcategories may exist, or may emerge with new technology. It is intended that these additional subcategories be incorporated into the Virtual Universe 110. The NOC 120 is coupled to the subcategories of the Virtual Universe 110 through the WAN 101.

[0058] A logical block diagram of the Virtual Universe 110 is shown in FIG. 2B. Each Virtual Environments 211a, 211b to 211x, 212a, 212b to 212y, 213a, 213b to 213z, 214a, 214b to 214m, 215a, 215b to 215n is coupled to the WAN 101. Each subcategory, Virtual Overlays of Real World Data 201, WEB Communities 202, MMOGs 203, and Social Worlds 204, and Telecom 205, may include multiple Virtual Environments 211a to 215n. Moreover, some Virtual Environments 211a to 215n may be hybrids of these subcategories. Thus, while the line between specific subcategories may become increasingly indistinct, the boundaries between individual Virtual Environments 211a to 215n are distinct and nearly impassable. Occasionally, the Virtual Overlays of Real World Data 201 have provided some connectivity between Virtual Environments 211a to 215n as shown in FIG. 3; however this connectivity is limited in scope. The NOC 120, on the other hand, is able to access all the Virtual Environments 211a to 215n thereby providing a bridging mechanism to allow for persistent avatars to migrate from any Virtual Environment 211b to another Virtual Environment 211b.

[0059] A logical block diagram of an exemplary Virtual Environment 211b is shown in FIG. 2C. Within each Virtual Environment 211b exists an Enabler 231. The Enabler 231 allows for Persistent Avatar 221a, 221b to 221t to access the WAN 101, and eventually the NOC 120. In some embodi-

ments, each Virtual Environment 211b has a corresponding Enabler 231. However, any number of Persistent Avatars 221a to 221t may exist within a Virtual Environment 211b at any given time. Additionally, due to the migratory nature of the Persistent Avatars 221a to 221t, the number of Avatars 221a to 221t within the Virtual Environments 211b is in flux.

[0060] An logical block diagram of an exemplary Persistent Avatar 221a is shown in FIG. 2D. In some embodiments, Persistent Avatar 221a may include Physical Attributes 241, Intellectual Attributes 242 and Emotional Attributes 243. Physical Attributes 241 may include Avatar's 221a physical statistics, such as strength, and appearance data. Intellectual Attributes 242 may include the Avatar's 221a backstory, history and memory. Emotional Attributes 243 may include the Avatar's 221a emotional disposition, and reaction and response algorithms.

[0061] FIG. 3 shows a logical block diagram of End User Components 330a, 330b to 330p for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. Each customer of the Customers 130 includes an End User Component 330. In some embodiments, the End User Components 330a, 330b to 330p includes Author Tools 332a, 332b to 332p, respectively, that are coupled to the WAN 101 through Customer Interface 331a, 331b to 331p, respectively. The Author Tools 332a to 332p provides user management of the Persistent Avatar 221a. In some embodiments, each Customer 130 may own or use multiple Persistent Avatars 221a to 221t.

[0062] FIG. 4A shows a functional block diagram of the server architecture for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. In some embodiments, Server 121 includes an Application Framework 422, User Accounts 424, multiple Functionality Modules 426a, 426b to 426q and a Persistence Layer 428. The Application Framework 422 integrates and unifies Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) technologies. User Accounts 424 provides back access to the Customer Interfaces 330. The Persistence Layer 428 provides object/relational persistence and query service. The Functionality Modules 426a to 426q provide additional functional components for NOC 120 driven Persistent Avatars 221a to 221t.

[0063] FIG. 4B shows a functional block diagram of exemplary Functionality Modules 426a for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. In some embodiments, Functionality Modules 426a include a Discovery Functionality 401, a Reporting Functionality 402, a Planner and Scheduler 403, a Language Functionality 404, Emulators 405, a Rendering Engine 406, and a Procedural Degradation 407. The illustrated Functionality Modules 426a is not an exhaustive list, however, and additional Functionality Modules 426a to 426q may be incorporated as need dictates. The Discovery Functionality 401 provides text data mining, simulations and evolving algorithms. The Reporting Functionality 402 may include reporting usage, revenues, security attacks and similar statistically significant data. The Planner and Scheduler 403 may determine a sequence of actions, wherein the actions are related activities, and then coordinates the timing for the actions. In some embodiments these functions may be externalized when Avatar 221a serves as a "personal assistant". For example, Avatar 221a takes some responsibilities for planning the owner's schedule, such as for calls and appointments. The Language Functionality 404 includes grammatical parsing, statistical parsing and subsequent emotional assessment of text dialog. The Emulators 405 provide the ability to emulate corresponding Virtual Environments 211a to 215n. In some embodiments, the Emulators 405 may simu-

late the area most local to the Avatar **221a** and base decisions on the approximations generated by the simulation. The Rendering Engine **406** provides the ability to render Persistent Avatars' **221a** to **221t** appearance. The Procedural Degradation **407** matches the level of rendering to the capabilities of the target Virtual Environment **211b**. Procedural Degradation **407** may drive the Rendering Engine **406**. Each Virtual Environment **211b** tends to have its own unique set of features and limitations. For example, a model used to generate the "physical embodiments" of Avatar **221a** may render as 3D with facial expression in one Virtual Environment **211b**, but may need to be rendered as a 2D image for use as Avatar **221a** in another of Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n**.

[0064] FIG. 5 shows a functional block diagram of the Enabler **231** for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. The Enabler **231** includes a Client **510** that utilize a Protocol Suite **520**. In some embodiments, the Protocol Suite **520** includes protocols such as XML-RPC **521**, HTTP/HTTPS **522**, XMPP **523**, SMS **524**, WAP **525**, SMTP **526**, XML Socket **527**, and Protocol X **528**. Protocol X **528** may include any additional protocols as they become advantageous to include within the Protocol Suite **520**. In some embodiments the Enabler **231** is platform dependent, and uses native language of the Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n**. Client **510** may be a thin client module. Depending on the implementation, the Client **510** may be a thick client. Enabler **231** may be limited as to avoid the risk of being locked into any particular Virtual Environment **211b**. Dependent upon implementation.

[0065] The Enabler **231** may exist within the Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n** as either integrated software, or as independent hardware. In some embodiments, the Enabler **231** may exist within the NOC **120**. In alternate embodiments, the Enabler **231** may exist with the Customers **130**. In these embodiments the Customers **130** may additionally include the Database **122** and Server **121** thereby circumventing the need for any centralized NOC **120**.

[0066] FIG. 6 shows a flow chart illustrating the process **600** for enabling a Virtual Environment **211b** through the Enabler **231**. In this process the Enabler **231** encodes current conversation, position, owner credentials, attribute data and any other data necessary to drive the Avatars **221a** to **221t**, into a transaction request for use by the Server **121** at step **601**. In some embodiments, the encoding takes place within the Virtual Environment **211b** that the Avatar **221a** is located.

[0067] In step **602** the Virtual Environment **211b** sends the transaction request over the WAN **101** to the Server **121**.

[0068] In step **603** the Server **121** processes the encoded data for language, emotion, animation, planning, and movement and attribute changes. The Server **121** may then make modifications to the avatars **221a** attribute data.

[0069] In step **604** the Virtual Environment **211b** receives the response to the transaction request over the WAN **101** from the Server **121**.

[0070] In step **605** the Enabler **510** decodes response from the server to drive conversation, movement, actions or animations.

[0071] In step **606** the Persistent Avatar **221a** in the Virtual Environment **211b** talks, moves, acts or gestures.

[0072] FIG. 7 shows a flow chart illustrating the process **700** for Avatar **221a** attribute generation. In some embodiments, attributes may include Physical Attributes **241**, Intellectual Attributes **242** and Emotional Attributes **243**. In this process a determination is made whether the user is new at step **701**. If the user is not new she/he will be required to login

at step **703**. In some embodiments user credentials may be required to login, typically with a username and password. Of course alternate methods of authenticating user may be utilized as is well known by those skilled in the art. At step **704**, a determination is made whether to create a new avatar. If no new avatar is being created the Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n** receives the user information and data for a preexisting avatar from over the WAN **101** from the Server **121** at step **710**. Then proceed to step **711** below.

[0073] Otherwise if a new avatar is created then a determination is made whether the Avatar **221a** attributes will be from an avatar already in existence in one of the Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n**, at step **705**. If the Avatar **221a** is not from a preexisting avatar then the new Avatar **221a** will be built from scratch, at step **706**. Then, the Virtual Environment **211b** receives the user information and data for the newly created Avatar **221a** from over the WAN **101** from the Server **121** at step **710**. Then proceed to step **711** below.

[0074] Else, if the new Avatar **221a** is from a preexisting avatar then Enabler **510** encodes the avatar's data from the Virtual Environment **211b** for importing to Server **121**, at step **707**. Then, in step **708**, the avatar data is imported to the Server **121**. In step **709**, the imported avatar data may be used to create the new Avatar **221a**. Then, the Virtual Environment **211b** receives the user information and data for the newly created Avatar **221a** from over the WAN **101** from the Server **121** at step **710**. Then proceed to step **711** below.

[0075] If in step **701** the user is a new user then the user registers in step **702**. Registration may include generating a username and password. Then an Avatar **221a** is created. A determination is made whether the new Avatar **221a** attributes will be from an avatar already in existence in a Virtual Environment **211b**, at step **705**. If the new Avatar **221a** is not from a preexisting avatar then the new Avatar **221a** will be built from scratch, at step **706**. Then, the Virtual Environment **211b** receives the user information and data for the newly created Avatar **221a** from over the WAN **101** from the Server **121** at step **710**. Then proceed to step **711** below.

[0076] Else, if the new Avatar **221a** is from a preexisting avatar then Enabler **510** encodes the avatar data from the Virtual Environment **211b** for importing to Server **121**, at step **707**. Then, in step **708**, the avatar data is imported to the Server **121**. In step **709**, the imported avatar data may be used to create the new Avatar **221a**. Then, the Virtual Environment **211b** receives the user information and data for the newly created Avatar **221a** from over the WAN **101** from the Server **121** at step **710**.

[0077] At step **711** the Enabler **510** decodes the data and logs the Avatar **221a** into the Virtual Environment **211b**. The Avatar **221a** incurs experiences within the Virtual Environment **211b** which may result in changes made to the Avatar **221a**. At step **712** the experiences within Virtual Environment **211b** modify Avatar **221a** data. In step **713** the enabler encodes the Avatar **221a** data, including the modifications, for storage on the Server **121**. In step **714** the Virtual Environment sends the Avatar **221a** to **215n** data over the WAN **101** to the Server **121**. The Server **121** then stores the Avatar **221a** data, thereby incorporating changes made to the Avatar **221a** within the Virtual Environment **211b**.

[0078] FIG. 8 shows a logical block diagram of an exemplary Customer Interface **331a** for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. An Initializer **801** is coupled to Login Module **811**. Login **811** is included in a User Module **810**. User Module **810** includes functionality such as Pass-

word Restorer **812**, Registrar **813**, User Preferences **814**, and User Director **820**. Login **811** is coupled to the Password Restorer **812** and change Registration **813** information and Main Module **800**. Registration **813** is coupled with Main **800** and User Preferences **814**. Main Module **800** is coupled to Login **811**, Registration **813**, User Preferences **814**, User Director **820**, Forum Module **830**, Blog Module **840**, Support Module **850** and Avatar Development Module **860** via the Avatar Module **862**.

[0079] The User Director **820** includes a User Administrator **821** which in turn includes User Manager **822**, and User Parameters **823**. User Parameters **823** is coupled to the User Administration Main **821**. The User Director **820** module allows for management of users and the parameters of each user. For instance a particular one of Customers **130** may have multiple users; however, certain Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n** may be accessible to a subset of the users.

[0080] The Forum Module **830** may provide access to forums to enhance communication. The Forum Module **830** may include forum search ability, the ability to view forums and archive forum discussions.

[0081] The Blog Module **840** provides a web log history of the Avatar's **221a** actions and conversations. The Blog Module **840** may include searching capabilities, viewing capabilities, and the ability to edit or delete the conversational histories of the Avatar **221a**.

[0082] The Support Module **850** may include the ability to request support, search support inquiries by other users, view resolutions to common problems and troubleshoot.

[0083] The Avatar Development Module **860** includes Avatar Module **862**, Avatar Viewer **861**, Avatar Testing Module **870**, and an Avatar Redactor **880**. The Avatar Module **862** includes Avatar Manager **863** and Avatar Navigator **864**. Avatar Testing Module **870** includes manual Avatar Driver **871** and Avatar Monitor **872**. The Avatar Redactor **880** includes an Avatar Creator **881**, an Avatar Editor **882**, Visualization Editor **883**, Intellectual Editor **884** and an Emotional Editor **885**. The Avatar Redactor **880** includes the ability to create, edit, copy, review and manage one or more Persistent Avatars **221a** to **221t**.

[0084] The Avatar Module **862** couples with Avatar Viewer **861**, manual Avatar Driver **871**, Avatar Monitor **872**, Avatar Creator **881**, and the Avatar Redactor **880** via the Avatar Creator **881** and Avatar Editor **882**. The Avatar Editor **882** couples with the Visualization Editor **883**, Intellectual Editor **884** and Emotional Editor **885**. The layout and structure of the Customer Interface **331a** is of course not limited by the embodiments aforementioned. Alternate interface designs may be utilized as desired.

[0085] FIG. 9 shows a logical block diagram of an exemplary Author Tools **332a** for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. Three user roles exist: Common Users **900** or simply "User", Administrators **901** and Authors **902**. Users **900** are coupled to Avatar Navigator **864**. Administrators **901** and Authors **902** may become Users **900**. Conversely, under proper conditions a User **900** may become an Administrator **901** or Author **902**.

[0086] Administrators **901** are power users who may administrate work of main Customer Interface **331a** functions. For example Administrators **901** may create arbitrator for forums within the Forum Module **830**, and approving of registration new users. Administrators **901** are coupled to WAN Manager **903** and Avatar Manager **863**. Avatar Manager

863 includes the ability to Change Avatar's Owner **905** and Avatar Lock **907**. Avatar Manager **863** has direct effects upon Avatar Navigator **864**.

[0087] Authors **902** are users who are involved in process of Avatar **221a** development (narrations writing, Avatar **221a** knowledgebase filling, drawing, etc.). Author **902** has access to Blog Module **840** as well. In some embodiments, the Author **902** encapsulates two classes: corporate customer and end-user. There may be a difference between the two for the feature sets enabled in the Avatar Redactor **880**. For example corporate customer includes game designer at a companies and would include less breadth of feature sets but more depth. An example of end-user includes an individual with a MySpace account who requires more breadth of feature sets but less depth. Authors **902** have access to New Avatar Creator **881**, Avatar Eliminator **909**, utilize Train Wizard **908**, access Avatar Testing Module **870** and Avatar Editor **882**. The Train Wizard **908** may be an advanced feature that utilizes a "wizard", wherein the wizard is a guided set of dialog windows with embedded help, to guide the user through an initial experience of creating rules for the Avatar **221a**. In some embodiments, an example of interaction may then be shown in the same window as the rules editor, thereby allowing convenient training. Such a feature may be valuable to less experienced users.

[0088] FIG. 10 shows a functional block diagram of one embodiment of Avatar Testing Module **870** for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. The Avatar Testing Module **870** may include a manual Avatar Driver **871**, Avatar Monitor **872**, and Avatar Debugger **1000**. Avatar Debugger **1000** utilizes information from manual Avatar Driver **871** and Avatar Monitor **872** to debug an Avatar **221a**. In some embodiments, debugging an Avatar **221a** may include monitoring Avatar's **221a** reactions, movements, interactions, gestures and expressions for believability. In alternate embodiments, believability may not be the desired end result, in which case the Avatar **221a** may be monitored for some alternate behavioral, movement and reactionary criteria. Minor alterations to the Avatar's **221a** attributes may then be implemented to ensure greater compliance to the desired behavioral, movement and reactionary criteria.

[0089] FIG. 11 shows a functional block diagram of the Avatar Editor **882** included in Avatar Redactor **880**. Avatar Editor **882** function may be coupled to Visualization Editor **883**, Intellectual Editor **884** and Emotional Editor **885**. Visualization Editor **883** may be coupled to Animation Editor **1130** and Appearance Editor **1135**. Animation Editor **1130** may be coupled to Generic Animator **1131**, Animation Adjustor **1132**, Animation Up-loader **1133** and Animation Selector **1134**. Appearance Editor **1135** may be coupled to Body Editor **1136** and Accessories Editor **1137**.

[0090] Intellectual Editor **884** may be coupled to Background Editor **1143** and Personalizer **1140**. Background Editor **1143** may be coupled to Narration Generator **1144**, Generic Intellectual Background Appointer **1146**, Concept-Map Generator **1147** and Narration Parser **1148**. In some embodiments a concept-map is a graphical representation of a narrative represented by "concepts". Narration Generator **1144** may be coupled to Backstory Generator **1145**. Personalizer **1140** may be coupled to "Rule Map" Editor **1141** and Asset Associator **1142**. A Rule Map includes an interactive graphic of the rules, how they are connected, which rules are used more often than the others.

[0091] Emotional Editor **885** may be coupled to Generic Emotional State Appointer **1150**, Emotions Adder **1151** and Individual Emotions Editor **1152**. Additional aspects of the Avatar **221a** may become editable as Avatar **221a** complexity increases. It is intended that these additional editing functions become incorporated into the Avatar Editor **882**. Additionally, in some embodiments it may be advantageous to have fewer editing functions for simplicity or cost versus benefit reasons.

[0092] FIG. 12 shows a flow chart **1200** illustrating the process for editing the Avatar **221a** for the persistent avatar management system of FIG. 1. In this process, the Avatar's **221a** appearance is edited at step **1201**. Then the Avatar's **221a** intellectual attributes are edited in step **1202**. In step **1203**, the Avatar's **221a** emotional disposition is edited. In step **1204**, the Avatar's **221a** animation library is customized. Lastly, in step **1205**, the Avatar **221a** is personalized.

[0093] FIG. 13 shows a flow chart **1201** illustrating the process for editing the Avatar's **221a** appearance within the Avatar Editor **882**. In this process the Avatar's **221a** body is edited at step **1301**. Then, in step **1302**, the accessories are edited. After completion the process returns to step **1202** of FIG. 12.

[0094] Three methods of generating multi-dimensional computer graphics can be utilized by system **100**. The first method is to manually input data, either by typing on a keyboard or using a Graphical User Interface (GUI) such as a tablet, a joystick and/or a mouse. This can be tedious, but precise, and generally looks esthetically pleasing. The second method is to use 3D scanning technology to enter data which is fast, precise, esthetically pleasing, but is often quite expensive since it requires a 3D scanner. The third method is the use of algorithms which generate models from pre-existing formula, position sets, or other data that dictates the position of the geometry, then doing some variable on that, or even creating it from the ground up. This method, once built, is quite fast, precise, and inexpensive, but may result in distribution of potential errors. Accordingly one, all, or a combination of these methods may be utilized to create dimensional computer graphics for use in the process **1201** of editing the Avatar's **221a** appearance.

[0095] In some embodiments, template-sets are built that articulate several 'common' anthropomorphic configurations. This template contains all the features of a numerically average human. The proportions of the nose, arms, posture, and other visual features are built to an average for male, female, and neuter models. This is done for mesomorph, ectomorph, and endomorph body types. This provides nine templates from which to work from. The nine base templates may be edited so that any small adjustments are made to ensure a high quality model of nearly-perfect appearance. The model may be custom-tailored to specific desires of facial or body features. The user may engage in an editing process with one of the nine templates which, when completed, creates a model that very closely approximates the user's desired appearance.

[0096] In some embodiments, an alternate production path may be desired. Many gamers and developers will have already built models of Avatars **221a** to **221t** that they enjoy, and it is desirous to allow them to reuse these models as they may already have an Avatar **221a** whose attributes are desired. The user may also want to imbue the Avatar **221a** with emotion and intellect.

[0097] Polygons can also be used for generating multi-dimensional graphical representations. However, while poly-

gons may be subdivided and reduced, the presence of edges generally makes calculation that changes visual resolution complicated, if at all workable. Therefore, in some embodiments, the method of representing geometry may be indefinitely detailed as visual resolution is altered, and still be sufficiently light as to be transportable over a WAN **101**. Examples of this kind of 3D representation method include Metaballs, and NURBs (Nonuniform rational B-splines).

[0098] FIG. 14 shows a flow chart **1202** illustrating the process for Editing the Backstory **1145** of an Avatar **221a** within the Avatar Editor **882**. In this process a determination to use a generic template is made in step **1400**. If a generic template will be used, a generic intellectual template is generated in step **1401**. The personality is then evaluated through chat in step **1406**. After completion the process returns to step **1203** of FIG. 12. Else, if a generic template will not be used, a backstory is written in natural language in step **1402**. Then, in step **1403**, the backstory is parsed into its conceptual elements. These conceptual elements are then organized in a grid concept-map, in step **1404**. In step **1405** the concept-map is edited. The personality is then evaluated through chat in step **1406**. After completion the process returns to step **1203** of FIG. 12.

[0099] FIG. 15 shows a flow chart **1203** illustrating the process for editing the emotional disposition of an Avatar **221a** within the Avatar Editor **882**. In this process a general emotional personality template is selected in step **1501**. Then, in step **1502**, individual emotions are edited with a slider and fuzzy set. In step **1500**, a determination is made to add specific emotions. Then, if determined so, specific emotions are added in step **1503**. After completion the process returns to step **1204** of FIG. 12. Else if no specific emotions are added the process returns to step **1204** of FIG. 12.

[0100] FIG. 16 shows a flow chart **1204** illustrating the process for editing the animation of an Avatar **221a** within the Avatar Editor **882**. In this process a generic animation template is selected in step **1601**. In step **1600**, a determination is made whether to upload animation. Then, if determined so, animation may be uploaded in step **1602**. In step **1603**, animations are edited within the animation editor. After completion the process returns to step **1205** of FIG. 12. Else if no animations are uploaded, animations are edited within the animation editor in step **1603**. After completion the process returns to step **1205** of FIG. 12.

[0101] FIG. 17 shows a flow chart **1205** illustrating the process for editing the personality rules of an Avatar **221a** within the Avatar Editor **882**. In this process rules within the Rule Map to be modified are selected in step **1701**. Then, in step **1702**, assets are associated within the rule editor.

[0102] FIG. 18 shows a logical block diagram **1800** of User **900** interacting with an Information Broker **1802** in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In some embodiments, the Information Broker **1802** is a variety of Persistent Avatar **221a** that acts as a personal assistant to broker trust and personal information as the User **900** navigates through multiple Virtual Environments **211a** to **211c** with a separate Persistent Avatar **221a**. Multiple Virtual Environments **211a** to **211c** may include any number of additional Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n**. Alternatively, in some embodiments the Information Broker **1802** may be a component of the Persistent Avatar **221a** that User **900** uses to navigate the Virtual Environments **211a** to **214c**. In some embodiments the Information Broker **1802** may have no physical representation, and the User **900** may not realize

when the Information Broker **1802** is active. Alternatively, the Information Broker **1802** may be a more tangible aspect of the User's **900** virtual exploration.

[0103] The User **900** accesses Virtual Environments **211a** to **211c** through the Information Broker **1802**, a browser **1803** and the WAN **101**. In some embodiments, some or all of the Virtual Environments **211a** to **211c** require personal information about the User **900** to provide access or full functionality. Thus, every time the User's **900** Avatar **221a** migrates from one Virtual Environment **211a** to **211c** to another the User **900** is prompted to provide information before the migration may be completed. This repetitive prompting may seriously disrupt User's **900** migration from one Virtual Environment **211a** to **211c** to another. The Information Broker **1802** makes decisions based upon trust levels for each Virtual Environment **211a** to **211c** and brokers personal information accordingly in order to make migration more seamless, yet still maintain a high level of security with personal information.

[0104] FIG. **19** shows a logical block diagram of the Information Broker **1802** of FIG. **18**. Personal Data Access Broker **1920** includes Virtual Environment Identity Authenticator **1930** and User and Avatar Relationship Manager **1910**. Virtual Environment Identity Authenticator **1930** is very important since the level of trust provided any particular Virtual Environment **211b** is entirely dependent upon that Virtual Environment's **211a** to **215n** identity. Subsequently, accurate data is imperative to secure Brokering of Access to Personal Information **1920**. The User and Avatar Relationship Manager **1910** provides the User's **900** comfort level, preferences, trust and habits. The trustworthiness of a Virtual Environment **211b** is then balanced by the User's **900** trust to determine the extent of information access.

[0105] FIG. **20** shows a flow chart **2020** illustrating the process for Personal Information Access Broker **1920** for the Information Broker **1802** of FIG. **18**. In this process the Virtual Environment **211b** is ranked by trust in step **2021**. In some embodiments, this ranking by trust takes into account the identity of the Virtual Environment **211b**, the User's **900** previous trust for the particular Virtual Environment **211b** or similar Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n**, public knowledge of the trustworthiness of the Virtual Environment **211b**, and the User's **900** natural trust levels. In some embodiments, additional statistical and preferential information may be utilized in order to determine a trust ranking. In step **2022**, a determination is made if the Virtual Environment **211b** is fully trusted. If the Virtual Environment **211b** is fully trusted the Information Broker **1802** provides full access to the User's **900** available personal information in step **2023**.

[0106] Else if the Virtual Environment **211b** is not fully trusted, a determination is made if the Virtual Environment **211b** is intermediately trusted in step **2024**. If the Virtual Environment **211b** is intermediately trusted, the Information Broker **1802** may provide a limited access to personal information in step **2025**. Limited access may be regulated by comparing the level of trust in the Virtual Environment **211b**, as determined in step **2021**, compared to the sensitivity of the personal information. Alternatively, the User's **900** preferences may augment, or supplant, the sensitivity of the personal information for purposes of regulating limited access to personal information.

[0107] Else, if the Virtual Environment **211b** is not intermediately trusted, the Information Broker **1802** may restrict access to personal information in step **2026**.

[0108] FIG. **21** is a flow chart **2100** illustrating the process for Event Notification in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In this process an event occurs within a Virtual Environment **211b** or within the Real World in step **1201**. Examples of an event may include a response to a forum comment, a guild raid in a MMOG **203**, a swing in the New York Stock Exchange, or any other event. Events are monitored for within Virtual Environments **211a** to **215n** and WAN APIs **170a**, **170b** to **170r**. In step **2102**, a determination is made as to whether the event is important. This determination relies heavily on the User **900** preferences stored within the User Account **424**. Importance may be determined by an assessor, which assesses the scope, and duration, of an event to the User **900** or the User's Avatar **221a**. The User's **900** preferences, degree of impact on User **900**, scope of event, duration of event, and degree of impact on User's **900** social network, group associations, interests, physical location, and demographic data may all be utilized by the assessor to determine importance. Additionally, by incorporating a feedback system the assessor may be adaptable to the Users' desires through statistical means. In some embodiments a value may be generated for the importance of an event and the value may be compared to a threshold to determine if an event is important. If the event is found unimportant then the process ends.

[0109] Else, if the event is found important then, in step **2103**, the User Account **424** is queried for User **900** activity. In step **2104**, a determination is made if the User **900** is logged in. If User **900** is logged in then a message may be sent to the User **900** within the Virtual Environment **211b** with an alert of the event, in step **2105**.

[0110] Else, if the user is not logged in a determination is made if the User **900** is engaging in instant messaging, in step **1206**. If User **900** is engaging in instant messaging then an instant message may be sent to the User **900** with an alert of the event, in step **2107**.

[0111] Else, if the User **900** is not engaging in instant messaging, a query may be made into the User's **900** contact preference at step **2109**. In step **2110**, a determination is made if the preferred contact method is email. If email is the preferred contact method then an email of the event alert may be sent to User **900** at step **2111**.

[0112] Else, if email is not the preferred contact method then, at step **2112**, a determination is made if the preferred contact method is text messaging. If text messaging is the preferred contact method then a text message of the event alert may be sent to User **900** at step **2113**.

[0113] Else, if text message is not the preferred contact method then, at step **2114**, a determination is made if the preferred contact method is an audio messaging. If audio messaging is the preferred contact method then an audio message of the event alert may be sent to User **900** by phone or voicemail, at step **2115**.

[0114] Else, if audio message is not the preferred contact method then additional methods of User **900** contact may be included, or the process may end. Alternatively, in some embodiments a default message system, such as email, may be utilized if a User **900** is found to have no contact preference.

[0115] The present invention may also be practiced with other techniques for providing a Persistent Avatar **221a** with migratory abilities. For example, it is possible, to provide Users **900** with the equipment necessary to host their own Persistent Avatar **221a**, including an Enabler **231** and access to large external databases, thereby distributing processing

and eliminating the NOC 120. Alternatively, in some embodiments, the Enabler 231 may exist within the NOC 120, thereby coupling to the Virtual Environments 211a to 215n in its native language. Such embodiments require no cooperation from Virtual Environments 211a to 215n.

[0116] In sum, the present invention provides a persistent avatar management system 100 for the creation, editing and maintaining of avatars that are capable of migrating across multiple virtual environments while maintaining substantially constant attributes personalities and histories, thereby providing the ability to seamlessly transition from one virtual environment to another. Persistent avatar management system 100 may be implemented entirely with special purpose hardware, or a combination of hardware and software executing on a computer system. The advantages of such an efficient system include ease of working within virtual environments, reduction of man-hours wasted in alternate avatar creation, efficiency and economy for the virtual environments, and positive repercussions for the healthcare and education industries.

[0117] Although the present invention has been described in considerable detail with reference to exemplary embodiments, modifications, variations, permutations, and substitute equivalents may be made to the disclosed embodiments while remaining within the subject and spirit of the invention. Therefore, the spirit and scope of the appended claims should not be limited to the description of the versions contained herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A persistent avatar management system, useful in conjunction with a persistent avatar and a first virtual environment having a first user interface, wherein the persistent avatar includes at least one attribute, the persistent avatar management system comprising:

a first enabler configured to transpose the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar to be compatible with the first interface of the first virtual environment thereby enabling the first virtual environment to utilize the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar.

2. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 1, further comprising a second enabler configured to transpose the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar to be compatible with a second interface of a second virtual environment thereby enabling the second virtual environment to utilize the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar.

3. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 2, further comprising a migrator configured to migrate the persistent avatar from the first virtual environment to the second virtual environment, wherein the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar remains substantially consistent from the first virtual environment to the second virtual environment.

4. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 1, wherein the first enabler includes at least one client module, and wherein the at least one client module is based on a protocol suite.

5. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 1, wherein the persistent avatar management system is hosted within a network operation center.

6. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 1, wherein the persistent avatar is associated with a user and wherein the persistent avatar management system is hosted by the user.

7. The persistent avatar management system, as recited in claim 1, further comprising an attribute generator configured to generate the at least one attribute of persistent avatar.

8. The persistent avatar management system as recited in claim 7, wherein the attribute generator generates the at least one attribute from a plurality of pre-selectable attributes.

9. A method for managing a persistent avatar, useful in association with a first virtual environment having a first user interface, wherein the persistent avatar includes at least one attribute, the method comprising:

transposing the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar to be compatible with the first interface of the first virtual environment thereby enabling the first virtual environment to utilize the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar.

10. The method, as recited in claim 9, further comprising transposing the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar to be compatible with a second interface of a second virtual environment thereby enabling the second virtual environment to utilize the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar.

11. The method, as recited in claim 10, further comprising migrating the persistent avatar from the first virtual environment to the second virtual environment, wherein the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar remains substantially consistent from the first virtual environment to the second virtual environment.

12. The method, as recited in claim 9, wherein the persistent avatar includes at least one of a character, a non-player character, a quasi-player character, an agent, a personal assistant, a personality, a guide, an educator and a representation.

13. The method, as recited in claim 10, wherein each of the first and the second of virtual environments includes at least one of an online game, a social network, a web community, a shared simulation based on user-created content, a virtual overlay on physical world data, and a telecommunication device.

14. The method, as recited in claim 12, wherein the persistent avatar is editable.

15. The method, as recited in claim 14, wherein the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar includes at least one of an appearance, a memory, a personality, an emotional attribute, an intelligence attribute, a physical attribute, a social attribute, and an avatar statistic.

16. The method, as recited in claim 14, further comprising modifying the at least one attribute of the persistent avatar, wherein the modifying is triggered by an experience in one of the first and the second virtual environments.

17. The method, as recited in claim 9, wherein the persistent avatar represents a plurality of persistent avatars.

18. A notification system, useful in association with a user and at least one virtual environment, the notice system comprising:

a monitor configured to monitor the at least one virtual environment for an event;

an assessor configured to assess an importance of the event and to generate a value for the event corresponding to the importance; and

a notifier configured to notify the user of the event if the value generated for the event exceeds a threshold value.

19. A method for notifying a user, wherein the user is associated with at least one virtual environment, the method comprising:

monitoring the at least one virtual environment for an event;

assessing an importance of the event;
generating a value for the event corresponding to the importance; and
notifying the user of the event if the value generated for the event exceeds a threshold value.

20. The method, as recited in claim **19**, wherein the monitoring further comprising monitoring a real-world for an occurrence of the event.

21. The method, as recited in claim **20**, wherein assessing the importance of the event includes querying at least one of a user preference, a degree of impact on the user, a scope of the event, a duration of the event, and a degree of impact on a social network associated with the user.

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