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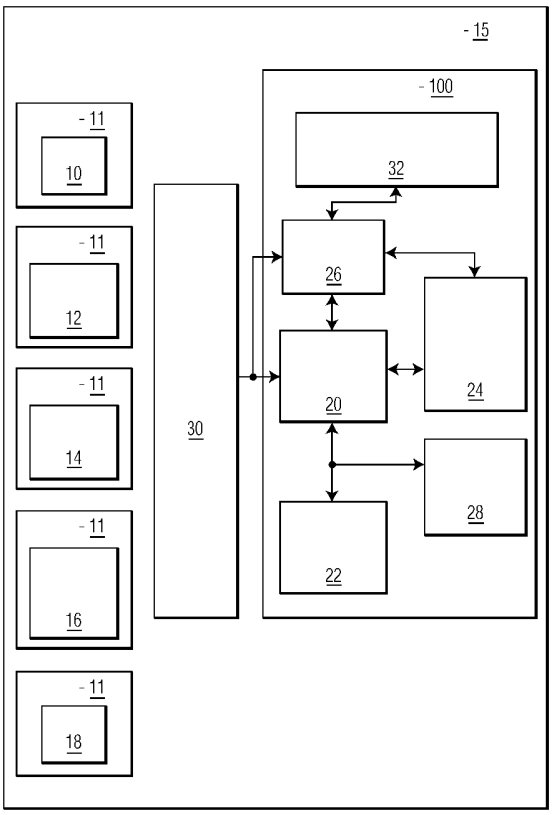
(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INFLUENCING MEDIA SELECTION IN A COMMON AREA



(57) Abstract: Methods for influencing media selection in a common area, include notifying (111) users to participate in influencing media selection, establishing (112) communication in the common area to receive selection information from the users and evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot. A system for receiving input for influencing media selections in a common area includes a management module (20), which establishes communication with the users in a common area to receive selection information therefrom. A selection information module (24) provides options to the users and receives selection information from the users to evaluate in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area. A contact information device (32) notifies the users of available participation in influencing the media selection in the common area.

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— *as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))*

— *as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))*

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INFLUENCING MEDIA SELECTION IN A COMMON AREA

This disclosure relates to selecting media, and more particularly to systems and methods for individuals to select media for play in common areas.

When in a public area, such as a train station, a pub, a sporting event, etc., music or other media may be rendered which is not pleasing or not desirable to some or all of the individuals present. Depending on the venue, there is often no way to affect the selection or type of content being played.

In small, venues, a request of the owner, manager or other persons may be available to attempt to change, for example, music being played on a loud speaker in a department store or the like. This is of limited value since it is not convenient to make such a request. In addition, such as request may not be met with the desired response. In other scenarios, the music may not be controlled at the location or may be a subscription to a music service. Therefore, it would be advantageous to have a system and method, which permits an individual to influence the media played in a public or common area.

A method for influencing media selection in a common area, includes notifying users of an option to participate in influencing media selection in a predetermined common area, establishing communication with the users in the common area to receive selection information from the users and evaluating the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot.

A system for receiving input for influencing media selections in a common area includes a management module, which establishes communication with the users in a common area to receive selection information therefrom. A selection information module provides selection information options to the users and receives the selection information from the users to evaluate the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot. A contact information device notifies the users of available participation in influencing the media selection in the common area.

These and other objects, features and advantages of the present disclosure will become apparent from the following detailed description of illustrative embodiments thereof, which is to be read in connection with the accompanying drawings.

This disclosure will present in detail the following description of preferred embodiments with reference to the following figures wherein:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a system for influencing media content played in a common area in accordance with an illustrative embodiment; and

FIG. 2 is a block/flow diagram showing a system/method for influencing media content played in a common area in accordance with an illustrative embodiment.

The present disclosure provides a system and method for enabling individuals to influence the selection of media being publicly played. This is preferably performed through remote communication such as through a wireless network, e.g., a local area network or a dedicated network. The present disclosure will describe a plurality of different illustrative embodiments to demonstrate ways in which the present disclosure may be implemented. These embodiments are illustrative only and should not be construed as limiting.

It should be understood that the elements shown in the FIGS. may be implemented in various forms of hardware, software or combinations thereof. Preferably, these elements are implemented in a combination of hardware and software, which may employ one or more appropriately programmed general-purpose digital computers having a processor, display memory and input/output interfaces. The elements depicted in the FIGS. may be implemented in various combinations of hardware and software and provide functions which may be combined in a single element or multiple elements. In addition, the elements shown may be distributed over a network or networks or may be located at a single location.

Referring now to the drawings in which like numerals represent the same or similar elements and initially to FIG. 1, an illustrative system 100 is shown, to demonstrate features and aspects of embodiments in accordance with the present disclosure. System 100 is preferably implemented in a public area or common area 15. Common area 15 may also include a private area open to the public or a private area open to one or more individuals. In some relevant examples, area 15 may include a subway station, a sport or entertainment arena, a public square, a business establishment or any other indoor or outdoor venue.

System 100 includes a management module or system 20. Module 20 may include a server or any computer device or mechanism equipped to receive information from a plurality of users. Server 20 manages functions and operations of system 100. Server 20 may be connected to a network 30, which may include the Internet, a local area network, a cable network, a designated network, such as a home network or the like, or any other

communications networks. In one embodiment, server 20 receives input directly from the plurality of users 11.

Users 11 may communicate with server 20 in a plurality of different ways. Some of these ways are illustratively depicted in FIG. 1 and may include, e.g., wireless devices, such as a lap top 12, a cell phone 14 a personal digital assistant (PDA) 16, a pager 18 or any other device 10, which is capable of interfacing with server 20 and communicating the appropriate information to server 20 in accordance with a recognized protocol.

Aspects of system 100 will become apparent from the following description by way of example. In this example, public area includes a train station. Many individuals may be waiting for a train and have laptops 12, cell phones 14, PDAs 16 or pagers 18 on their person. A media output device 22 is located in the station (area 15). Device 22 may include a television, monitors, display, radio, speakers, or any other media output system or device.

The users 11 present in the station will have the opportunity to change the television station, radio station or otherwise select media to be played over one or more of the media output devices 22. In one embodiment, this includes notifying the users 11 that the opportunity exists for them to select or to vote on media content to be played. This notification may include a contact information display 32. Display 32 may be a sign, advertisement or posting that may include instructions on how to vote or bid or give information on how to connect to server 20. Display 32 may also be incorporated into device 22. The instructions may be communicated audibly or visually or any other method of communication. For example, a sign (32) may be posted in the train station to indicate a website, give a telephone number, or provide a password for communicating with server 20. In the case where a sign is employed, the sign may be changed or the password or other information may be changed to ensure that only a local crowd is interacting with server 20.

A user 11 decides that the media being played on media output device 22 is not preferred. The user 11 follows instructions on display 32 to log into server 20 directly or over a publicly switched network or other network 30. Server 20 may provide a plurality of options or choices for media selections. The user 11 selects one of the options or inputs his/her own option. This may be down be entering a title, artist or other information. Server 20 compiles the information received from user 11 with other users. This may be done in a plurality of ways. For example, server 20 may tally a number of votes for that selection over a given period of time. The selection with the most votes wins and may be played at the end

of a particular time segment or immediately. This information may optionally be reported back to the users 11 via their respective device or publicly using, for example, display 32.

Server 20 may include or be coupled to a voting/polling/bidding module 24, which tallies the votes for the selections during a given period. After the voting period has elapsed, mechanism 24 reports to server 20 the winner of the vote/poll. Once media has been determined, server 20 downloads the media from memory/content storage 28 for rendering on the media output device 22. This process may be repeated continuously.

Measures may be taken in the event no voting has occurred, for example, no one is presenting the station or if no one in the station is voting. Then, media may be randomly selected, played in accordance with a program, or system 100 may be powered down.

Voting may also include a plurality of different techniques of systems. For example, users may vote on media in a play queue, and a next played media title may include the most popular title (the most votes). During the playing of the last selected media votes for a next title may be tallied to determine a next title to be played. In other methods, the voting may include the media in the play queue, which is ordered based on a number votes during a predetermined voting period, say ½ hour. After the ½, the titles are ordered in accordance with a number of votes, e.g., the highest number of votes is played first, the second highest number of votes played second, etc. These methods may further include a dynamic voting system were an instantaneous tally at the point where a decision needs to be made for the next title to be played will decide the next title to be played. For example, the system may constantly receive votes and may look back over a predetermined period (which may be arbitrarily set) to determine the number of votes received for that period and select the next title in accordance with the highest number of votes. The title selected last would go back into the play queue but may not be played again until a predetermined time had elapsed or a predetermined number of titles were played. Other techniques are also contemplated.

Another embodiment includes the ability for an individual user 11 to bid against another user to attempt to get a particular selection played immediately or at a selected time. In one example, a user A decides to employ system 100 to select a video B to be played on output device 22. Since user A will be at the station for several hours, user A is willing to pay for the option to view movie B at a designated time. If unopposed, system 100

will trump any voting for the paying user A. User A can be prompted for credit card information or may be billed through his/her service provider (e.g., the telephone company).

In another example, a user C wishes to view the same movies at the same time. Then, the system would bill both users and may reduce the cost for each of user A and user C. If, however, user A and user C wish to view different movies, then the time slot will be opened up to bidding. User A and user C would both enter a bid amount and after a predetermined bidding period, mechanism 24 would determine a winner, charge the winner and notify server 20 of the next selection to play in accordance with the winner of the bidding.

Depending on the application, an area verification device or system 26 may be provided. In one embodiment, area verification 26 includes an additional step to ensure that the voting users are indeed present in area 15. Area verification 26 may include displaying a code or number on display 32 which must be input by the voter during the voting or bidding process. Area verification 26 may change the code every few minutes or during each voting segment. Only those present within area 15 will have knowledge of the code and will be able to vote/bid. In another embodiment, area verification 26 may employ global positioning data (e.g., GPS) or other location determination methods to verify the location of the voter/bidder.

In yet another embodiment, users 11 may influence the media output from output device 22 by uploading media to be played. The media uploaded to server 20 from one of devices 10-18 may have to be reviewed for content by server 20 or to ensure copyrights are not violated. The uploaded media can then either be placed in a queue or a timeslot may be bid on for playtime.

In another example, people may bid or vote on media to be played at a public event or occasion. This embodiment may require presence at the event or may permit ticket holders or the public at large to influence the media to be played. In one example, a user 11 may want to hear a song played at midnight on New Year's Eve in Times Square. An auction for this privilege may be held in advance of the event and permit bidding. The highest bidder may select from a list of titles, request a user selected title or upload a personal message or media. Since this is performed in advance of the event, the uploaded message can be screened for appropriateness or to ensure the media does not violate copyrights. In this example, server 20 can be interfaced over the Internet (as network 30) by a user employing a computer, although other devices and methods may be employed.

Referring to FIG. 2, a system/method for permitting users to select media played in a common area is illustratively shown. In block 110, a system 100 is provided which permits user interaction therewith. System 100 may include some or all of the features described with reference to FIG. 1. For example, a server may be employed to permit interactions between individual users and the system. In block 111, users are alerted to the option of being able to influence the media being played in the common area. This may be implemented by displaying a sign or having a kiosk with an interactive screen that informs passersby of the option. In block 112, a user establishes communication with the system (e.g., server 20). This may be performed by wireless communication using a cellular telephone, PDA, pager, or portable computer device. Stationary devices may also be employed over a network.

In block 114, payment may be needed to proceed to select the media. This may take several forms depending on the type of selection desired by the user. For example, a simple vote from a list of media options provided to the user may be free, or it may cost a fee to make a selection. Uploading media may incur cost for the user as well as a bid for a time slot that is accepted. Placing a bid may also incur a charge. A user may be asked to enter credit card information, open an account with a service provider or be charged by an existing service provider (e.g., be charged fees by a telephone company or Internet service provider based upon usage of the system and/or the device being used to interface with the system).

The user selects a method to influence the media being played or to be played by selecting one of blocks 116, 118 and/or 120. In block 116, a user votes for a media selection to be played during a given time period by selecting a content title from a list provided by the system to the user after communication has been established.

In block 118, the user may select to upload a content title to the system. This process may be included in the bidding as described with respect to block 120. Uploaded material may be accompanied by a bid amount and users would compete for a timeslot based on the run time needed for the uploaded material and the amount of the bid. If the bid is the highest from a plurality of bids, the highest bid may not win the timeslot if the user's uploaded material is too long or too short for the timeslot. Other criteria may also be employed including, for example, weighted calculations to determine a winning bid for uploading.

Block 118 may be followed by an optional screening step in block 119 to determine if the content to be uploaded is appropriate for the common area and that violations of copyrights are not at issue. Appropriate content may include determining if the content is appropriate for general public viewing or other viewing depending on the circumstances.

In block 120, a user may bid on a timeslot by entering a bid amount and waiting for a determination of a winner. The bidding may include entering the media desired to be played and pooling bids on a common media selection together as a way of creating a weighted vote. For example, if a user A and user B bid on a same timeslot and desire the same media content be played, their bids may be combined to enhance the bid and increase the chances of winning.

In block 122, the system tallies votes and determines winning bids to determine the play list for the system. A user that wins bidding may have rights to a particular timeslot in block 120 Then, the system plays the media in accordance with the determination(s) made in block 122.

Having described preferred embodiments for systems and methods for influencing media selection in a common area (which are intended to be illustrative and not limiting), it is noted that modifications and variations can be made by persons skilled in the art in light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that changes may be made in the particular embodiments of the disclosure disclosed which are within the scope and spirit of the embodiments disclosed herein as outlined by the appended claims. Having thus described the details and particularity required by the patent laws, what is claimed and desired protected by Letters Patent is set forth in the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for influencing media selection in a common area, comprising the steps of:

notifying (111) one or more users of an option to participate in influencing media selection in a predetermined common area;

establishing (112) communication with the one or more users in the common area to receive selection information from the one or more users; and

evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of tallying votes (116) and awarding the timeslot to the media selection having the most votes.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of receiving (119) uploaded media content from a user and evaluating criteria to determine whether the uploaded material can be played.

4. The method as recited in claim 3, wherein the step of evaluating (122) criteria to determine whether the uploaded material can be played includes screening (119) the uploaded material to determine if it is content appropriate.

5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of receiving (120) bids from the one or more users and determining a user with a winning bid to whom the timeslot is given.

6. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising charging (115) the one or more users a fee.

7. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of notifying includes updating (111) a notification source with access information to limit the one or more users to users within the common area.

8. The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the notification source includes one of a display, sign or audible message.

9. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of verifying (113) location of each user to ensure each user is within the common area.

10. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps as recited in claim 1.

11. A method for influencing media selection in a common area, comprising the steps of:

notifying (111) one or more users of an option to participate in influencing media selection in a predetermined common area;

establishing (112) communication with the one or more users in the common area to receive selection information from the one or more users;

providing (115) options to the one or more users for selecting media to be played in a given timeslot;

receiving (116, 118, 120) selection information in accordance with a selected option from the one or more users; and

evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot.

12. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of tallying (116) votes and awarding the timeslot to the media selection having the most votes.

13. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of receiving (118) uploaded media content from a user and evaluating criteria to determine whether the uploaded material can be played.

14. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein the step of evaluating (122) criteria to determine whether the uploaded material can be played includes screening (119) the uploaded material to determine if it is content appropriate.

15. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the step of evaluating (122) the selection information in accordance with selection criteria includes the step of receiving bids (120) from the one or more users and determining a user with a winning bid to whom the timeslot is given.

16. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the step of receiving selection information from the one or more users includes charging (115) users a fee.

17. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the step of notifying (111) includes updating a notification source with access information to limit the one or more users to users within the common area.

18. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein the notification source includes one of a display, sign or audible message.

19. The method as recited in claim 11, further comprising the step of verifying (113) location of each user to ensure each user is within the common area.

20. The method as recited in claim 11, wherein the options include one of voting on a media selection provided in a list (116), uploading media content (118), and bidding on a media selection (120).

21. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps as recited in claim 11.

22. A system (100) for receiving input for influencing media selections in a common area, comprising:

a management module (20), which establishes communication with the one or more users in a common area to receive selection information from the one or more users;

a selection information module (24) which provides selection information options to the one or more users and receives the selection information from the one or more users to evaluate the selection information in accordance with selection criteria for a given timeslot to determine a media selection to be played in the common area during the timeslot; and

a contact information device (32), which notifies the one or more users of available participation in influencing the media selection in the common area.

23. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the selection information module (24) includes a list of media selections available for selection by the one or more users.

24. The system as recited in claim 23, wherein the selection information module (24) tallies votes received from the one or more users to award the timeslot to the media selection having the most votes.

25. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the management module (20) receives uploaded media content from a user and evaluates the media content against criteria to determine whether the uploaded material can be played.

26. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the selection criteria module (24) receives bids from the one or more users and determines a user with a winning bid to whom the timeslot is given.

27. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the contact information device (32) includes one of a display, sign or audible message.

28. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the contact information device (32) includes a notification source, which has updated access information to limit the one or more users to users within the common area.

29. The system as recited in claim 22, further comprising, an area verification module (26), which verifies locations of the one or more users to verify that the users are within the common area.

30. The system as recited in claim 22, further comprising, a media output device (22), which outputs media in accordance with the media selection to be played.

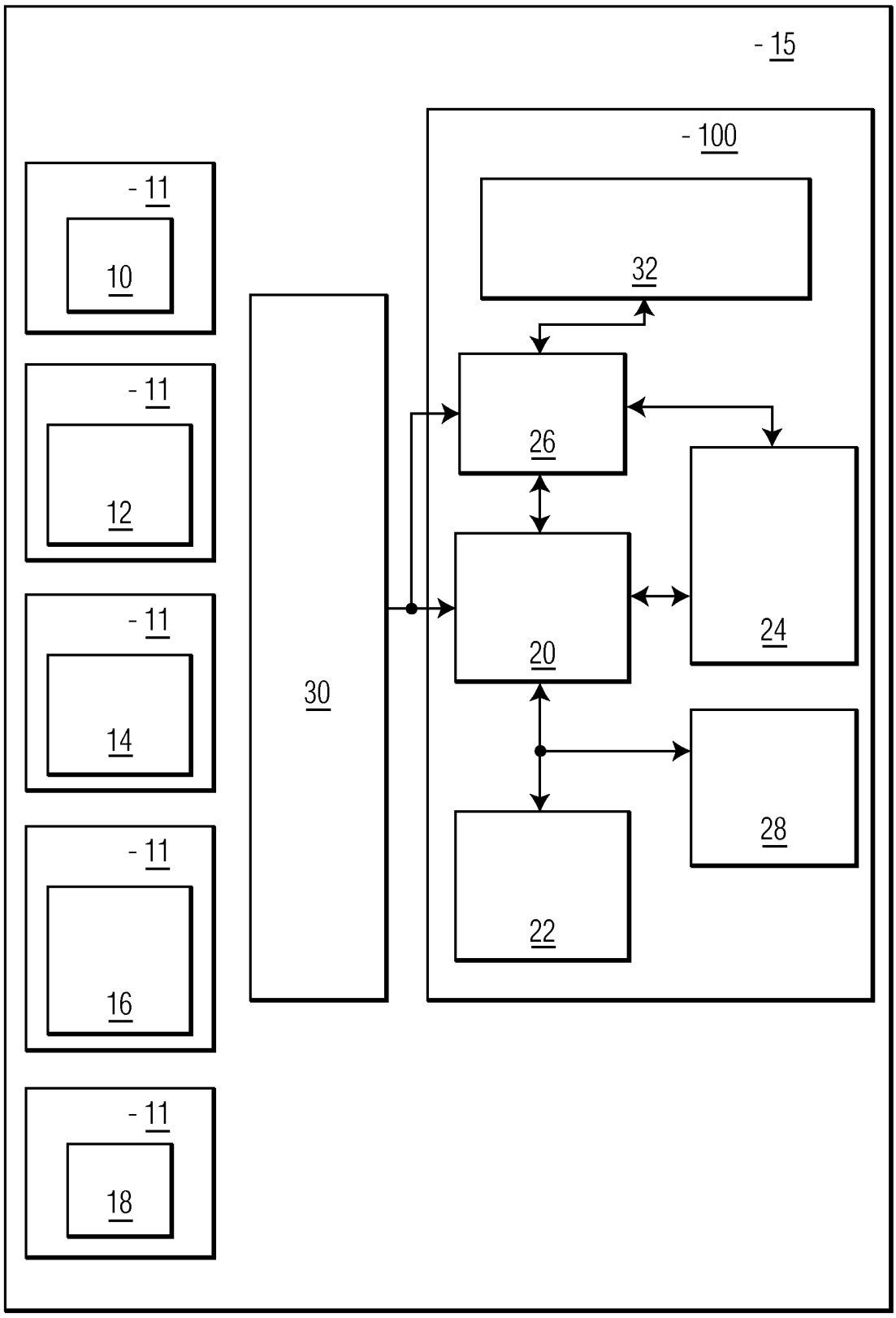

FIG. 1

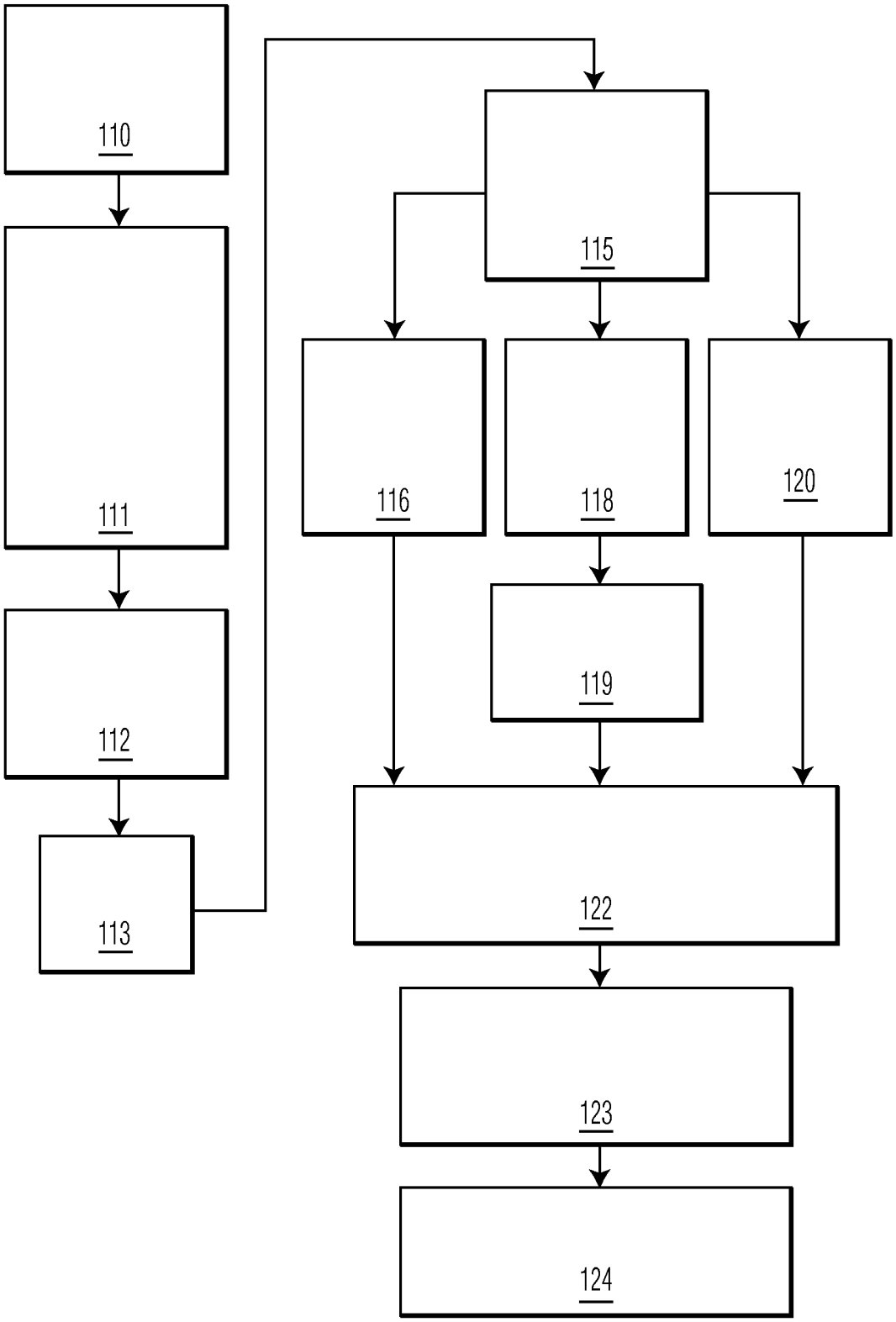

FIG. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/IB2006/050370

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. H04N7/16

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
H04N G06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, INSPEC

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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A	page 9, line 7 page 4, line 33 page 3, line 12 page 7, line 22 page 10, line 23 page 12, line 23 - line 27	2,12,24
X	DE 203 16 306 U1 (ROTHFUCHS, MICHAEL) 26 February 2004 (2004-02-26) the whole document	1,2, 10-12, 21,22,24

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[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

[X] See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
12 July 2006	24/07/2006

Name and mailing address of the ISA/	Authorized officer
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	Bertrand, F

C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No
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