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(71) Applicant and
(72) Inventor: DAVIS, Christopher, D. [US/US]; 514 West 26th Street, Suite 3-East, Kansas City, MO 64108 (US).

(74) Agent: STITT, Richard, P.; Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP, 1000 Walnut Street Suite 1400, Kansas City, MO 64106-2140 (US).

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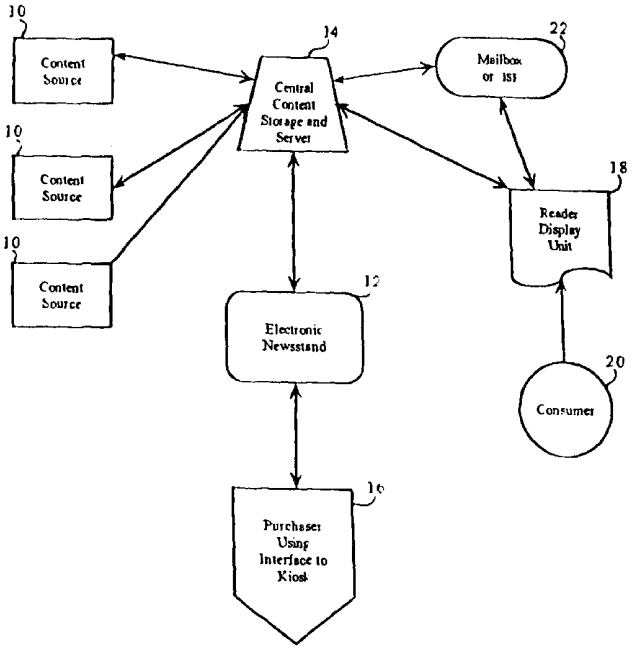
(54) Title: ELECTRONIC CONTENT PURCHASE AND DELIVERY SYSTEM




(57) Abstract: A method and apparatus is provided to allow purchase of goods and transfer of copies of electronic data files of text, and/or graphic and/or audio material from a producer of text, and/or graphic and/or audio material to a consumer by which the consumer utilizes a remote electronic sales stand (12) to examine samples of the contents of the electronic data files and to purchase the content and to transfer the content to an on-line mailbox (22) or computer or reading device (18) of the customer's selection.

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# ELECTRONIC CONTENT PURCHASE AND DELIVERY SYSTEM

## Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a method and apparatus of transferring copies of electronic data files of text, and/or graphic and/or audio material from a producer of the text, and/or graphic and/or audio material to a consumer of the text, and/or graphic and/or audio material. In particular, the method and apparatus provide a remote electronic sales stand to provide consumers with a means for examining samples of the content of the electronic data files and with a means to purchase the content of the electronic data files for later shipment or transfer to an online mailbox or computer or reading device of the consumer's selection.

## Background of the Invention

Recently the concept of converting print and graphic and audio materials into electronic files for transfer has become an area of wide spread interest due to the proliferation of personal computers. The general object of this effort is to make solid versions of material such a newspapers, magazines, books, sound recordings and the like obsolete, or at least an uncommon publishing format. The principle reasons for this effort are the monetary savings in printing costs and distribution costs and rapidity and ease of distribution. The stated ecological reasons are the reduction of paper pulp manufacturing and tree cutting. Both of these operations work a substantial hardship on the environment. Two such prior art methods and devices will now be described.

The patent to Saigh, et al teaches an information distribution system having a central information bank and central transaction database which is coupled to point-of-sale delivery systems. The apparatus and method of Saigh present the problems that a user must have in their possession particular memory media for insertion into the devices of Saigh and, therefore, is substantially limited in the ability to make impulse purchases. In addition, the apparatus and method of Saigh presents the problem of requiring that the selected material be downloaded to the point-of-sale terminal of Saigh prior to the material being downloaded onto the consumer media. This method of Saigh tends to provide a

time consuming episode for the consumer and requires that the consumer plan ahead to have available the particularized download media to be used with the devices of Saigh.

The patent to Sachs teaches an electronic publication, publishing and distribution system for use with a portable electronic viewing unit. The electronic books are designed to load publications selected from a book store or other on-line source from a host computer. The method and apparatus of Sachs is substantially limited, however, in that it requires the user of the method to be in possession of the apparatus of Sachs. This apparatus contains a unique serial number which operates as a 'public key' to allow the downloading of data after the Sachs system recognizes the 'public key' number. The public key is compared against a key list in the host computer to determine if the receiving key is valid. If the key is valid, the device is able to operate. (Col. 3, Ln. 35-47.) Clearly, the device and method of Sachs present additional limitations on a user who intends to view books and publications electronically. Under Sachs method, the user must purchase or have available the particular electronic book operable with the Sachs method in order to operate the system. Further, Sachs appears to limit viewing of material to use of the small format electronic book device of Sachs. Under the Sachs method, for a user to determine what materials are available, the user must connect to the host computer using the electronic book of Sachs in order to view potential selections and download the selections.

Therefore, Sachs also is a method which is dependent upon a particular apparatus and which thereby restricts users to having in their possession the particular device of Sachs at all times that a user may wish to select and purchase and read electronic material using the method of distribution of Sachs.

The present invention overcomes these limitations and debilities of both Sachs and Saigh by providing a method which is apparatus independent, and which is more compatible with consumer purchasing activities and, in particular, maintains patterns of consumer impulse buying which occur when a consumer views a book, magazine or periodical on the sale stand. The present invention allows the publisher to maintain a presence before the consumer at the usual locations where consumers have become used

to examining magazines and periodicals and newspapers for potential purchase. Yet, the present invention allows elimination of the distribution and stand upkeep personnel and apparatus associated with publications in print format. The present invention further permits the consumer to use conventional methods of payment including placement of the charge for the periodical on the consumer's telephone bill, use of standard credit/debit cards to pay for the purchase, or establishment of a user account with the periodical vender.

## Summary of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to a system and apparatus for consumer selection of text, visual content and audio content such as reading material or graphic material or sound recordings or products which are presented to the consumer at a point of purchase location such as a store or airport sales stand or sales stand or a street sales stand where the consumer can browse the available content and purchase the content through interaction with the sales stand whereupon the selected, purchased content is transmitted from a central content storage server which is in communication with the sales stand to an on-line "mailbox" or Internet service provider from which the consumer can later download the purchased content onto whatever device the consumer wishes to store and display the content for use by the consumer.

More particularly, the method of the present invention allows content producers or content sources such as book publishers, magazine publishers, newspaper publishers and the like to place copies of their publications at a central storage server or unit for later distribution to a purchaser of the content. The content, which is in electronic form, is made available for consumer browsing prior to consumer purchase of the content through use of local sales stands. The sales stands are equipped with one or more display screens which permit the consumer to select a magazine or newspaper or book or audio recording or product, and to briefly examine the contents of that selection in order to determine whether the consumer wishes to purchase an electronic copy of the selected content.

Once the consumer has determined to make a purchase, the consumer can utilize their cellular phone or mobile phone or the sales stand to effect the purchase of the material, and to accomplish payment for the selected material by having the charges for the purchase billed to a consumer through the consumer's mobile phone or cell phone provider. If a consumer is without a cell phone or mobile phone, the consumer can utilize the instrumentation provided on the sales stand to enter the appropriate telephone number or credit card number to achieve payment of the selected content. If the material selected and purchased by the consumer is in an encrypted format, the consumer is provided with the necessary password to access the encrypted mutual decryption file from the central server.

An additional component available on the sales stand for consumer selection and purchase is a catalog sales component. In the catalog sales component the sales stand is equipped with displays of various catalogs from the vast array of catalog sales companies, and the consumer can utilize their cellular telephone or the sales stand keypad to select an item for purchase and for drop-shipment by the catalog company. The billing of the purchase can be added to the purchaser's telephone bill or charged to a credit card.

Yet another aspect of the present invention is the inclusion of a greeting card exchange for selecting and transmitting a greeting containing text and/or a small illustration to a cellular phone of a recipient. In this component, the cell phones best equipped to employ the full functions of this embodiment of the present invention are those having a small text display of approximately one inch by one inch. This allows the display of text and small illustrations on the telephone. In this component, the purchaser uses their cellular telephone or the sales stand keypad to input the telephone number of the greeting recipient and to select the appropriate greeting from the sales stand. The greeting is then transmitted to the cell phone of the receiving party and the charges for the greeting are billed to the telephone number of the sender.

The foregoing and other objects are intended to be illustrative of the invention and are not meant in a limiting sense. Many possible embodiments of the invention may be made and will be readily evident upon a study of the following specification and accompanying drawings comprising a part thereof. Various features and subcombinations of invention may be employed without reference to other features and subcombinations. Other objects and advantages of this invention will become apparent from the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein is set forth by way of illustration and example, an embodiment of this invention.

## Description of the Drawings

Preferred embodiments of the invention, illustrative of the best modes in which the applicant has contemplated applying the principles, are set forth in the following description and are shown in the drawings and are particularly and distinctly pointed out and set forth in the appended claims.

Fig. 1 is a flow chart showing the relationships between various components in communication with one another to effect operation of the inventive apparatus and method;

Fig. 2 shows a typical layout for a sales stand for use with the inventive method to provide the consumer with visual and/or audio displays of the electronic content which the consumer may browse while making a selection and shows a keypad for use by a consumer who is without a mobile phone, as well as an instructional display screen which advises a consumer on the operation of the sales stand; and

Fig. 3 is a block diagram of components which operate within the sales stand to effect the operation of the present invention.

## Description of the Preferred Embodiment

Referring now to Fig. 1, a flow chart showing the interrelationship of the various components utilized in the present method is shown. In Fig. 1, the general operation of the method comprises a content source 10 which provides electronic versions of text and graphic material to central server and storage unit 14. Central unit 14 is in communication with content source 10 and electronic sales stand 12. A potential purchaser 16 using a hand-held unit such as a cellular phone (58 Fig. 2) or the equipment (46, 50 Fig. 2) provided on electronic sales stand 12, communicates with electronic sales stand 12 to examine the content available for display on electronic sales stand 12. Purchaser 16 can

perform browsing of the content material which is displayed on sales stand 12, or the purchaser 16 can simply select publications of known interest and immediately buy these publications. The purchase is conducted at sales stand 12 and can be alternatively billed to a credit card or a telephone bill. The order placed by purchaser 16 is transferred from electronic sales stand 12 to central unit 14 where the billing is confirmed prior to transmission of the full text of the publication to the consumer. When payment for the transaction has been authorized, the purchased publication is transmitted from central unit 14 to a mailbox or Internet provider 22. Consumer 20, who may or may not be a different person than purchaser 16, can then download the publication stored in mailbox 22 to a reader unit 18 of consumer's 20 choice. In this manner, the consumer avoids a hard-copy publication and avoids the need to carry additional equipment to one location or another in order to obtain new publications as with prior art methods and devices. With the present method and apparatus, the consumer can continue to purchase publications in a familiar manner, such as at a sales stand or grocery store checkout counter or the like and have the publication available for reading at whatever location and on whatever display device is convenient for the particular consumer. Now that the method and apparatus have been generally described, a more particularized description will be provided hereinafter.

In Fig. 1, multiple content sources 10 are shown providing electronic content to central content storage and server 14. Content sources 10 can consist of any publisher or developer of textual, graphic, or audio material which can be electronically transferred from device to device. Typically, a content source provider 10 would be the publisher of books, or magazines, or newspapers, or publishers of music or product catalogs. One typical example of a content provider 10 is a newspaper publisher. The newspaper publisher provides the content of the current edition of the newspaper in electronic form to the content central server 14 where the current edition of the newspaper resides for purchase by purchaser 16. When the newspaper prepares a replacement for the current edition, the prior current edition can be moved into an archive status where it continues to be available through central content server 14 to purchasers 16 or consumers 20.

In another typical example of a content provider, a publisher of a book can provide the electronic form of the book to central content server 14 once the book has been edited and prepared for publication. In this manner, the editor avoids unnecessary costs related to actual printing of hard-copies of the book and distribution of the printed copies of the book to retail store distributors. In yet another example of a content source 10, a recording studio can provide the electronic file of the produced music to central content server 14 in addition to the ancillary materials associated with the recorded music or sound file. Such ancillary material can be information about the musical selection and artists or other information which is typically included on the liner notes accompanying a recording sold at a retail store.

In each of these cases, the content source provider may wish to provide a file of sample material, or display material, to central content server 14. The sample material, or display material, is a data file which would be particularly appropriate to display on electronic sales stand 12. By way of example, the book publisher may wish to provide an enticing graphic which previously served as the graphic on the jacket cover of a printed book. Alternatively, a book publisher may wish to provide a synopses of the book and sample portions of the book text so purchaser 16 can examine the contents of the book and the style of the author to determine whether or not it is a publication the purchaser 16 or consumer 20 desires. In the case of a music publisher acting as content source 10, the music publisher may wish to provide central content server 14 with graphic material and sample audio portions of its product for display on electronic sales stand 12. In addition to the visual display used in printed material, electronic sales stand 12 can incorporate a speaker or headphones so audio portions of content available on the electronic sales stand can be heard by purchaser 16 prior to making a purchase.

In the case of a newspaper or periodical acting as content source 10, the publisher may wish to provide graphic material which would have appeared on the magazine cover or graphic material such as a photograph which would have appeared on the front page of the newspaper to attract the attention of purchaser 16. In addition, the periodical publisher may wish to select particular headlines or magazine article titles or table of

contents for display on the electronic sales stand 12 so the purchaser can review the contents of the periodical or newspaper prior to purchase.

Central content storage and server unit 14 receives the electronic content developed by content source 10. Central content storage and server unit 14 can operate on either a long term or short term storage basis for content sources 10. In some instances, it may be useful to simply maintain a short term storage of current materials available from particular content sources 10. For example, with respect to newspapers and periodicals, it may not be useful for central content server 14 to serve as the archive unit for past issues of magazines and newspapers. The content source 10 may determine that it wishes to maintain its own archive of past materials for sale to the public. In this instance, only the current issue of a magazine or newspaper would be available from central content server 14 to be distributed to consumers 20. In this fashion, central content server 14 could mimic the present-day availability of magazines and newspapers at a newsstand. That is, once the display date has passed for the magazine or newspaper, it is removed from the stand and replaced with the current issue.

Alternatively, the content source 10 may wish to have central content server 14 act as the archive distribution unit for its publications. In this event, time-dated material, such as magazines or newspapers, would be removed from a current issue status and placed into archive status on central content server 14 once the display date had ended for that particular issue. It would be a further option of the present invention to archive the display material intended to be presented to a purchaser 16 on electronic sales stand 12 in addition to the entire content of the particular issue of the magazine or newspaper. If the display material is also archived, a purchaser 16 would be able to review past editions of magazines and newspapers on electronic sales stand 12 to determine which issue was of interest to purchaser 16 or consumer 20 prior to purchase of the issue.

In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, search and retrieval operations can be made available to purchaser 16 on electronic sales stand 12 which would allow purchaser 16 to search the archives of central content server 14 for particular

subject matter of interest. This search and retrieval routine could be conducted in any number of ways including complete word indexing of all content on central content server 14 to allow a purchaser 16 to search all publications on the server. Alternatively, the indexing could be limited so a purchaser 16 must select a particular book or periodical or newspaper for searching.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the particular electronic format of the content source that is to be transmitted to central content storage and server unit 14 is simply a matter of choice for the operator of content storage server 14. It is anticipated that the particular electronic format of content which is developed by content sources 10 will change over time, and that any format or language which is convenient and available for use in the computer industry can be applied to the present invention and, is therefore, contemplated as being encompassed within the present invention. It will further be appreciated that under the present invention, interconnection between content source 10 and central content storage server 14 and electronic sales stand 12 can be accomplished in any convenient manner currently utilized or developed in the future such as the multitude of wire or wireless communications variations which are well known in the art and utilized in the industry today. It will further be appreciated that the particular manner of interconnection between content source 10, central content storage server 14 and electronic sales stand 12 and mailbox 22 and reader unit 18 will be open for selection by the users of the present invention and reliance upon one form or another is not critical to operation of the present invention.

Still referring to Fig. 1, electronic sales stand 12 is connected to central content storage server 14 and is used to provide ongoing displays of the content available to a purchaser 16 via electronic sales stand 12 to attract the purchaser's 16 attention to electronic sales stand 12. In general, it is the purpose of electronic sales stand 12 to provide a means of attracting a purchaser 16 to buy the content displayed on electronic sales stand 12, and to serve as a means of purchaser interaction with central content storage server 14 and to, in effect, be a point-of-purchase site for the central content storage server. It is useful to appreciate that electronic sales stand 12 need not be

equipped to serve as the point for downloading information from central content storage server 14. Rather, electronic sales stand 12 simply serves as an ordering, or purchasing, sales stand for purchaser 16 to allow purchaser 16 to inspect the currently available audio or electronic print publications available from central storage server 14, and to effect purchase of whatever content is of interest to purchaser 16 or consumer 20.

Referring now to Fig. 2, the general configuration of one embodiment of electronic sales stand 12 will be discussed. Electronic sales stand 12 is generally composed of case 40 which is supported by a base 56. Case 40 is equipped to contain various display units 42, 44. Display units 42, 44 can be as simple or as elaborate as is deemed commercially useful. In one embodiment, display units 42, 44 could simply comprise printed paper inserts of the current sales stand issue of particular publications and newspapers. In a more elaborate embodiment, case 40 can have display units 42, 44 which are CRT displays, or liquid crystal displays, or other electronic displays which are interconnected to a central processing unit 88(Fig. 3) and which display whatever content is requested by a purchaser 16 interacting with electronic sales stand 12.

By way of example, and not limitation, display unit 44 can be a small liquid crystal display which is utilized for indicating what newspapers are available for purchase from electronic sales stand 12. For a newspaper such as the Wall Street Journal, having little or no graphic information on the front page, a small LCD or even paper sign display might be appropriate for informing the consumer about the leading articles of the day as no graphic content or photographs are utilized in that particular newspaper to attract a reader's attention. In another embodiment, it might be considered appropriate to use a larger display unit 42 which could, in that case, be a 14 inch CRT or flat-panel display unit on which the entire cover of a periodical, such as a magazine, is displayed to attract the consumer's attention through display of the graphic material which normally appears on the cover of the periodical. In addition, display units 42 can be utilized to provide a rotating display of various magazine covers or graphic content contained within the particular periodical to attract a purchaser's 16 attention to the particular periodical.

Once a purchaser 16 (Fig. 1) has determined to examine publications available on electronic sales stand 12, purchaser 16 can examine instructions and other informational data useful to the purchaser during examination of publications on the sales stand by consulting instructional display 46 which can take the form of printed instructions, or a cathode ray tube (CRT) or flat-panel electronic display similar to those used for display units 42, 44. Electronic sales stand 12 is equipped with several means of communication for a purchaser 16 to use in making selections and purchasing electronic content through sales stand 12. In general, sales stand 12 is equipped to accept communications through a mobile or cellular phone 58 which purchaser 16 would be carrying. Alternatively, a purchaser 16 without a cellular phone 58 can utilize the key pad 50 available on case 40, and if desired, utilize a credit card in card swipe slot 52 also provided on case 40.

During operation, a typical purchaser 16 (Fig. 1) approaches electronic sales stand 12 upon noticing the publication content being displayed on display units 42, 44. The purchaser 16 can then consult display 46 to determine the various instructions required to activate and utilize electronic sales stand 12. A purchaser 16 equipped with a cell phone 58 is instructed to dial a local telephone number in order to communicate with sales stand 12. Sales stand 12 then detects the cell phone telephone number of purchaser 16 and utilizes the cell phone telephone number to effect billing the charges for the selections purchaser 16 ultimately makes while examining the products available on electronic sales stand 12.

Purchaser 16 can then proceed either to use cell phone 58 to communicate with sales stand 12, or purchaser 16 can utilize key pad 50 to communicate with electronic sales stand 12. Purchaser 16 then follows the instructions available on display 46 to select the various publications available for examination and purchase from sales stand 12. By way of example, not limitation, a purchaser 16 can depress a key for a search function and enter the title of the magazine of interest to have the current cover and contents of that particular issue displayed on one of display units 42. This allows purchaser 16 to conduct a cursory examination of the contents of the selected periodical and determine whether or not the purchaser wishes to buy the periodical. If purchaser 16 decides against purchasing the particular periodical or wishes to examine others,

successive instructions are entered through cell phone 58 or key pad 50 to search and display alternative publications available for examination through electronic sales stand 12. Once purchaser 16 has decided upon a periodical or audio program to purchase, purchaser 16 depresses the particular keys of cell phone 58 or key pad 50 as instructed by instruction display 46 to select the item.

Purchaser 16 can then select the mode of payment such as use of a credit card in credit card swipe slot 52, or purchaser 16 can direct that the purchase of the publication or audio program be directed to the purchaser's cell phone billing, or the purchaser may have established a separate account directly with the operator of sales stand 12 for direct billing of the purchased publications.

In yet another embodiment of the present invention, purchaser 16 can utilize electronic sales stand 12 to examine and listen to various audio programs which are made available to purchaser 16 through electronic sales stand 12. The purchaser 16 can use one of several means for listening to the audio program of interest as electronic sales stand 12 can be equipped with a loudspeaker 48 or head phones 52 for listening to audio programs available on electronic sales stand 12. Alternatively, a purchaser 16 using a cell phone 58 can listen to the audio content by simply utilizing the receiving portion of the cell phone 58.

Once a purchaser 16 interacting with electronic sales stand 12 has selected a book, a magazine, an audio program, or a newspaper or product to purchase, and purchaser 16 has selected the type of billing to be used for making the purchase, purchaser 16 can select the manner of delivery to be employed. In one embodiment of the present invention, the selected and purchased content is stored in a transaction mailbox 22 (Fig. 1) which is located at central content storage and server 14. A purchaser 16, by selecting this option, can later connect to the transaction mailbox 22, the address of which is provided to the purchaser at the time of purchase, and then download the data file or a portion of the data file which is located at the transaction mailbox 22 of central content storage and server 14.

In an alternative embodiment, purchaser 16 may wish to have central storage server 14 transmit the electronic content to purchaser's 16 or to consumer's 20 personal mailbox 22 at the purchaser's or consumer's Internet service provider (ISP) for downloading by the purchaser 16 or consumer 20 to a reader display unit 18. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that reader display unit 18 (Fig. 1) can be any number of different devices, such as a personal computer such as a desk top model, or a laptop, or a personal digital assistant-type device, or a specific reading and display unit developed for the display of reading content. It will be appreciated that one advantage to this type of method for the transfer and dissemination of printed material is that by avoiding the use of a particularized reader unit as many prior art systems rely upon, the present invention allows a wider range of display and uses for the electronic material. In addition it is not necessary that the consumer of the electronic content be the purchaser of the electronic content. In prior art devices, the a particular display device was required to download and/or view the content. This method and device prevents a purchaser buying material for use by another person and prevents the purchaser from buying a gift for transmission to another person. In the prior art, unless the purchaser either downloads on-site to the approved device or downloads the content to the proper device the prior art methods do not function. Therefore, in most prior art methods and devices the purchaser and consumer need to be the same person. This limitation is not a part of the present invention. In general, prior art devices which rely upon verification of a particular user's electronic reading device before downloading is allowed, eliminate the possibility that a purchaser may wish to make a purchase of a book or audio program and offer it as a gift to a third party who, of course, would not be possessed of the particular device or authorization number embedded in the reading or listening device or electronic content of the prior art methods.

In particular, the patent to Sachs presents just such a limitation in that the downloading and reader device requires a verification of a key in order to affect transfer of the data. In the present invention, the electronic material is transferred to a transaction mailbox 22, or the user mailbox at an ISP 22, and the material can be downloaded and displayed on any device which is convenient for the purchaser 16 or ultimate consumer

20. For example, if the individual has limited eyesight, they may wish to display the text on a computer screen or a television screen in a large font which will allow them to read. While with actual printed material, this sight limitation problem is addressed by "large print books," the number of selections available in such large print format is limited, and the reader has little or no control over the availability of these "large print" books. Alternatively, the purchaser of the electronic format which is transmitted to mailbox 22, may wish to download the electronic content onto a personal computer which is equipped with a voice generator reader device which will be beneficial to those with extremely limited eyesight or no eyesight. In this manner, the range of literary and news content for this group of individuals is substantially expanded, and new advantages are obtained over the prior art devices which restricted the user to use and display of the electronic content on a particular device associated with the prior art methods.

Referring now to Fig. 3, the general electronic components contained in electronic sales stand 12 will be described. Electronic sales stand 12 includes interface 80 which allows connection of the electronic sales stand 12 to central content storage and server unit 14. This interface can be a wire or wireless-type of interface as is most appropriate to the location of electronic sales stand 12. By way of example, an electronic sales stand which is located within a building or metropolitan area having convenient hard-wire connections into a telecommunications system may utilize that means of interface with central content storage and server unit 14. Alternatively, if electronic sales stand 12 is positioned on a street corner, or in a more rural area, it may be less expensive to utilize the now pervasive forms of wireless interconnection. Electronic sales stand 12 also is provided with a local communications link and receiver 84 which is used to provide local reception of the signal from mobile phone or cell phone 58 which can be used by purchaser 16 to communicate with electronic sales stand 12.

One particular advantage of this means of interconnection with electronic sales stand 12 is that an individual commuting by commuter train, subway, or automobile can utilize the cell phone or mobile phone 58 in their possession to interconnect with an electronic sales stand 12 which is wired into the transit system or which is adjacent to the

highway on which the vehicle of purchaser 16 is traveling. In this particular embodiment of the invention, the full electronic sales stand 12 would, obviously, not be available for interaction with the purchaser. The purchaser in this situation can observe signs on the commuter train or along the roadside advising that certain publications such as newspapers or magazines can be purchased by dialing a particular number on cell phone 58 to connect with electronic sales stand 12. Once connected to sales stand 12 the purchaser 16 can place an order. In this embodiment, the means of effecting the purchase is most easily conducted by utilizing billing of the purchase to purchaser's 16 cell phone billing company, or by use of a purchaser account with the operator of electronic sales stand 12. However, the entry of credit card numbers by telephone is certainly possible as an alternative form of affecting purchase of the electronic content.

Still referring to Fig. 3, electronic sales stand 12 is equipped with central processing unit (CPU) 88 which governs all operations of electronic sales stand 12. Sales stand 12 is provided with local storage 90 wherein the display information and sample content received from central content storage and server unit 14 through interface 80 is downloaded and stored for later output under the command of program instructions 86 stored in read and write memory 86 as commanded by CPU 88. When a purchaser 16 interacts with electronic sales stand 12, the commands are transferred from local com link and telephone receiver 84 to CPU 88 operating under program instructions 86 and local storage 90 is accessed to present the selected content material on display 82 of electronic sales stand 12. In the case of a request to access an audio program, the commands are received at local com link and telephone receiver 84 processed by CPU 88 under program instructions 86 whereupon local storage 90 is accessed and the audio content is delivered by a sound card 92 through one of several devices such as speaker 48 (Fig. 2), or head phones 60 (Fig. 2), or cell phone 58 (Fig. 2). It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the sound quality from audio speaker 48 or cell phone 58 of Fig. 2 will not present particularly satisfying sound quality. These sound devices are included merely for convenience. Often a purchaser will simply wish to confirm that they have selected the correct audio program by listening to a portion of the audio sample available. This sort of confirmation activity can be satisfactorily conducted through speaker 48 or cell phone

58. A purchaser 16 wishing to make decisions based on quality sound reproduction via sound card 92 will wish to access an electronic sales stand 12 which is equipped with headset 60 for quality sound reproduction.

Another embodiment of the present invention includes a catalog sales component in the capabilities of sales stand 12 which is accessible by use of cell phone 58 or keypad 50 (Fig. 2). The sales stand is equipped to present viewing of proprietary catalogs of the kind which are typically mailed to consumers for examination and selection of goods. The sales stand also can contain a catalog of goods selected by the sales stand operator and made available for purchase through the sales stand. A particularly useful location for the sales stand embodiment featuring catalog purchases is in airports and train stations or the like where people are commuting from one location to another with little time to leave the train station or airport to examine, select and purchase merchandise in stores. The business traveler needing to purchase gifts or emergency equipment and supplies for use during business travel will find the sales stand of particular utility. The traveler can select their purchases directly from the sales stand viewing equipment, or if a user's cell phone is equipped with a sufficient graphical display, the user can receive information and graphics regarding the products for sale through their cell phone display.

To make a purchase, the user enters commands using their cell phone keypad or sales stand keypad 50 to indicate the purchases they wish to make. As the purchased goods are drop-shipped from a central location, the consumer can select the speed of shipping they wish employed, and the address to which the goods are to be shipped. In the case of the business traveler needing equipment or goods while on the road, the business traveler may wish to select a courier service to deliver the goods to a future hotel address. When the consumer business traveler is ordering the goods for personal use, they may simply designate their home address. In either case, the goods may be billed to the cellular phone telephone number of the user or to a credit card entered by the user. Upon the execution of the purchase of the goods the order is communicated from stand 12 to central server 14. The purchase information and shipping information is then transferred from central server 14 to the catalog sale company content source 10 for

execution of the drop-shipping of the selected goods to the address entered by the purchaser.

Another embodiment which may be incorporated into the overall sales stand embodiment is an electronic greeting card exchange. The electronic greeting card exchange allows a user to select an appropriate form of electronic greeting such as a "thank you" note, a "get well" note, a "sympathy" note or other social expression message note, and to transmit a the social message to a selected recipient. Recipients equipped with digital displays on their cell phones will be able to receive the electronic text greeting and the associated graphic which is transmitted with the text message.

In operation, the purchaser or sender of the electronic greeting uses their cell phone 58 (Fig. 2) or the keypad 50 on the sales stand to examine and select various basic social expression greeting formats shown in display 42 (Fig. 2). The user can then add various personalized touches to each greeting such as the entry of the recipient's name, the entry of the sender's name, or a meting date etc. The purchaser then enters the telephone number of the receiving party, and the sales stand will affect the transmission of the electronic greeting to the recipient. In the case of business travelers, this technique of contacting other parties is particularly useful when the business traveler wishes to confirm a business meeting or send a thank you note for a business meeting or contract, or to send a gentle reminder of an upcoming meeting. A typical message could read:

JANE, LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR
9am MEETING ON THE 20$^{TH}$. MARY

This type of greeting can be particularly useful where both the sender and the recipient, are frequent travelers, and the use of conventional mailed notes are ineffective in reaching the recipient during the proper time constraints. Often the use of phone messages and email at an office can take on an impersonal aspect lacking in spontaneity and intimacy. Another important benefit of the electronic greeting transmitted in this fashion is that a business traveler frequently will have only the telephone number for a particular person. The business traveler may wish to send a social expression message,

but will not a mailing address and will not have the modem connection available for use of a personal computer to send an email type of message. Through operation of the user's cellular phone interacting with the sales stand, these types of quick, personal messages can be selected and transmitted to the recipient without interruption of the sender's business travel.

In the foregoing description, certain terms have been used for brevity, clearness and understanding; but no unnecessary limitations are to be implied therefrom beyond the requirements of the prior art, because such terms are used for descriptive purposes and are intended to be broadly construed. Moreover, the description and illustration of the inventions is by way of example, and the scope of the inventions is not limited to the exact details shown or described.

Certain changes may be made in embodying the above invention, and in the construction thereof, without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is intended that all matter contained in the above description and shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not meant in a limiting sense.

Having now described the features, discoveries and principles of the invention, the manner in which the inventive electronic content purchase and delivery system method and apparatus is constructed and used, the characteristics of the construction, and advantageous, new and useful results obtained; the new and useful structures, devices, elements, arrangements, parts and combinations, are set forth in the appended claims.

It is also to be understood that the following claims are intended to cover all of the generic and specific features of the invention herein described, and all statements of the scope of the invention which, as a matter of language, might be said to fall therebetween.

## CLAIMS

Having thus described the invention what is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. An apparatus to allow a purchaser to examine the content in electronic data files of text, and/or graphic material of a content producer and to allow the purchaser to select and to purchase goods and to transfer electronic copies of text or graphics files the apparatus comprising:

a sales stand for use by the purchaser in selecting and examining and purchasing the producer content, said stand having a memory and a visual display operated by a central processor for operating program stored on said stand,

a content sample portion of the producer content stored on said stand memory,

a central server and storage device in communication with said stand said central server having the content electronic data files of the content producer stored thereon,

means on said stand for receiving signals from the purchaser to allow the purchaser to select and examine said content sample portion and to purchase a copy of the content electronic data files of the content producer stored on said central server, and

means for transferring said purchased electronic content copy from said central server to an electronic mailbox associated with the purchaser.

2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 further comprising means for audio playback to allow a purchaser to select and to examine and to purchase the content in electronic audio data files of an audio content producer.

3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the server is in communication with the content provider and the purchased producer content is transferred from the content producer to the electronic mailbox associated with the purchaser.

4. An method of allowing a purchaser to examine the content in electronic data files of text, and/or graphic material of a content producer and to allow the purchaser to select and to purchase goods and to transfer electronic copies of text or graphics files the apparatus comprising:

activating a sales stand by the purchaser said stand being equipped with a memory and a visual display operated by a central processor for operating a sales stand program stored on said memory to display content sample portions of producer content stored on said stand,

choosing a content sample portion for examination by the purchaser,

displaying a content sample portion of the producer content stored on said sales stand memory for examination by the purchaser,

selecting a producer content for purchase,

transmitting the identity of the selected producer content for purchase to a central server,

receiving said transmitted content identity at a central server and storage device in communication with said sales stand said central server having the content electronic data files of the content producer stored thereon, and

transferring a copy of said selected content electronic data files of the content producer stored on said central server from said central server to an electronic mailbox associated with the purchaser.

5. An apparatus to allow a purchaser to examine an electronic data file for social expression greeting and to allow the purchaser to select and to purchase and to transfer electronic copies of the social expression greeting to a recipient, the apparatus comprising:

a stand for use by the purchaser in selecting and examining and purchasing the social expression greeting, said stand having a memory and a visual display operated by a central processor for operating program stored on said stand,

a social expression greeting content sample portion content stored on said stand memory,

means on said stand for receiving signals from the purchaser to allow the purchaser to select and examine said social expression greeting content sample portion and to purchase a copy of said social expression greeting, and

means for transferring said purchased copy of said social expression greeting to a telephone associated with the recipient of said purchased copy of said social expression greeting.

6. An apparatus to allow a purchaser to examine the text and/or graphic content of a product catalog of a catalog company and to allow the purchaser to select and to purchase and to have delivered goods from the catalog, the apparatus comprising:

a stand for use by the purchaser in selecting and examining and purchasing the catalog goods, said stand having a memory and a visual display operated by a central processor for operating program stored on said stand,

a catalog text and graphic content stored on said stand memory,

a central server and storage device in communication with said stand said central server having means for communicating with the catalog company,

means on said sales stand for receiving signals from the purchaser to allow the purchaser to select and examine said catalog content and to order goods represented by the catalog, and

means for transmitting to said central server the order from the stand to the central server for communication to the catalog company for shipment of the order.

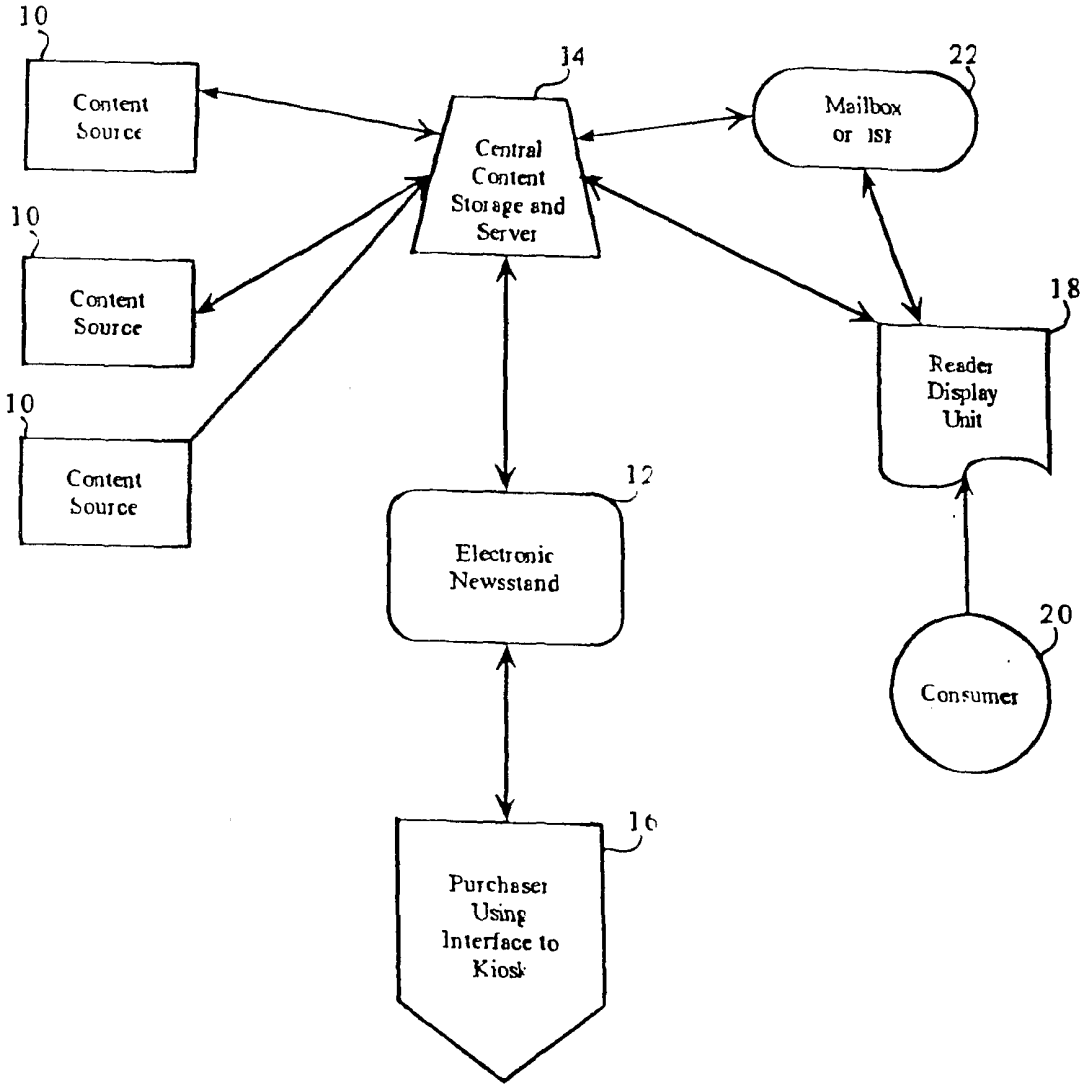
10
Content Source
10
Content Source
10
Content Source
14
Central Content Storage and Server
22
Mailbox or ISP
18
Reader Display Unit
12
Electronic Newsstand
20
Consumer
16
Purchaser Using Interface to Kiosk

Fig. 1

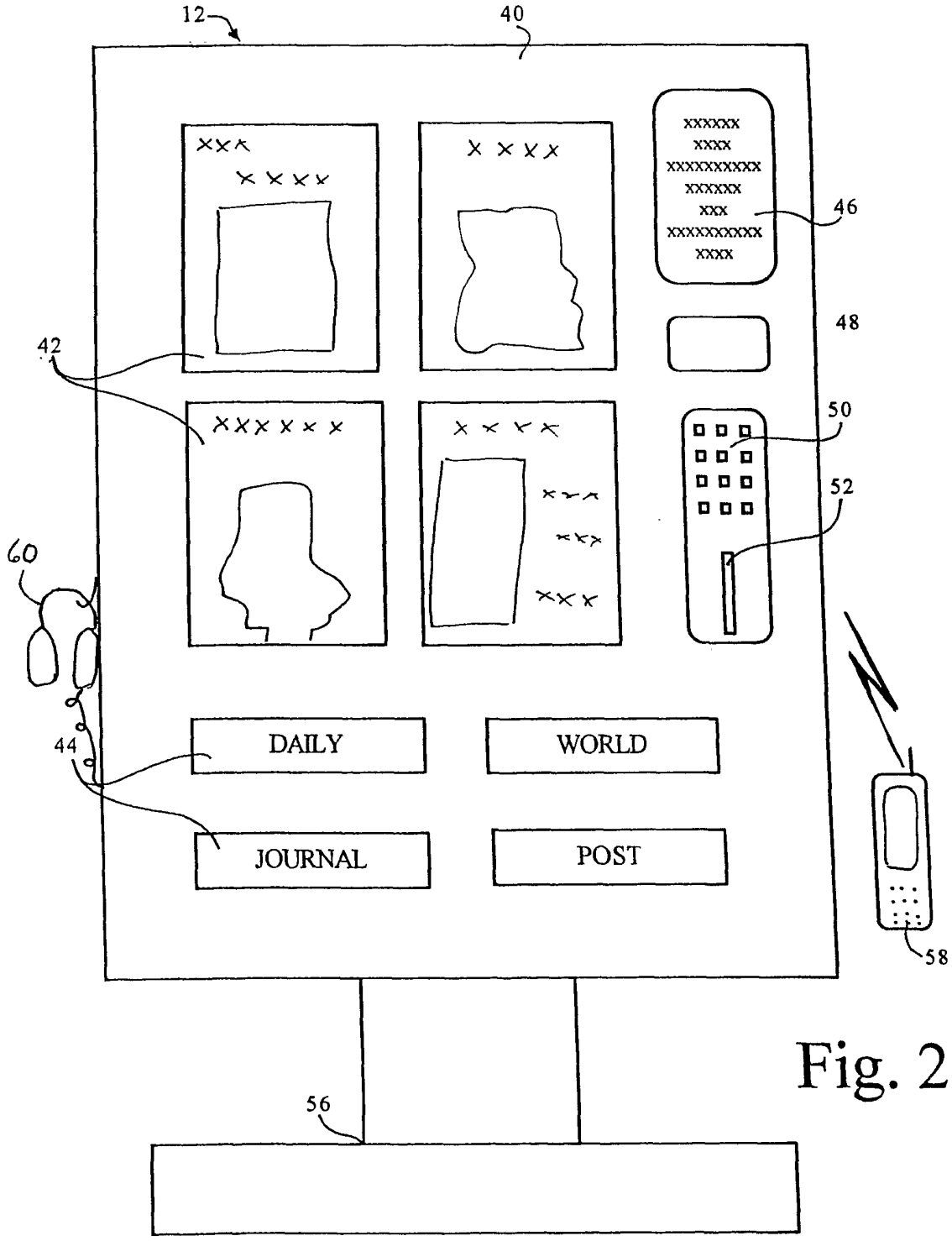


Fig. 2

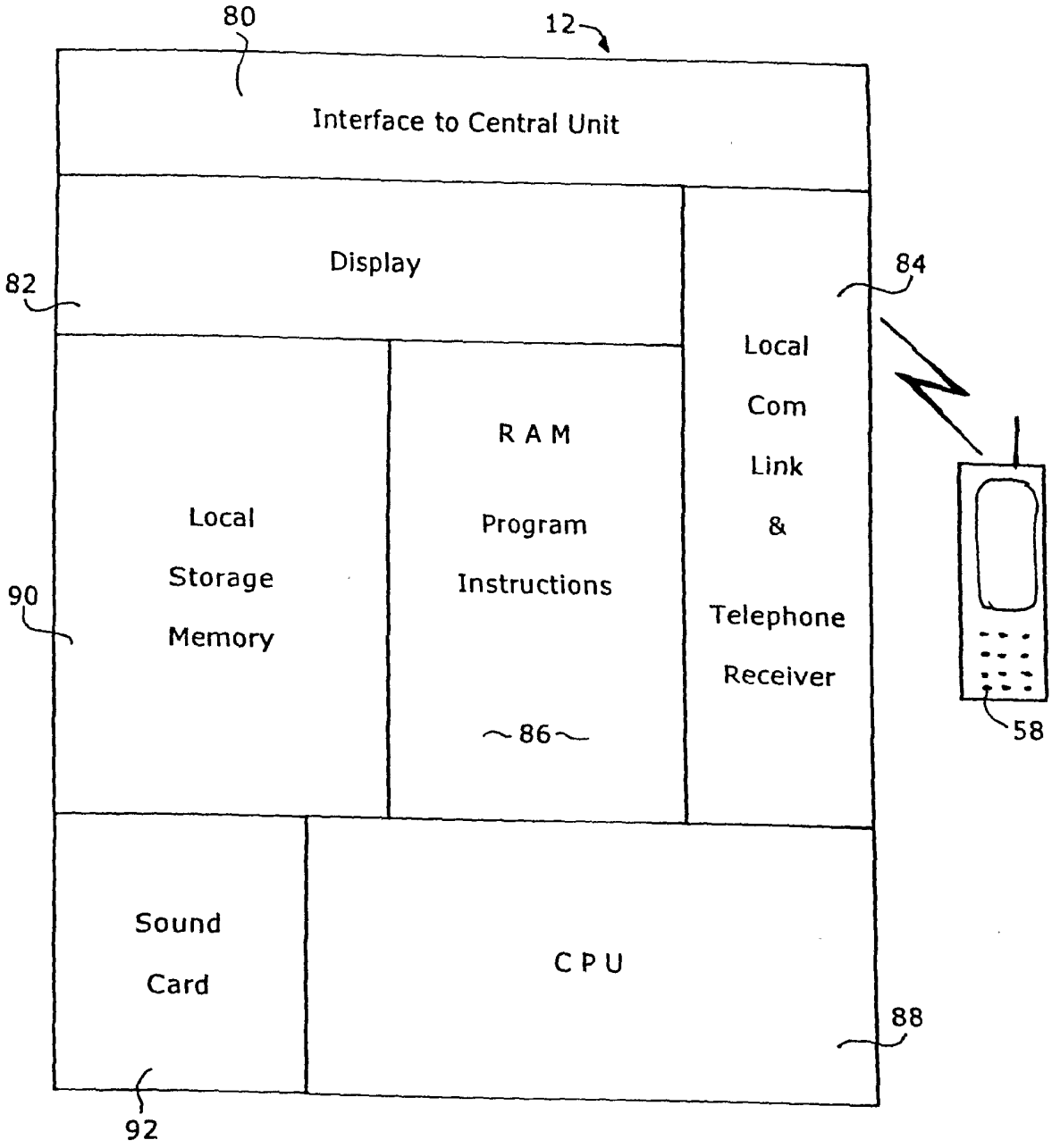
80
12
Interface to Central Unit
Display
82
84
Local
Com
Link
&
Telephone
Receiver
R A M
Program
Instructions
86
Local
Storage
Memory
90
58
Sound
Card
C P U
88
92

Fig. 3

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US01/18861

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :H04L 9/30; G06F 17/00
US CL :380/4;705/27,57

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)

U.S. : 380/4;364/479;705/57;235/383;345/329;705/40;713/100

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 practicable, search terms used)

Dialog

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| X | US 5,513,117 A (SMALL) 30 April, 1996, Abstract/Summary | 5 |
| X | US 5,982,891A, (GINTER et al), 09 November 1999, Abstract/Summary | 1-4,6 |

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| * | Special categories of cited documents: | "T" | later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention |
| "A" | document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance | "X" | document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone |
| "E" | earlier document published on or after the international filing date | "Y" | document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art |
| "L" | document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) | "&" | document member of the same patent family |
| "O" | document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means | | |
| "P" | document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed | | |

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|---|---|
| Date of the actual completion of the international search<br>24 AUGUST 2001 | Date of mailing of the international search report<br>11 OCT 2001 |
| Name and mailing address of the ISA/US<br>Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks<br>Box PCT<br>Washington, D.C. 20231<br>Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230 | Authorized officer<br>Peggy Harvey<br>MARK ANTHONY FADOR<br>Telephone No. (703) 605-4252 |

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