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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR LIST SHOPPING OVER A COMPUTER NETWORK**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention is a system for conducting commercial transactions over the Internet, whereby a shopper can simultaneously search for a plurality of items on at least one website with a single search command. The shopper can selectively specify the items of interest to be searched and can also specify and/or exclude websites to be searched. The system also searches a selectively alterable set of default website(s) and intelligently recommended website(s). Under one search command, the system simultaneously searches for all of the items on any combination of the following: site(s) specified by the user, a default website, an alterable set of default or intelligently recommended website(s). Information regarding the items retrieved as a result of the search is compiled under an alterable set of criteria, and displayed for viewing by the shopper. The shopper can simultaneously purchase selected ones of said items with one order command.
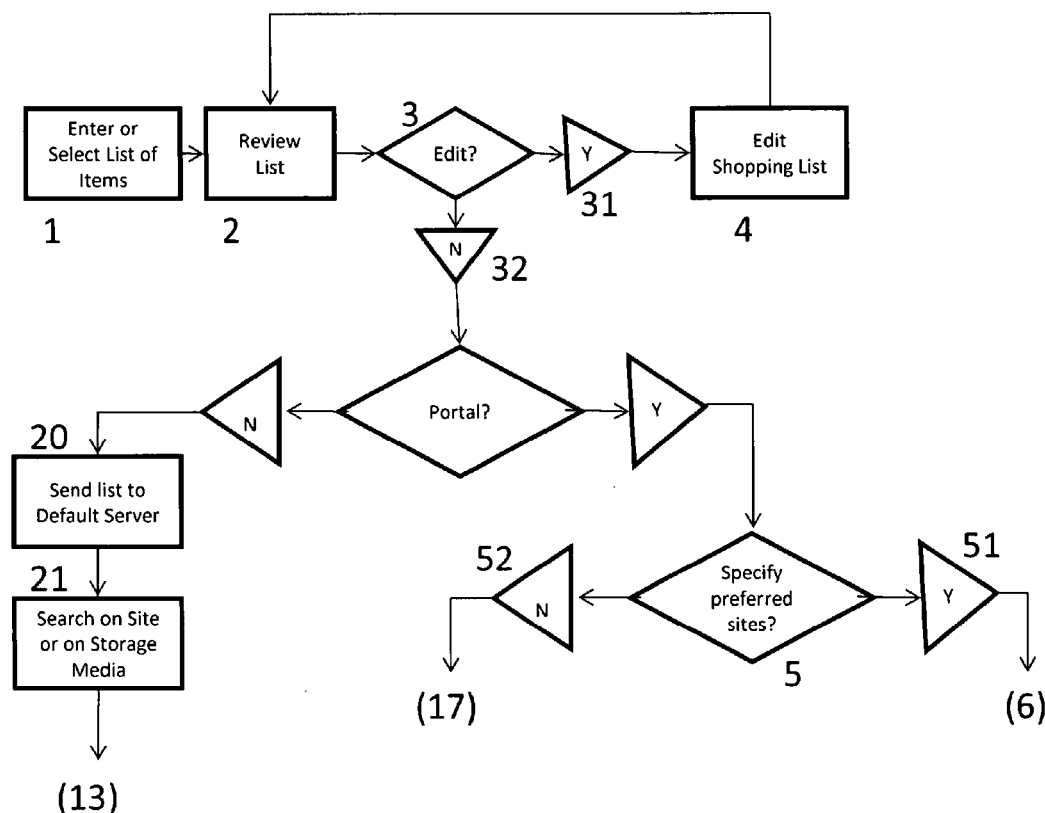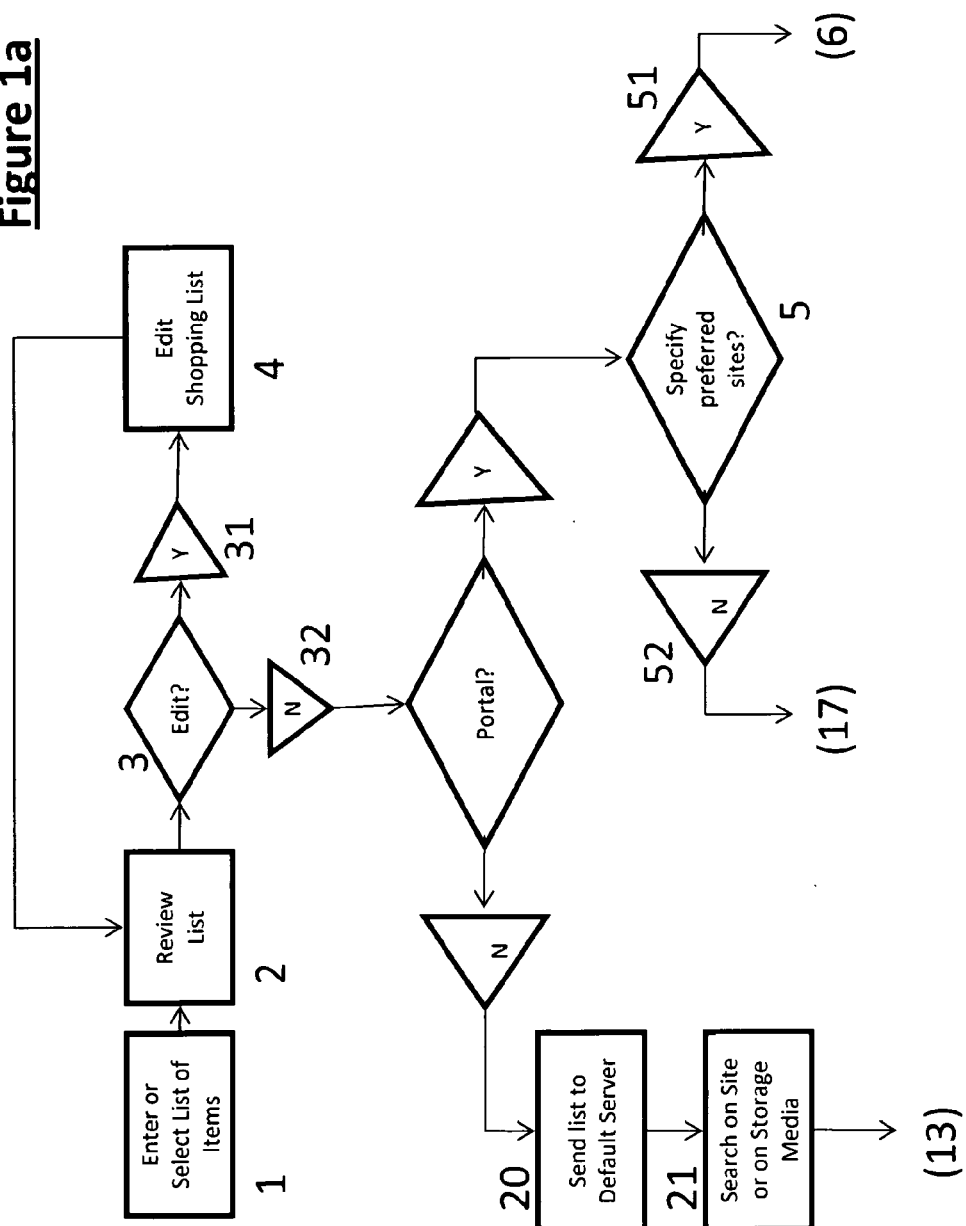
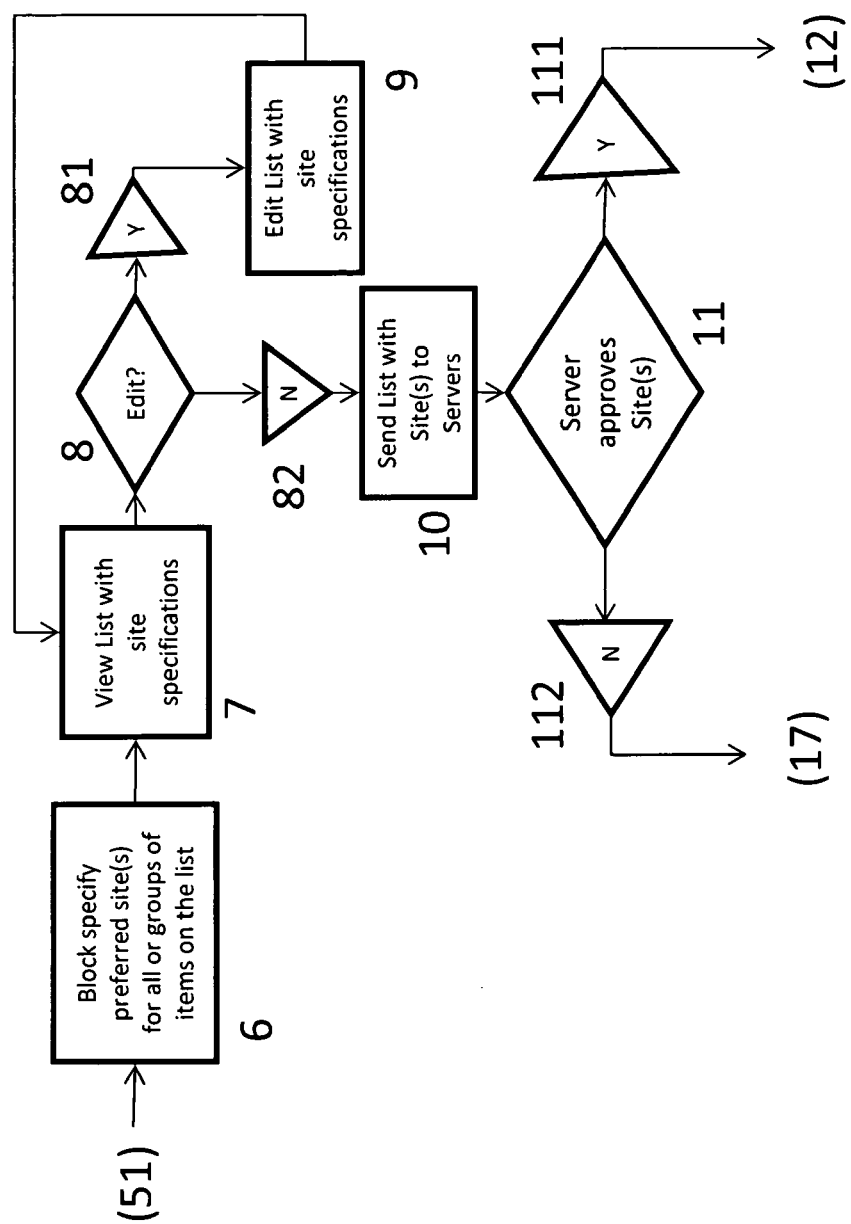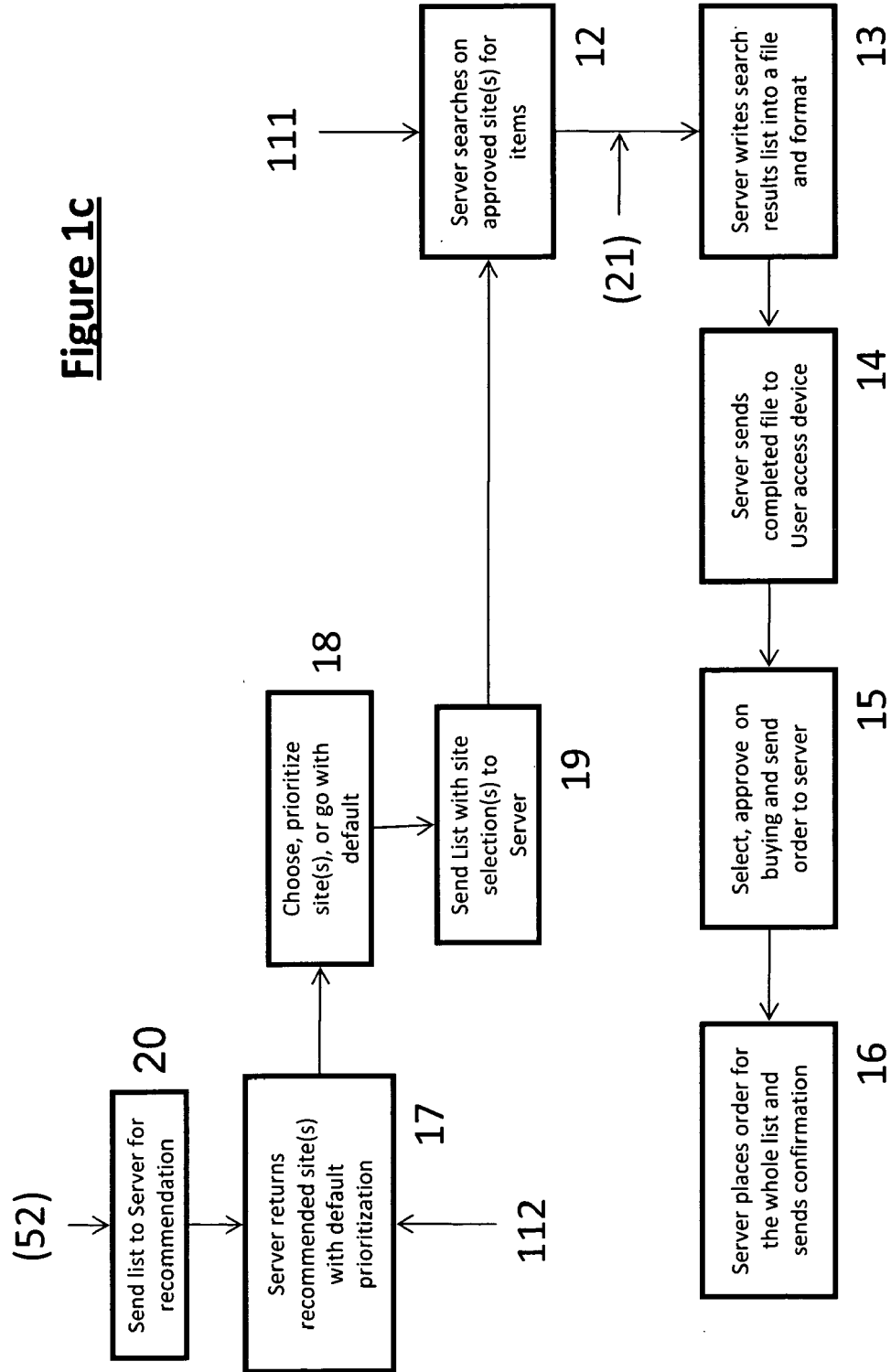## Figure 1a

Figure 1b

Figure 1c

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR LIST SHOPPING OVER A COMPUTER NETWORK

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of U.S. Ser. No. 13/015,528, filed Jan. 27, 2011, which is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 09/833,956, filed Apr. 12, 2001, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth in their entireties.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention pertains to commercial transactions conducted over a computer network, and more particularly to a system and method for selecting and purchasing a plurality of items on such a network.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Conducting commercial transactions over computer networks such as the Internet is commonplace today. As the number of Internet shoppers continues to increase, the number and corresponding dollar value of goods and services, i.e., items, purchased electronically in such manner also continues to increase. However, conventional techniques for searching for items to be purchased, are searching, viewing specifications and prices, and selecting for purchase of such items, one item at a time.

[0004] Specifically, in order to conduct such transactions today, a consumer has to search for such items one at a time by accessing and browsing web pages of a website, one web page and one website at a time. Searching for and purchasing items of interest in this manner is a very tedious, time consuming and frustrating process. Even the most sophisticated and advanced shopping search engines, such as www. MySimon.Com, which enables a shopper to enter product specifications, and then searches for the websites of participating merchants that may carry the items being searched, still requires that searching and purchasing be done one item at a time, one web page and one website at a time. Accordingly, it is an objective of the present invention to overcome the foregoing drawback.

SUMMARY

[0005] A system and method for conducting commercial transactions over the Internet, whereby a shopper, by using one search command, can simultaneously search for a plurality of items on at least one website in a single search action. The shopper specifies items of interest to be searched, and in one embodiment can also specify and/or exclude websites to be searched. In additional embodiments, the system searches a selectively alterable set of default or server recommended websites. To use the invention, the shopper enters a list of items in response to a series of prompts. Under one search command, the system then simultaneously searches for all of the specified items on the default site, the system recommended site(s), or site(s) specified by the shopper, or all of the above in another embodiment. Information regarding the items retrieved as a result of the search is then displayed for viewing by the shopper. The shopper can simultaneously purchase selected ones of said items.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] FIGS. 1a, 1b, and 1c show a flowchart depicting an example operation of the present invention. A selective subset of these steps can be implemented for desired application.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention enables a shopper to selectively designate a plurality of items which they wish to purchase, issue one search command to simultaneously conduct a search for said items on a default website, or a plurality of websites, view information found regarding the specified items, and then purchase all or some of these items. This enables shoppers to search for and purchase items without having to engage in the tedious and time-consuming process of searching for items one at a time, one web page and one website at a time as is conventionally done. The user can also issue one command to simultaneously search for different types of items using the present invention. The word "simultaneously" in this disclosure signifies that the search for all items is conducted under one user command. In one embodiment, the search software looks for a match through the list of items at each unit of search target. In another embodiment, the search software searches through the search target for one item in one pass, looping through all items before reporting end result to the user.

[0008] The system and method of the present invention is implemented by software. The software is used in conjunction with a website that the shopper would visit to shop for items to be purchased. The software presents a series of on-screen prompts in response to which the shopper specifies the items to be searched and specifies information/ preferences and/or answers questions regarding the items so that a search can be conducted for such items. The software alternately causes a search to be conducted on a default website, website(s) specified by the shopper, and/or on a selectively alterable set of default website(s), recommended website(s) specified by intelligent software, or all of the above. The results of the search are then compiled, formatted, and displayed on a display device for viewing by the shopper who can purchase selected ones or all of the items found in the search, or further refine the search.

[0009] FIGS. 1a, 1b, and 1c show a flow chart depicting an example operation of the present invention. A selection of steps illustrated can be implemented for a desired application. At step 1, a shopper enters via keyboard, mouse, stylus, voice or otherwise, a list of the items they wish to purchase at a default site the shopper visits for such items. Alternatively, a shopper can select items to be searched from a default list of items offered by a project program such as a meal preparation program, by checking boxes for ingredients to be purchased from a website that sells food products. At step 2, the shopper reviews the shopping list. At step 3, the shopper decides whether to edit the shopping list. If the shopper wants to edit the shopping list, then the shopper does so at step 4 and the shopper can review the edited list at step 2. If at step 3, the shopper decides not to edit the shopping list and the default site is not a portal, at step 20 the list is sent to the site server. At step 21 the search is conducted on the default site. The process then proceeds to step 13 in FIG. 1c. If the default site is a portal on which the software is running, at step 5 the shopper is prompted to

indicate whether he wants to specify any particular website or sites to be searched. If the shopper decides to specify a preferred website or sites, then at step **6** in FIG. **1***b* the shopper specifies such site or sites and/or excludes site or sites to be searched for some or all of the items in the shopping list. If at step **5** the shopper declines to specify a preferred website, in step **52** the shopping list is sent to the portal server for system recommendation for site(s) to search at step **17** in FIG. **1***c*.

[0010] At step **7** in FIG. **1***b*, the shopper views the list of website(s) he specified. At step **8**, the shopper is prompted to indicate whether he wishes to edit the list of website(s) he specified. If so, then at step **9**, the shopper edits the list of website(s), and then at step **7** views the edited list of site(s). If however, at step **8**, the shopper decides not to edit the list of website(s) they specified, then at step **10** the list of specified site(s) is sent to the server of the website on which the software is running. At step **11**, the server can approve good site(s) and reject problem site or sites selected by the shopper. At step **12** the server searches approved sites, and if so desired, also search the system recommended sites for the items on the shopping list for comparison.

[0011] At step **13**, the server writes the results, i.e., data gathered, of the search for all of the items from all of the sites searched into a file and formats the file. At step **14**, the server sends the file to the shopper's access device. The file can be presented to the shopper in any form, including in a series of lists, wherein each list corresponds to items found on different websites or databases, or wherein each list is comprised of similar types of items or similarly priced items. The list of items can be presented for viewing by the shopper using any desired criteria. At step **15**, the shopper reviews the file and selects and approves for purchase those items he desires, and such approval is sent to the server. At step **16**, the server places an order at the appropriate website or sites for the items selected and approved for purchase by the shopper and then send a confirmation to the shopper.

[0012] If at step **11**, the server rejects all websites specified by the shopper as problem sites, then at step **17** the server returns the list of specified sites together with reasons for rejection, and a list of recommended sites to the shopper. At step **18**, if so desired, the shopper can choose and prioritizes the system recommended sites, or selects to search all system recommended sites at the default prioritization recommended by the server. At step **19**, the revised list of sites is then sent to the server for search at step **12**, from where the process continues as previously described above.

[0013] If at step **5** the shopper does not specify any websites, then the list of items to be purchased are sent at step **20** to the server. From step **20**, the server returns the list of recommended sites at step **17**, from which point the process continues as previously described above.

[0014] It will further aid in understanding the operation of the present invention to consider the following example. If a shopper wants to shop for ingredients for a meal, the recipe or recipes for the meal are presented on-screen with a check box in front of each ingredient on the list of required ingredients, along with option entry blanks for the shopper to select or exclude items and to indicate other information such as how many servings are to be prepared to automatically populate an editable quantity column.

[0015] After the shopper enters their preferences/selections, the shopper is presented with a list of suppliers from whom they can purchase the goods. The shopper then selects

and prioritizes the list of suppliers in order of descending preference. The website or database of the first most preferred supplier is then searched for the desired items on the list, and data regarding said items is collected and compiled. Then the website or database of the second most preferred supplier is searched for the specified items with said data being collected and compiled. The websites or databases of the remaining suppliers are similarly searched in order of descending preference.

[0016] The search results are then displayed for viewing by the shopper in a plurality of lists including product information, e.g., brand and price information, for each item with a separate list being displayed for each of the respective suppliers. If items are not available from the first most preferred supplier while available from the next most preferred supplier, those items would be listed separately in the first most preferred supplier search result list as being available from the next, e.g., second, most preferred supplier from whom they could be purchased. If the desired items are not available from the first or second most preferred supplier while available from the third most favored supplier, such items would be listed separately in the first most preferred supplier search result list as being available from the next, e.g., third, most preferred supplier. Similarly, if in the search result list for the second most preferred supplier there are items not available from the second most preferred supplier, the list would indicate whether those items were available from the first most preferred supplier, from the third most preferred supplier or from other suppliers in descending order of preferred suppliers.

[0017] The shopper then chooses one search list of goods, and places an order for the entire list of items at one time. Alternatively, the shopper can query for various search result listings using different criteria, and choose and place an order for goods from said different lists, for example, for price optimization. The software program then automatically places orders at the specified suppliers for all of the items in the list, and sends one confirmation to the shopper when the process is completed.

[0018] The present invention is implemented using software which can be written in many programming languages, or implemented with many data and information displaying or web-page generation tools. The present invention can be used on a global or local computer network, on a personal computer, on viewable storage media such as a CD or DVD, on a wireless telephone, on a wireless personal assistant such as a Palm Pilot, or on any type of wired or wireless device that enables digitally stored information to be viewed and internet access. Also, information displayed and viewed using the present invention can be printed, stored to other storage medium, and electronically mailed to third parties.

[0019] Numerous modifications to and alternative embodiments of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. Accordingly, this description is to be construed as illustrative only and is for the purpose of teaching those skilled in the art the best mode of carrying out the invention. Details of the embodiment may be varied without departing from the spirit of the invention, and the exclusive use of all modifications which come within the scope of the appended claims is reserved.

1. A non-transitory computer-readable medium having stored thereon instructions that, when executed by a pro-

cessing device, enable the processing device to perform a method for conducting on-line commerce, the method comprising the steps of:

 generating a link to a list of a plurality of items needed for a project, the list configured to enable a user to select a set of multiple items, of the plurality of items, the user wishes to purchase;

 receiving from the user the selected set;

 searching on more than one data source or website, in response to a single search command from the user, for all items of the set, the step of searching being performed after the set of receiving;

 displaying information found in the step of searching regarding the set; and

 facilitating purchase on-line by the user of at least two items of the set.

2. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises:

 enabling the user to select a project from a plurality of projects each project of the plurality of projects requiring an item list corresponding to said each project;

 in response to the user selecting the project, presenting to the user the item list corresponding to the selected project; and

 allowing the user to use the list to make an online purchase.

3. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises enabling the user to edit the list.

4. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises selecting, in response to the single search command of the user, for all items of the set on at least one data source or website.

5. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises enabling the user to specify selectively at least one of the plurality of data sources or web sites to be searched.

6. The medium according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of data sources or web sites is a default data source or web site specified by the user.

7. The medium according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of data sources or web site to be searched is provided by the instructions.

8. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the step of purchasing comprises:

 providing a software-based interface configured to enable the user to place one order for purchasing all of the set.

9. The medium according to claim 8 wherein the software-based interface is further configured to enable the user to specify a display criterion whereby the information found in the step of searching is displayed according to the display criteria specified by the user.

10. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the step of searching comprises the step of:

 searching the plurality of the data sources or web sites in a prioritized order of the data sources or web sites, the prioritized order of the data sources or web sites being specified by the user.

11. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the step of searching comprises the step of:

 searching the plurality of the data sources or web sites in a prioritized order of the data sources or web sites, the prioritized order of the data sources or web sites being specified by the instructions.

12. The medium according to claim 1, further comprises the steps of:

 displaying a list of preferred data sources or web sites on a display device;

 prompting the user to edit the list or preferred data sources or web sites;

 receiving from the user input provided in response to the step of prompting; and

 editing the list of preferred data sources or web sites in accordance with the input provided by the user in response to the step of prompting to determine the plurality of the data sources or web sites to be searched;

 wherein the steps of displaying the list of preferred data sources of web sites, prompting, receiving, and editing are performed before the step of searching.

13. The medium according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of items is generated by a program.

14. A system for conducting on-line commerce, the system comprising:

 a computer configured to:

  generate a link to a list of a plurality of items needed for a project, the list configured to enable a user to select a set of multiple items, of the plurality of items, the user wishes to purchase;

  receive from the user the selected set;

  search on more than one data source or website, in response to a single search command from the user, for all items of the set, the step of searching being performed after the step of receiving;

  display information found in the step of searching regarding the set; and

  facilitate purchase on-line by the user of at least two items of the set.

15. The system according to claim 14, wherein the computer is further configured to:

 enable the user to select a selected project from a plurality of projects, each project of the plurality of projects requiring an item list corresponding to said each project;

 in response to the user selecting the selected project, present to the user the litem list corresponding to the selected project; and

 allow the user to edit the item list corresponding to the selected project, thereby obtaining a list of a plurality of items.

16. The system according to claim 14, wherein the computer is further configured to:

 search, in response to the single search command of the user, for all items of the plurality of items on at least one data source or website.

17. The system according to claim 14, wherein at least one of the plurality of data sources or web sites is a default data source or web site specified by the user.

18. The system accorder to claim 14, wherein at least one of the plurality of data sources or web sites to be searched is provided by the computer.

19. The system according to claim 14, wherein the computer is configured to facilitate the user to purchase by:

 providing a software-based interface configured to enable the user to place one order for purchasing all of the plurality of items.

20. The system according to claim 19, wherein the software-based interface is further configured to enable the user

to specify a display criterion whereby the information found in the step of searching is displayed according to the display criteria specified by the user.

21. The system according to claim **14**, wherein the computer is configured to search on a plurality of data sources or web sites by:

searching the plurality of the data sources or web sites in a prioritized order of the data sources or web sites, the prioritized order of the data sources or web sites being specified by the user.

22. The system according to claim **14**, wherein the computer is configured to search on a plurality of data sources or web sites by:

searching the plurality of the data sources or web sites in a prioritized order of the data sources or web sites, the prioritized order of the data sources or web sites being specified by the computer.

23. The system according to claim **14**, wherein the computer is further configured to:

display a list of preferred data sources or web sites on a display device;

prompt the user to edit the list of preferred data sources or web sites;

receive from the user input provided in response to the steps of prompting; and

edit the list of preferred data sources or web sites in accordance with the input provided by the user in response to the step of prompting, to determine the plurality of the data sources or web sites to be searched;

wherein the steps of displaying the list of preferred data sources or web sites, prompting, receiving, and editing are performed before the step of searching.

24. The system according to claim **14**, wherein the plurality of times is generated by a program.

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