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(54) SYSTEM, METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING USERS IN AN ONLINE COMPUTER SYSTEM BASED ON THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN SOCIAL **NETWORKS**

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ABSTRACT

A method and apparatus for calculating, displaying and acting upon relationships in a social network is described. A computer system collects descriptive data about various individuals and allows those individuals to indicate other individuals with whom they have a personal relationship. The descriptive data and the relationship data are integrated and processed to reveal the series of social relationships connecting any two individuals within a social network. The pathways connecting any two individuals can be displayed. Further, the social network itself can be displayed to any number of degrees of separation. A user of the system can determine the optimal relationship path (i.e., contact pathway) to reach desired individuals. A communications tool allows individuals in the system to be introduced (or introduce themselves) and initiate direct communication.

Path Calculation Process Flowchart

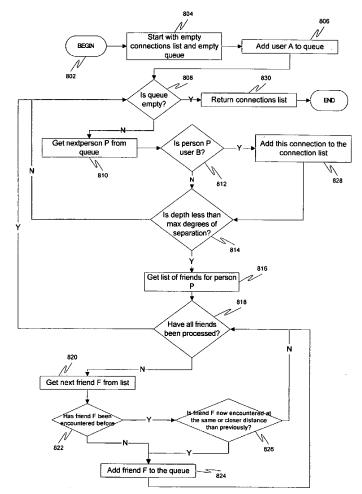




FIG. 1 System Diagram

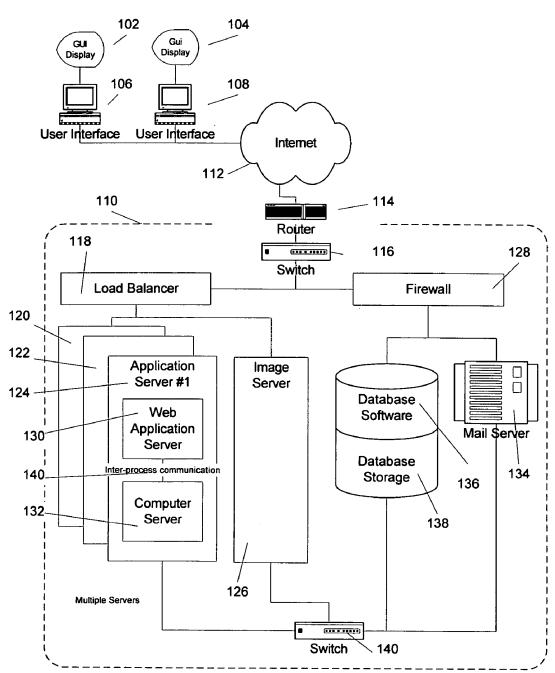


FIG. 2 Database

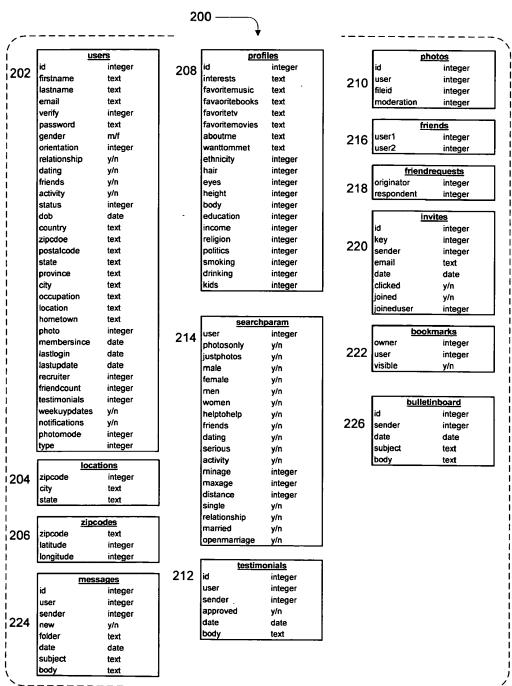
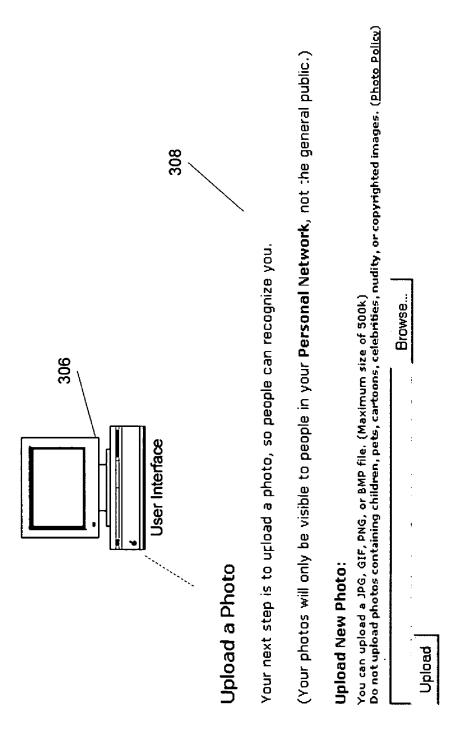


FIG. 3a Data Collection Interface

Email Add	2055:		ן 302
<u> </u>			
Repeat Email Address:			
First Name:			306
Last Name) :		
Password	.		4
Repeat Pa	ssword:		User Interface
Gender:		C Male C Female	
Interested	d in Meeting P	eople for:	1 / 1
▼ Dating		C Men C Women	
Serious Relationship		C Men and Women	
Friends Activity P	artners		
Just Here to Help			
L		7.1	1
	d refer you to	Friendster?	1
	ail address:	ur friend and your friend's friend	1.5
(10 adiomadi	any connect to yo	or meno and your meno's meno	304
	⊂ Single/Divord	ced/Separated	
Status:	← In a Relationship		
← Married			
	C Open Marria	ge	
Date of Birth:		<u> </u>	
Country:	<u> </u>		
Zip/Postal Code:	(U.S. & Canada Only)		
Hometown:	(Where you grew up))
Occupation:			
Interests:	(Separate Interest	ts with Commas)	
	l		

FIG. 3b Image Collection Interface





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