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

**Publication Classification**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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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.

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**Path Calculation Process Flowchart**

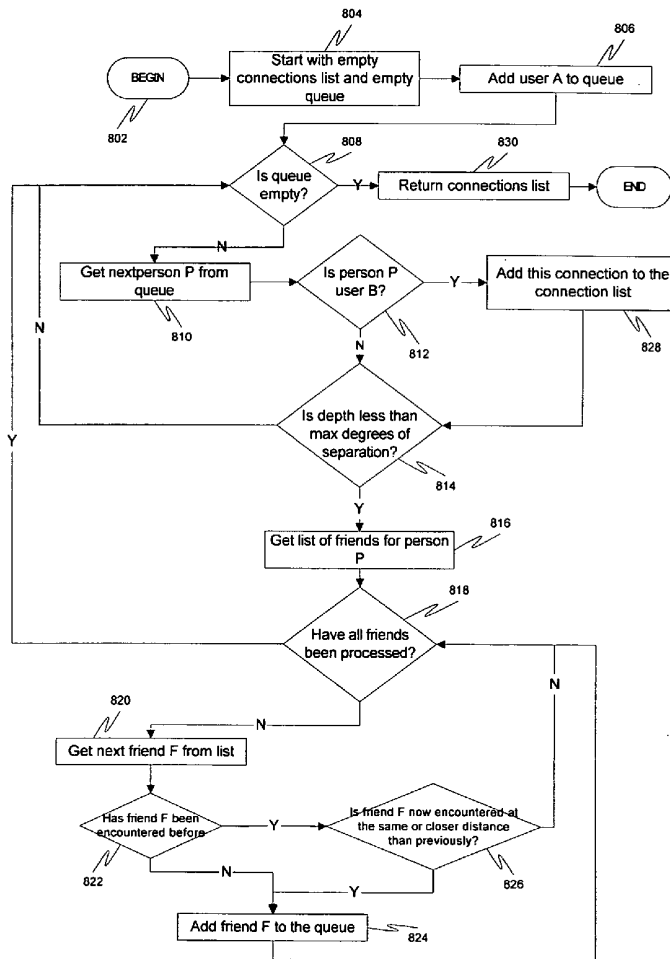


FIG. 1  
System Diagram

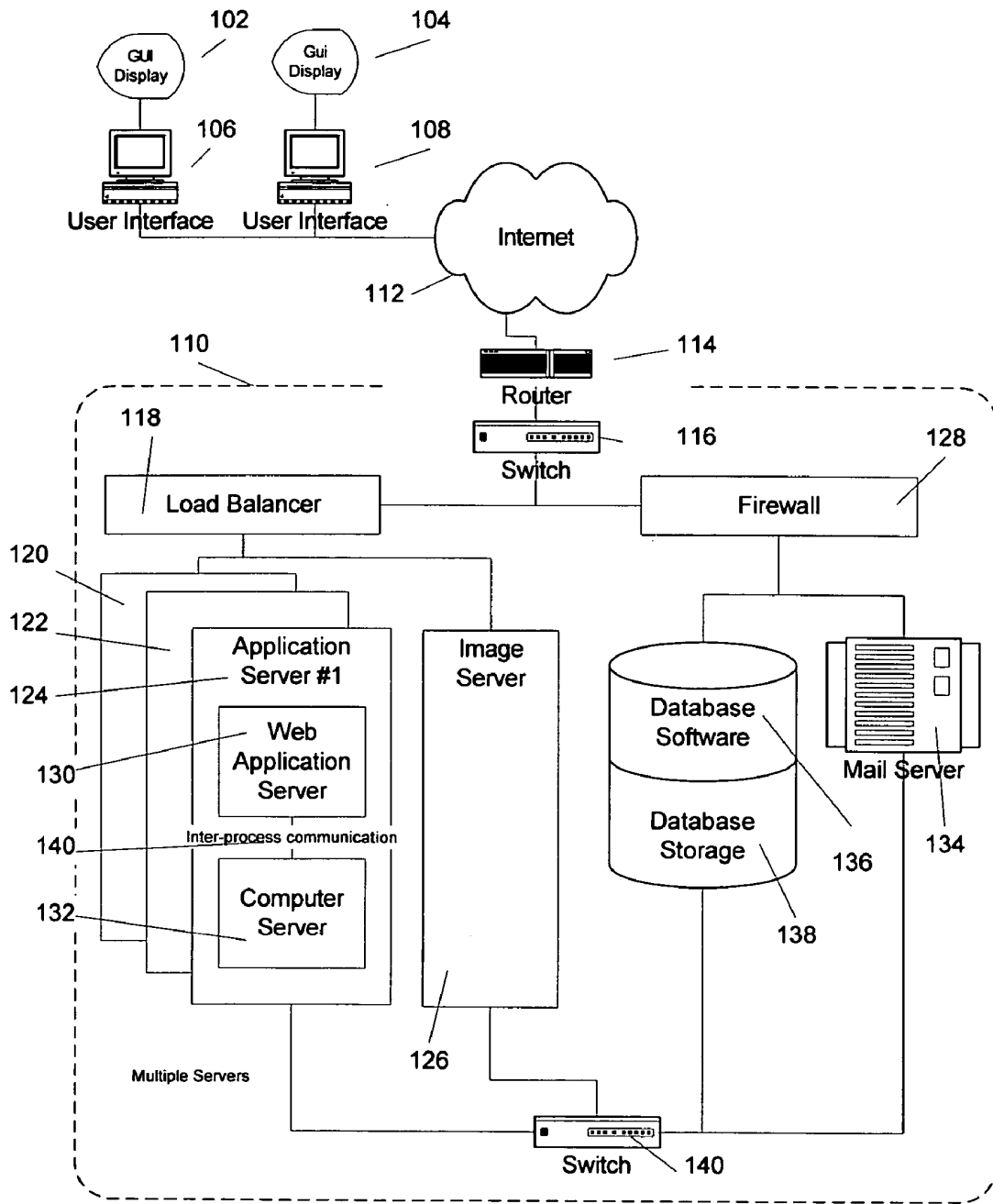


FIG. 2  
Database

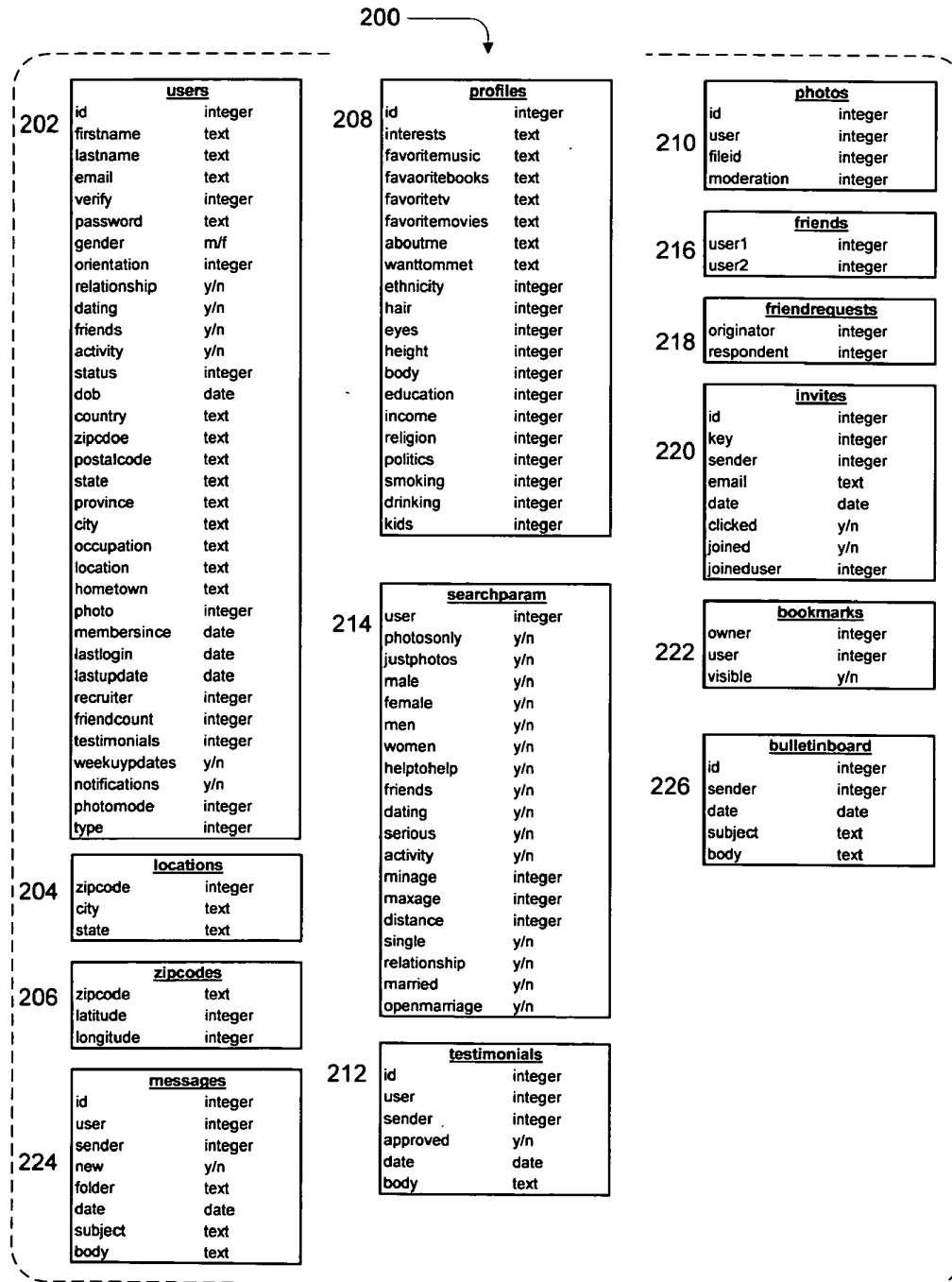
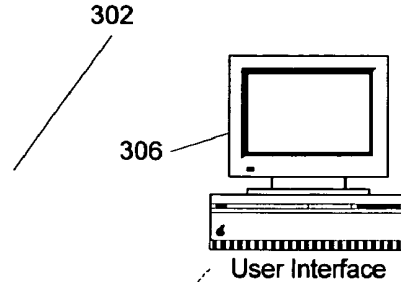


FIG. 3a  
Data Collection Interface

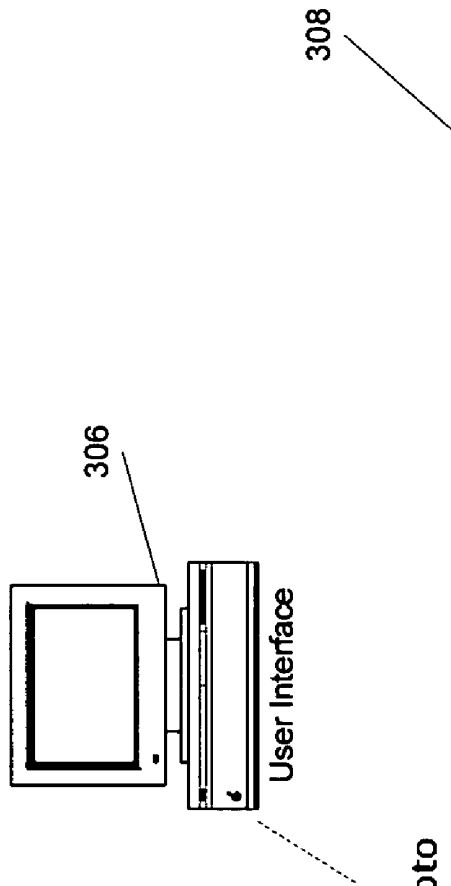
|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Email Address:</b>                                    | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>Repeat Email Address:</b>                             | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>First Name:</b>                                       | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>Last Name:</b>  | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>Password:</b>   | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>Repeat Password:</b>                                  | <input type="text"/>                                    |
| <b>Gender:</b>   | <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female |
| <b>Interested in Meeting People for:</b>                 |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dating               | <input type="radio"/> Men <input type="radio"/> Women   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serious Relationship | <input type="radio"/> Men and Women                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Friends              |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Activity Partners    |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just Here to Help               |   |



**Did a friend refer you to Friendster?** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Friend's email address:   
 (To automatically connect to your friend and your friend's friends.)

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Status:</b>          | <input type="radio"/> Single/Divorced/Separated<br><input type="radio"/> In a Relationship<br><input type="radio"/> Married<br><input type="radio"/> Open Marriage |
| <b>Date of Birth:</b>   | <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>   |
| <b>Country:</b>         | <input type="text"/>   |
| <b>Zip/Postal Code:</b> | <input type="text"/> (U.S. & Canada Only)  |
| <b>Hometown:</b>        | <input type="text"/> (Where you grew up)   |
| <b>Occupation:</b>      | <input type="text"/>   |
| <b>Interests:</b>       | <input type="text"/> (Separate Interests with Commas)  |

FIG. 3b  
Image Collection Interface



**Upload a Photo**

Your next step is to upload a photo, so people can recognize you.

(Your photos will only be visible to people in your **Personal Network**, not the general public.)

**Upload New Photo:**

You can upload a JPG, GIF, PNG, or BMP file. (Maximum size of 500k)  
Do not upload photos containing children, pets, cartoons, celebrities, nudity, or copyrighted images. ([Photo Policy](#))

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