



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

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(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/01575 (22) International Filing Date: 21 January 2000 (21.01.2000) (30) Priority Data: 60/116,816 21 January 1999 (21.01.1999) US (60) Parent Application or Grant POLYGON NETWORK, INC [/]; (). VOORHEES, Jacques [/]; (). KEJR, John [/]; (). ARCIERE, Robert [/]; (). VOORHEES, Jacques [/]; (). KEJR, John [/]; (). ARCIERE, Robert [/]; (). OPPEDAHL, Carl; ().		Published	
(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CREATION OF PERSONALIZED SUB-PAGE OF WEB SITE (54) Titre: PROCEDE ET APPAREIL DE CREATION D'UNE SOUS-PAGE PERSONNALISEE DE SITE WEB			
(57) Abstract <p>A method and system is used with first and second visitors to a retail store selling items of merchandise. Each of the visitors is received (21) at the retail store, and items of merchandise of interest to each visitor are noted (22). Web pages are configured on a web server to show information relating to the respective items of merchandise (16). Respective Uniform Resource Locators (URL) are provided to the visitors (23). Each visitor may use the visitor's respective Uniform Resource Locator (URL) to view the respective web page (24). The method and system provide a means for a retailer to build, almost instantly, a private showcase of merchandise for a consumer to see on the Web, customized precisely for that customer, and drawing upon vast quantities of product information.</p> (57) Abrégé <p>L'invention se rapporte à un procédé et à un système mis en oeuvre lorsqu'un premier et un second visiteur (Fig. 1) se présentent dans un magasin de détail vendant certains articles. Chacun des visiteurs est reçu (21) dans le magasin de détail et les articles en vente qui intéressent chaque visiteur sont notés (22). Des pages Web sont mises en forme sur un serveur Web de manière à présenter les informations relatives à ces articles respectifs (16). Des localisateurs de ressources universels (URL) respectifs sont attribués aux visiteurs (23). Chaque visiteur peut utiliser son URL respectif pour visualiser sa page Web respective (24). Le procédé et le système de cette invention offrent au détaillant un moyen d'élaborer, presque instantanément, une vitrine privée pour l'exposition de sa marchandise sur le Web, vitrine qui est accessible par le consommateur et est personnalisée très précisément pour le client en question de sorte que ce dernier puisse y obtenir une grande quantité d'informations sur les produits vendus.</p>			



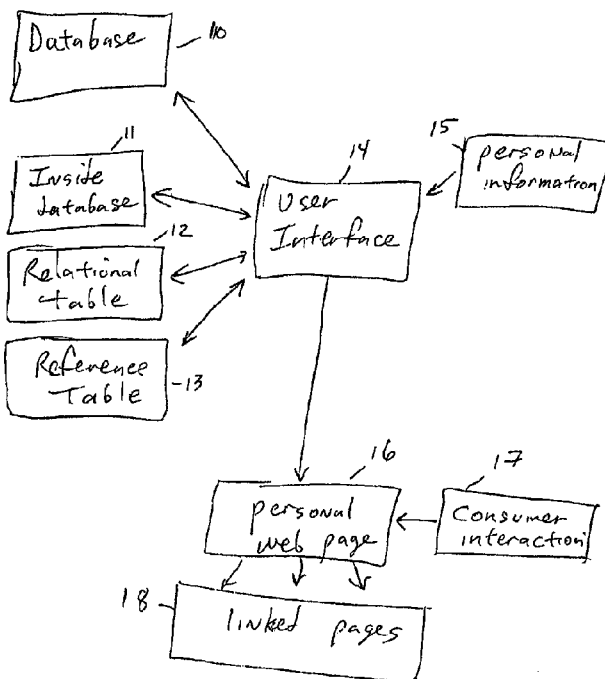
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<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/01575 (22) International Filing Date: 21 January 2000 (21.01.00) (30) Priority Data: 60/116,816 21 January 1999 (21.01.99) US (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): POLYGON NETWORK, INC [US/US]; P.O. Box 4806, Dillon, CO 80435 (US). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): VOORHEES, Jacques [US/US]; P.O. Box 1912, Dillon, CO 80435 (US). KEJR, John [US/US]; P.O. Box 1951, Frisco, CO 80443 (US). ARCIERE, Robert [US/US]; P.O. Box 1016, Dillon, CO 80435 (US). (74) Agents: OPPEDAHL, Carl et al.; Oppedahl & Larson LLP, P.O. Box 5270, Frisco, CO 80443 (US).</p>	<p>(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).</p> <p>Published With international search report.</p>	

(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CREATION OF PERSONALIZED SUB-PAGE OF WEB SITE

(57) Abstract

A method and system is used with first and second visitors to a retail store selling items of merchandise. Each of the visitors is received (21) at the retail store, and items of merchandise of interest to each visitor are noted (22). Web pages are configured on a web server to show information relating to the respective items of merchandise (16). Respective Uniform Resource Locators (URL) are provided to the visitors (23). Each visitor may use the visitor's respective Uniform Resource Locator (URL) to view the respective web page (24). The method and system provide a means for a retailer to build, almost instantly, a private showcase of merchandise for a consumer to see on the Web, customized precisely for that customer, and drawing upon vast quantities of product information.



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Description

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Method and apparatus for creation of personalized sub-page of web site

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This application claims priority from US application number 60/116,816, filed January 21, 1999, which application is hereby incorporated herein by reference to the extent permitted by applicable law.

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Background

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5 The major focus in terms of commerce on the Internet can be broken into three categories: (1) suppliers selling directly to consumers, via the Web; (2) retailers promoting their businesses online, in an effort to draw consumers into their physical stores; and (3) suppliers/manufacturers showcasing their merchandise on the Web, and then referring consumers to retailers who sell that merchandise.

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10 The web sites that serve these needs vary in size and complexity, with many containing "interactive" elements that empower the consumer to request specific types of data, find answers to questions, educate themselves, buy on-line, etc. Yet they are all very "hands-off" in terms of human interaction by the web site owner. That, in effect, is the whole point. The prior art web site exists to do the work of promoting and/or selling merchandise, with little if
15 any need for involvement by the web site owner. The web site passively provides information to the consumer, but it is not in any way customized or personalized for that consumer, except to the extent the consumer himself interacts with it, and is able to search
30 through it to find the information he wants, or leaves behind cookie historical data.

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20 In this environment, the traditional strengths of the bricks-and-mortar retailer are minimized. There is no human interaction, no "connection" between the retailer and the consumer. The web site could be anywhere, and the consumer could be anyone. In the case of a bricks-and-mortar retailer, unless the web site is successful at enticing a consumer to physically come
45 into the store, the web site is doing little if anything to build a personal relationship between buyer and seller. The web site is doing nothing to support the concept, or the value, of a consumer buying from a physical store. If anything it's doing the opposite -- training the
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5 consumer to shop online and buy online -- eventually to the detriment of the physical retailer.
Consumers who buy online will eventually gravitate to those sites with the widest selection
and lowest price. There really is minimal incentive for them to do otherwise. Retailers are
10 realizing this, and realizing they need to be using their web sites to promote their store in their
5 local area, and to draw the consumer into their physical store. The concept, for the retailer, is
that the web site must support the physical store, and the sale is made when the consumer
walks into that physical store, or at least as a result of walking into that physical store

15 Yet the physical store is limited in its own way. The consumer may walk into it, but more
often than not (especially with higher end, luxury items) will walk out without purchasing an
10 item. Often a consumer is "just looking," and while they may be quite interested, and may
reach a point of being quite close to purchasing, frequently they do not. They physically leave
20 the store. At that point, the retailers' ability to ever make a sale to that consumer drops to
almost zero. The odds are the retailer will never see the customer again.

Summary

30 15 A method and system is used with first and second visitors to a retail store selling items of
merchandise. Each of the visitors is received at the retail store, and items of merchandise of
interest to each visitor are noted. Web pages are configured on a web server to show
35 information relating to the respective items of merchandise. Respective uniform resource
locators are provided to the visitors. Each visitor may use the visitor's respective uniform
20 resource locator to view the respective web page.

40 The method and system provide a means for a retailer to build, almost instantly, a private
showcase of merchandise for a consumer to see on the Web, customized precisely for that
customer, and drawing upon vast quantities of product information.

45 The system empowers the retailer to do much more with a web site than merely use it as a
25 promotional aid to encourage consumers to come into the physical store. The method and

5 system provide a means for the salesperson in the physical store to maintain important
"cyber-contact" with the consumer, even after the consumer leaves -- and thus to expand the
environment in which the sale can ultimately be made. Instead of the sale needing to be made
10 during those brief instants when the consumer is in the store, hesitant about buying, perhaps
not quite ready to buy, perhaps needing another person (such as a spouse) to be in on the
15 decision, perhaps being in a hurry and needing to move on to other errands -- instead of the
sale needing to be made at that point, the system produce an environment in which the sale
can be made essentially at any time, from anywhere -- long after the consumer has left the
store. Thus the likelihood of the salesperson eventually closing the sale, and perhaps
20 establishing an on-going relationship with the consumer, increases dramatically.

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Description of the drawing

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The invention will be described in detail with respect to a drawing, namely Fig. 1 which
shows database and functional block interactions, and Fig. 2 which shows a sequence of steps
according to the invention.

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Detailed description

To illustrate the invention, consider the following scenario:

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1) Suzy Consumer walks into a retail jewelry store. She only has a few minutes, as she is on
her lunch break. She has no specific item in mind she wants to buy -- she's just
browsing, just "looking". (This is indicated by box 21 of Fig. 2)

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2) Sam Salesman comes over to be of service, and introduces himself to Suzy. "I'm just
looking," says Suzy, which Sam hears all the time. "That's great! Why don't you look at
this..." and he brings a tanzanite bracelet out of the showcase and has her try it on. Sam,
45 an accomplished salesperson, is in his element. In the few minutes he knows are granted
to him, he guides Suzy around the showroom, being sensitive to what things she seems to
25 like. In fact, while doing this he keeps a little notepad of which items Suzy seemed most

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impressed with. Perhaps he even uses a portable scanning device, and scans the UPC code of those items, recording it electronically for later use. Just before Suzy leaves, Sam hands the notes, or the scanning device, to a clerk who -- unnoticed by Suzy -- turns to a computer and enters some data with a few keystrokes (or the scanning device handles the data transfer automatically.) This is shown by box 15 in Fig. 1, and in box 22 of Fig. 2.

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3) Suzy is not ready to actually pull out her credit card and make a purchase. But she comes close. Sam perceives that she really likes a particular make and model of ladies' diamond watch. Yet it's expensive -- perhaps too expensive for an impulse purchase on Suzy's lunch break. And she also mentions that she'd really like to get her husband's opinion before buying something like that. She mentions breezily that she has to run, but that maybe she'll bring her husband back sometime to see the watch. The odds are heavy, at this point, that she will never come back to the store, with or without her husband. Note that this is a critical point, faced often by retailers of higher-end products. Most sales are lost at this juncture, with the customer walking out the door, and the opportunity for making the sale gone perhaps forever.

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4) As she is starting to leave, Sam hands Suzy Consumer a card, perhaps a business card, but with additional information on it. (This is shown as box 23 of Fig. 2.) "I can see you really like the watch," says Sam. "But I understand you're not able to make a decision right now. Here's what you can do. When you get home, or at your office, or whatever's convenient, just take a quick visit to the web site address shown on this card. This is your personal web site that our store's software has already built for you. You'll find it contains the model of watch we spoke about, with all the information about the watch, plus pictures and information about the other products you were looking at today. I know you're going to want to buy that watch at some point, and when you're ready, you won't even have to come in the store. You can buy it on-line, right from your personal web page.

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5) Suzy leaves the store, dazzled at the concept of a personal web page, and eager to visit it. She knows this will solve the problem of trying to drag her husband into the store, which

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she was already dreading. She'll be able to show the watch to him online, or she could even call him now and he could look at it from his office.

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6) When Suzy does visit her personal web page, she finds -- almost miraculously -- that it does contain precisely the photos and information about the very items she was interested

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in at the store, with the particular watch featured most prominently. She is amazed to

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discover that the site also includes linked pages telling everything about the particular

watch, and the watchmaking company itself, and the quality it represents. The other

merchandise is shown with similar linked pages of extensive background information --

much more than she ever would have had time to read in the store. All of the items

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shown are available to be purchased, via normal on-line shopping technologies. But the

site keeps going. She finds, as she explores it, that it also contains all the other items

featured in the store, plus many, many others that were not even in the store. She finds

that the site also directs her to additional merchandise she might be interested in, based on

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her attraction to the particular watch -- much of it not carried in the store at all, and all of

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it with extensive background information and order forms. Beyond all that, there is also a

great deal of information about the store itself, Smith Jewelers, the owner, John Smith,

their history, how they focus on customer service and satisfaction, pictures of the

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salespeople, etc. But Sam Salesman is featured most prominently, and she appreciates

that because that's who she was dealing with, and it's gratifying for her to know that if

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she buys any of the items, Sam will receive his commission, just as if she'd bought in the

store. She remembers how helpful he was, and looks forward to him being compensated

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for his time. Finally, also on the site is a message from Sam himself -- apparently typed

up just after she left: "Dear Suzy, thanks so much for visiting our store. As you see your

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personal web page from Smith Jewelers features the items you were most interested in, as

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well as additional merchandise we think you might find interesting. If you'd be kind

enough to enter your e-mail address in the space shown below, I'll make sure you're

notified of any upcoming sales even before they're announced in the papers. (And you

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can remove yourself from our e-mail notification list easily at any time.) Thanks again,

Suzy, and I hope you'll visit our store again, wearing that beautiful Longines watch! -

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Sam."

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5 The viewing of the personal page is depicted as box 24 of Fig. 2 and box 16 of Fig. 1.

10 7) A week later, still thinking about that watch, Suzy finally does buy it -- by going to her personal web page that is still there and waiting for her. At the point where she buys, she also is prompted to enter her name and address information (which of course she has to do if she is to receive the watch in the mail). This data becomes part of Smith's Jeweler's database of customers, and is able to be used in many ways in the future. The purchase is depicted as box 25 of Fig. 2.

15 As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, by using personal web pages, Sam Salesman was able to dramatically expand the universe of opportunity for making the sale to Suzy. His relationship with Suzy did not end the moment she walked out the door. In fact, by building on it in cyberspace, he eventually was able to make the sale. Throughout the process, Sam was able to use the power of the bricks-and-mortar store -- being in the community and being able to establish a personal relationship -- while still harnessing a great deal of the power of the Internet, being able to deliver vast quantities of information and product variety to Suzy via the Web, in the convenience of her own home, and empowering her to make the purchase at her discretion, easily, and without having to return to the store.

20 In essence, this is almost the opposite of how retailers are thinking of using web sites today. Instead of using the web site to bring Suzy in the store, the store is used to bring Suzy to the web site -- and from there the sale is eventually made. Yes, in a perfect world Sam would have been able to make the sale on the spot. Sam would have preferred that. But in many ways, by using web pages, Sam may ultimately do more business with Suzy than he would have otherwise. Sam can now interact with Suzy electronically, can send her e-mail, can add things to her site, change prices, etc., each time notifying her perhaps by e-mail as well. Suzy enjoys visiting her site periodically, and seeing new merchandise that Sam has placed there for her consideration. She develops a trust in Sam, and in Smith Jewelers, and can see that they are interested in her as a long-term customer. The personal web page makes all this possible, and substantially increases the closing ratio

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with any particular customer.

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One exemplary aspect of this system is the ability to draw from a large database of product information, assemble it in modules using pre-formatted and customized templates, add specific customization to it on the spot (the "Dear Suzy" letter, in the above example), add additional related information based on a relational database linking products of similar style and appearance (the "other items" Suzy saw on the site that weren't even in the showcases), and have the site generated and appearing live on the Internet before the consumer even leaves the store.

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10 In an exemplary embodiment, the technical elements of the software include the following.

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1) A database of standardized product information (text and graphics) is made available to the retail store. This database may be of the type disclosed in PCT publication number WO 99/46709, published September 16, 1999, entitled *System for providing a display of merchandise as specified by retail and Wholesale merchandise providers*, owned by the same assignee as of the present application. In this way the system provides a means for manufacturers to provide this information and keep it updated on a continuous basis, as well as determine which retailers are allowed to showcase it. This database is referred to herein as the "outside database," because it is provided by parties other than the retailer, and is controlled by such parties. This database appears as box 10 of Fig. 1.

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2) A second database of information is essentially built by the retailer itself, and is kept updated, modified, and maintained over time. This is called herein the "inside database," box 11 of Fig. 1. This database consists of several pieces:

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a) Template "choices" identified by the retailer, such as look and feel of the web pages, from among several patterns. Alternatively, the retailer may choose to use different templates for various web pages, and identify them on the fly. For example, for a young, female customer, the retailer may choose a very feminine,

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5 yet modern and stylish look. A middle-aged male customer might be given a more
masculine and “no nonsense” look and feel. An elderly customer might be given a
web page with a very traditional, conservative appearance.

10 b) Text and graphics information provided by the retailer, such as photos of the store,
5 pictures of the staff, history of the store, etc. The retailer is given “wizard” tools
to provide this information into the database, and update it and modify it at will.

15 c) Text and graphics information, provided by the retailer, identifying additional
products/services not included in the “outside database” mentioned above. An
20 example of this would be custom jewelry designs available only from this specific
10 retailer, and which were actually designed and produced by that retailer. Or, they
could include other products not presently available in the “outside database,” but
sold by that retailer and needing to be included in the web page database.

25 3) A relational table, either provided as part of the outside database (in the case of the
outside database), or provided by the retailer (with the help of wizards) with respect to the
30 15 products in the “inside database.” This relational table could eventually be quite
sophisticated, and could empower the web page user to follow relational threads in
numerous directions. For example, while looking at the Longines diamond ladies watch,
links could appear along side it such as:

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- a) See other diamond watches
 - 20 b) See other Ladies watches
 - c) See other products by the same manufacturer
 - 40 d) See other items of diamond jewelry.

45 Every item in either the inside or outside database would be connected by links to
“similar” items. This process allows the web page to initially appear quite small and
25 focused. But its interactive elements allow the consumer using it to branch out in
numerous directions (as with other web sites), and, much like a spider web, follow

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5 threads to other related products, yet all of them appearing inside the personalized
web page. Preferably, no matter how far afield the consumer goes, following these
relational links, the consumer never leaves the web page. The “home” button on the
10 site’s navigation bar, from any page, always takes the consumer back to the original
5 starting point, which showcased the initial items.

15 The relational table is shown as box 12 of Fig. 1.

4) A reference table, linking a unique merchandise ID number to the grouping of text and
graphics about that specific item of merchandise. In other words, this table is what allows
20 the sales clerk to enter five numbers into the software, and produce the entire web page in
10 seconds. The software uses the five (or some other predetermined number) numbers to
identify the product items, draw information as needed from the other databases, and
25 portray the information in accordance with the chosen web page template. The reference
table is shown as box 13 of Fig. 1.

5) Software wizards that prompt the retailer to add personal messages to the web page, and
30 include “known” information, such as perhaps the customer’s name, if given to the
15 salesperson (or able to be added later), the salesperson who waited on her, a “Dear Suzy”
letter, etc. These are found as part of box 15 of Fig. 1, and box 22 of Fig. 2.

6) A continuously-expanding list of “tilde” based URL’s, keyed off the retailer’s own site,
35 and able to be handed out sequentially on the fly to consumers. In the above example,
20 Sam handed a card to Suzy with the web site address www.smithjewelers.com/~47892.
40 “47892” identifies the specific web page to the program’s software. The number 47892
itself was preferably generated by the software, and/or was the next available one in
sequence. The cards could have been preprinted in sequence, to add to the
45 professionalism, as shown in Fig. 1, box 20. Alternatively, the software can prompt the
25 retailer with the option of a truly customized url, such as www.smithjewelers.com/~suzy.
If already taken, the software could ask for a different name.

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7) E-commerce tools, able to be accessed by the software on the fly and built into the web page, such as shopping carts, credit card encryption software, etc. These make possible the effectuated online sale, shown in box 25 of Fig. 2.

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8) Other "web objects" such as e-mail response mechanisms for contacting the retailer, wizards to prompt the consumer to continue personalizing the web page, and teaching the web page more about the consumer's areas of interest. Wizards would prompt and lead the consumer to identify other areas of interest, from drop down menu boxes (sailing, scuba diving, swimwear, dude ranches, etc.). This is shown as the linked pages of box 18 in Fig. 1.

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10 As the consumer continued to teach the web page, products and services from other vendors in completely different industries could appear, in the same fashion, and available to be purchased. Such customer interaction is shown as box 17 of Fig. 1. Mechanisms could exist to send commission payments to the original retailer who built the web page. As an example, if Suzy Consumer indicated on her site that she was interested in
15 Caribbean Vacations, and she eventually bought one of the ones suggested to her via the site, the travel provider could be required to send payment to Smith Jewelers for a referral commission. At that point Smith Jewelers is no longer just a bricks-and-mortar store, and no longer also an e-commerce enabled retail store, but is also a portal for Suzy and for
30 everything Suzy might eventually buy on the Web. All of these other product categories would be resident (including all their contents) in the "external database" mentioned above. The external database 10 (Fig. 1), obviously, does not live physically at the retailer's store, but is operated by the party providing this service, from a remote, Web-
35 accessed server. In fact, none of these elements live at the retailer's store. They all exist on the remote server, and are served up as web objects on demand, as the web page is
40 built and evolves.
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As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the web page is being acted upon remotely by three "classes" of user. Class 1 are the providers of the external database content, and restriction-classifications for use of that content, via the above-mentioned database

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5 technology. (As an example, one maker may provide text and graphics about that maker's
watches, along with a defined list of retailers allowed to showcase that text and graphics,
all of it subject to change on an ongoing basis.) Class 2 consists of the retailer(s) who
10 build the web page, and update/change it over time. Class 3 consists of the consumer(s)
5 for whom the web page was built, and who have the ability to teach the web page about
their likes and dislikes and areas of interest, and to manipulate the web page into
showcasing different items on its home page. Numerous options can be given to these
15 consumers, such as selecting a setting in which specific types of product may be "pushed"
onto the web page, perhaps on a daily basis, or on a 'when it goes on sale' basis, or
20 however defined.

20 Thus the product suppliers are providing vast quantities of text and graphic information
about goods and services, to authorized lists of retailers. The retailers package and
distribute that information into the web pages that they build for their 'bricks-and-mortar'
25 customers (or even for customers they may have encountered only via their own
15 promotional web sites). And the consumers are receiving this data, and manipulating the
sites so as to increasingly receive the specific data they are most interested in.

30 But much of this is unnecessarily complex, and illustrates how the web pages can be
expanded in the future. The essence of the process is the ability of the retailer to build the
site almost in seconds, and provide the URL to the consumer as they are literally walking
35 20 out the door. The bottom line is that the retailer expands his point of sale environment far
beyond his physical store, via a unique and very personalized form of ongoing interaction
with his customer.

40 Another use for this technology is to provide a mechanism for the consumer himself or
herself to build his or her site as he or she browses through a store, or even an entire mall,
25 or for that matter stores located all over a city. This would have particular application to a
45 large department store, perhaps, with many items on display and with few human
salespeople. Through a mechanism such as a smart card, or a handheld mechanical UPC-
scanner/recorder provided by the store to shoppers, a consumer could essentially

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“bookmark” items in the store as the consumer browsed through. The data captured by the recorder would then be inputted into the web page-construction software (in any number of ways, either in the store, later at home, by a clerk in the store, etc.) and the web page would be built and be available to the consumer to either buy one of those items later, read more information about it, follow threads to similar information, etc. The difference in this application of the technology is that the human salesperson would not need to be involved at all, yet the physical store(s) would still benefit from the “in person” visit of the consumer, and would still be ‘reaching out’ to him after he had left the store, and empowering him to purchase. For busy consumers, this could ultimately become their preferred means of shopping -- browse a store, or a whole mall, bookmark items that look interesting, and then find out much more about them later via the personal web page, and finally make a purchase from the convenience of home or office, and without being harried.

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The invention should not be limited in any way by particular language appearing in this Specification, but is to be defined by the full scope of the claims which follow.

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Claims

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Claims

We claim:

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1. A method for use with first and second visitors to a retail store selling items of merchandise and with a web server, the method comprising the steps of:

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5 receiving said first visitor at said retail store;

noting first items of merchandise of interest to said first visitor;

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configuring a first web page on the web server to show first information relating to said first items of merchandise;

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communicating to said first visitor, at said retail store, a first uniform resource locator;

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providing said first information in response to a first web browser evaluating said first uniform resource locator via a communications network;

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receiving said second visitor at said retail store;

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noting second items of merchandise of interest to said second visitor;

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configuring a second web page on the web server to show information relating to said second items of merchandise;

communicating to said first visitor, at said retail store, a first uniform resource locator;
and

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providing said second information in response to a second web browser evaluating said second uniform resource locator via a communications network.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein said communicating steps are performed by providing respective preprinted cards to the first and second visitors, each of said preprinted cards bearing a distinct uniform resource locator prior to the reception of the respective visitor at said retail store.

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3. A system for use with first and second visitors to a retail store selling items of merchandise; the system comprising:

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a web server communicatively coupled with a communications network,

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means for noting first items of merchandise of interest to said first visitor;

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means configuring a first web page on the web server to show first information relating to said first items of merchandise;

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means communicating to said first visitor, at said retail store, a first uniform resource locator;

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said web server characterized in that it provides said first information in response to a first web browser evaluating said first uniform resource locator via the communications network;

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means for noting second items of merchandise of interest to said second visitor;

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means configuring a second web page on the web server to show first information relating to said second items of merchandise;

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means communicating to said second visitor, at said retail store, a second uniform resource locator;

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said web server characterized in that it provides said second information in response to a

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second web browser evaluating said second uniform resource locator via the communications network;

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4. The method of claim 3 wherein said communicating means comprises preprinted cards provided to the first and second visitors.

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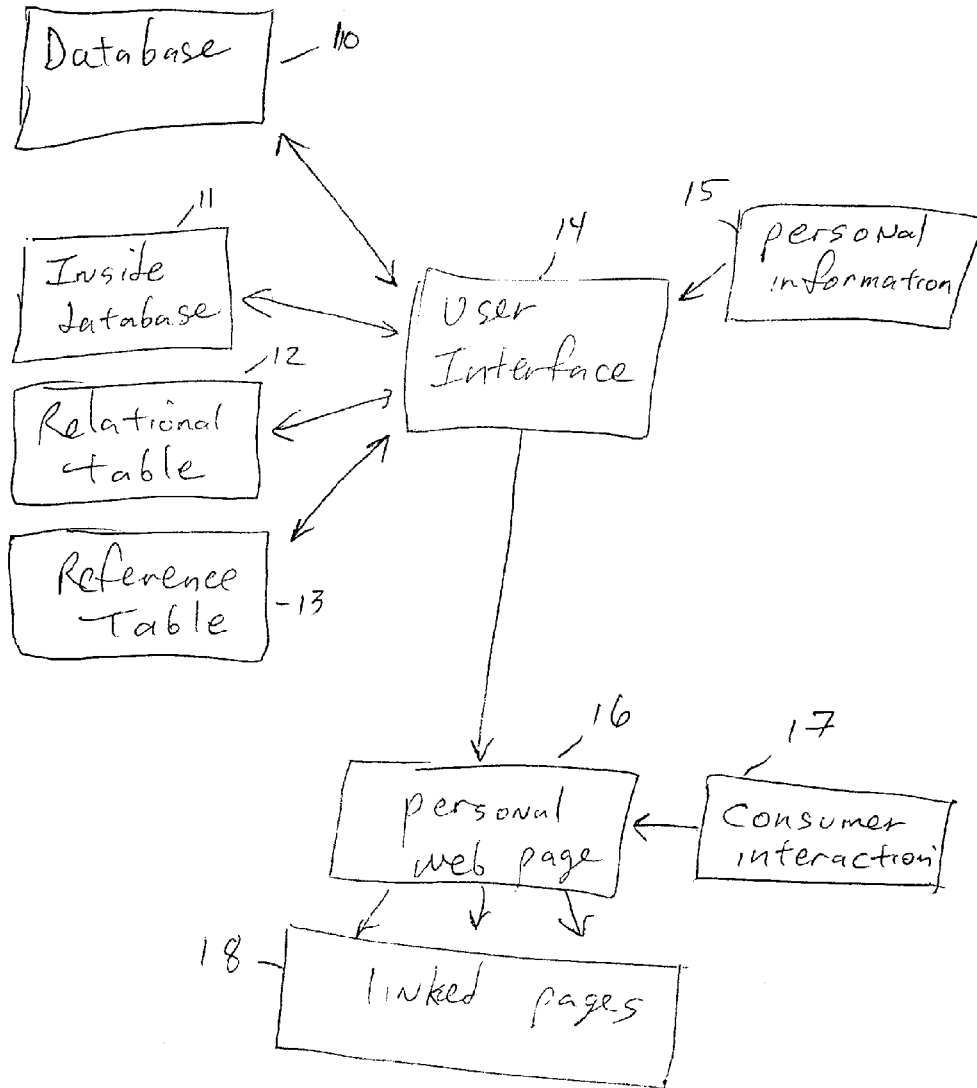


Fig. 1

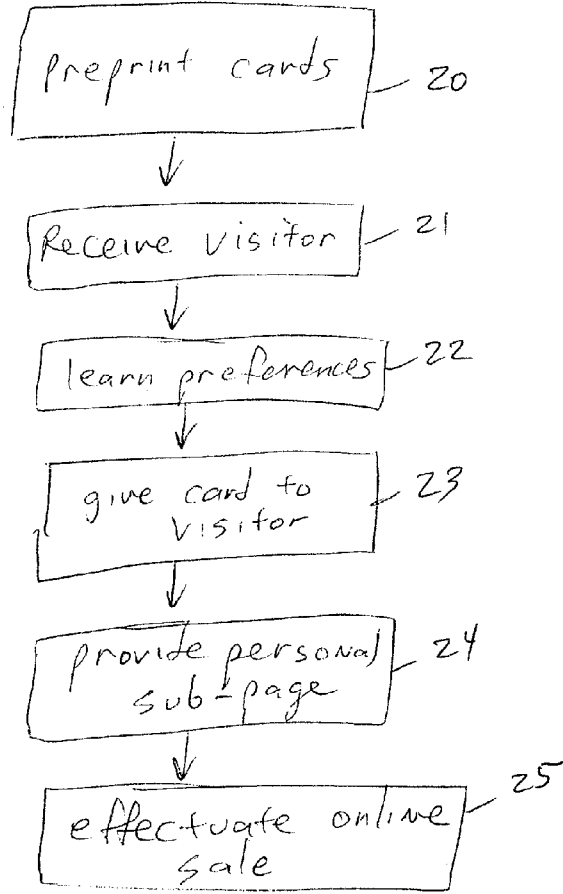


Fig. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/01575

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC(7) : G06F 17/60 US CL : 705/14, 26, 27 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. : 705/14, 26, 27 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched NONE Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) WEST, 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 5,793,972 A (SHANE) 11 August 1998, col. 3, line 56 thru col. 8, line 21.	1-4
X,P	US 5,870,737 A (DOCKTER et al) 09 February 1999, col. 3, line 11 thru col.5, line 37.	1-4
X,P	US 5,933,811 A (ANGLES et al) 03 August 1999, col. 18, line 35 thru col. 23, line 55.	1-4
X,P	US 5,987,480 A (DONOHUE et al) 16 November 1999, col. 7, line 25 thru col. 14, line 27.	1-4
X,P	US 6,009,410 A (LEMOLE et al) 28 December 1999, col. 3, line 15 thru col. 7, line 35.	1-4
X,P	US 6,014,638 A (BURGE et al) 11 January 2000, col. 3, line 45 thru col. 10, line 51.	1-4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> 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)	*Z* 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		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 10 APRIL 2000	Date of mailing of the international search report 27 APR 2000	
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer ALLEN MACDONALD <i>Allen Macdonald</i> Telephone No. (703) 308-9708	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/01575

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5,802,530 A (VAN HOFF) 01 September 1998, entire document.	1-4