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(54) PROVIDING HISTORY AND TRANSACTION VOLUME INFORMATION OF A CONTENT SOURCE TO USERS

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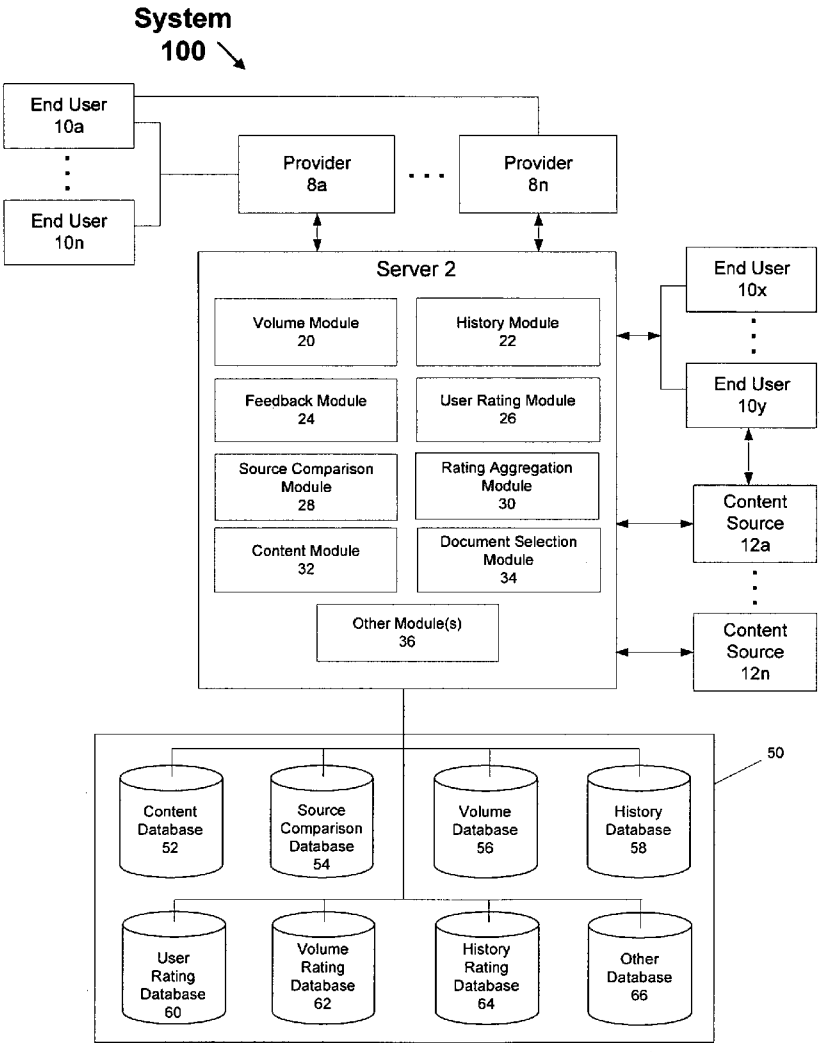
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A computer-implemented system and method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source are provided. A request for a document is received. An electronic document associated with a content source is passed by a document provider in response to the request. A legitimacy rating of the content source is passed. Examples of legitimacy rating information include, for example, a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source and a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed by the document provider.



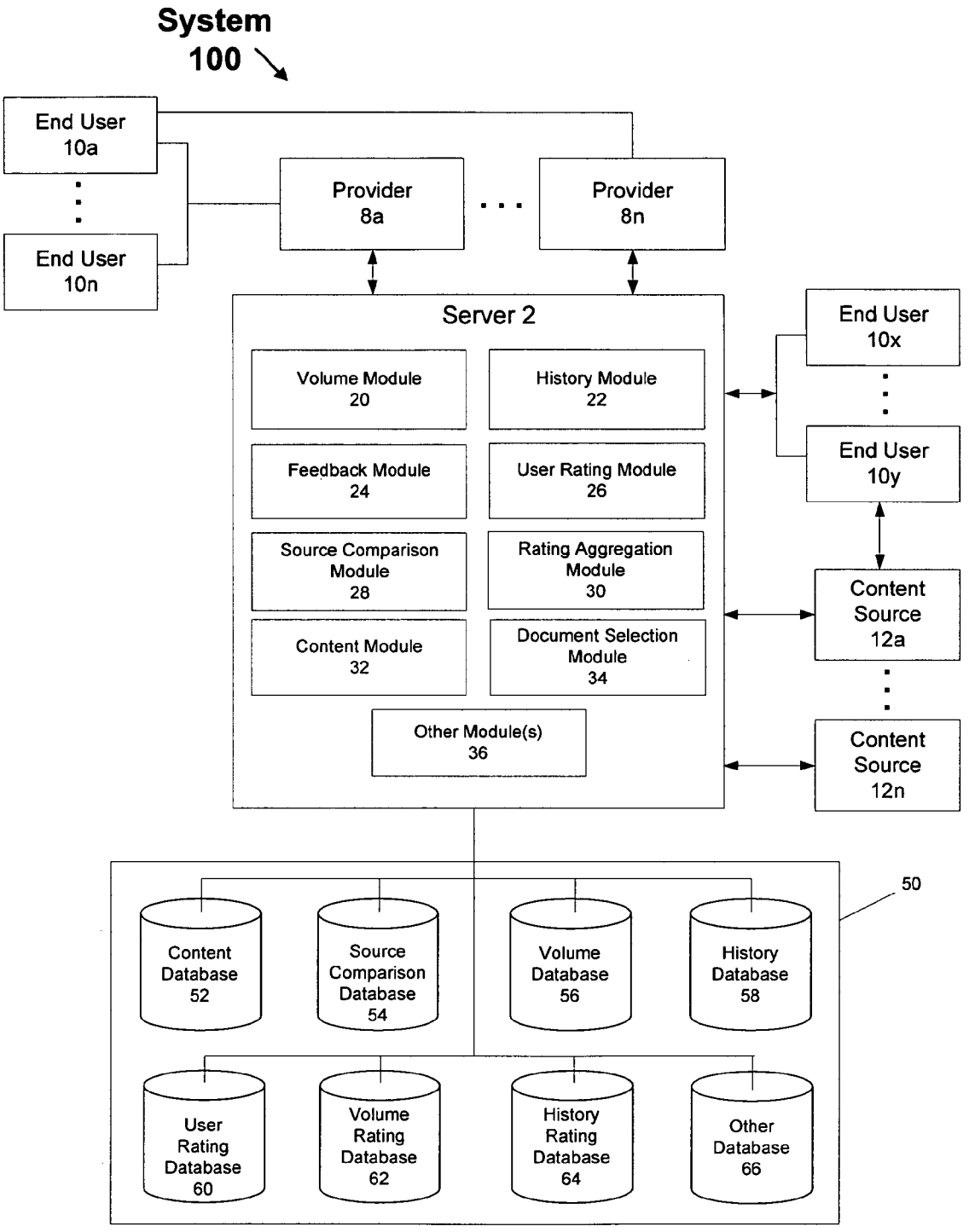

System
100
End User
10a
End User
10n
Provider
8a
Provider
8n
Server 2
Volume Module
20
History Module
22
Feedback Module
24
User Rating Module
26
Source Comparison
Module
28
Rating Aggregation
Module
30
Content Module
32
Document Selection
Module
34
Other Module(s)
36
End User
10x
End User
10y
Content
Source
12a
Content
Source
12n
50
Content
Database
52
Source
Comparison
Database
54
Volume
Database
56
History
Database
58
User
Rating
Database
60
Volume
Rating
Database
62
History
Rating
Database
64
Other
Database
66

FIG. 1

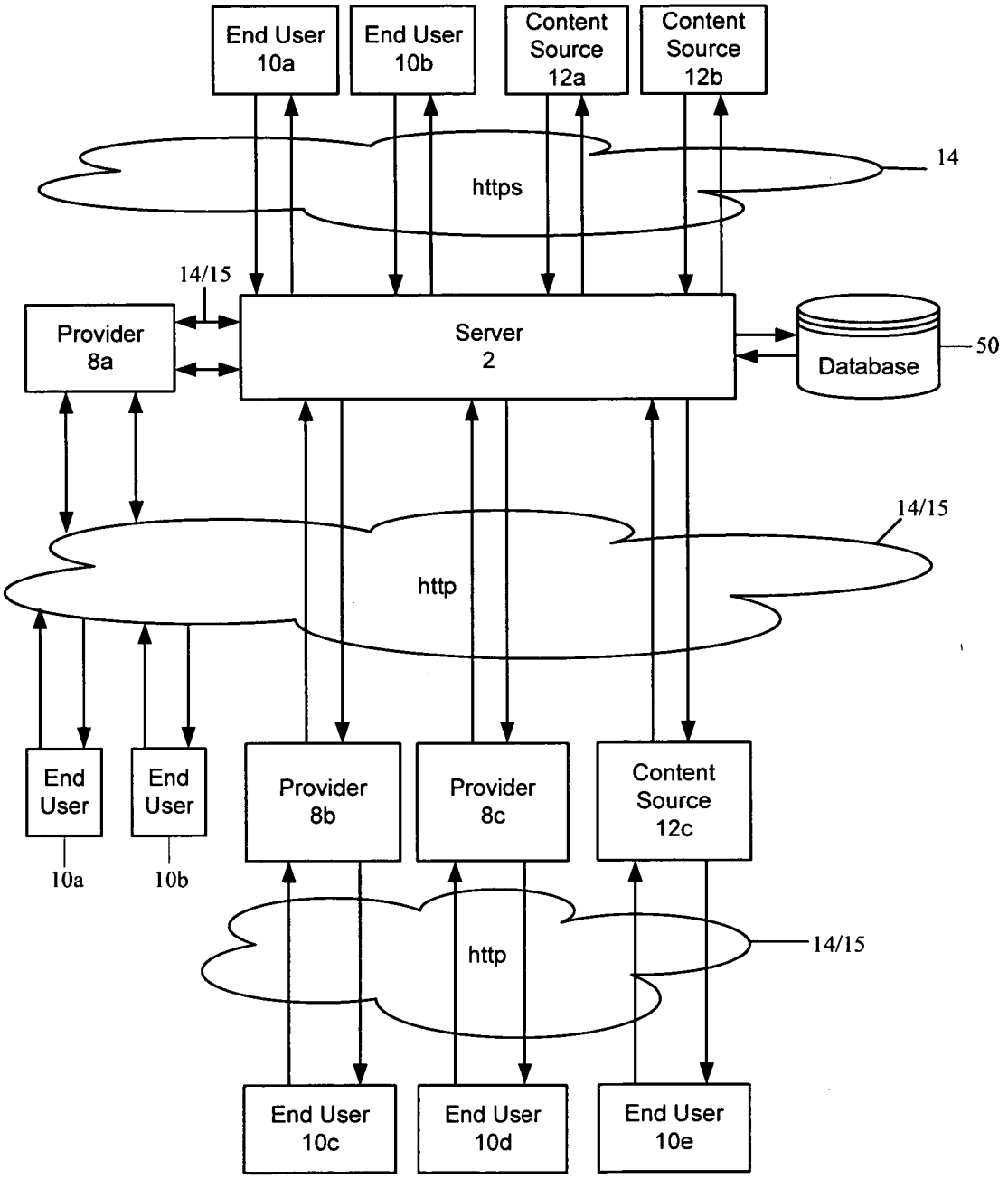

End User 10a
End User 10b
Content Source 12a
Content Source 12b
https
14
14/15
Provider 8a
Server 2
Database
50
14/15
http
End User
End User
10a
10b
Provider 8b
Provider 8c
Content Source 12c
http
14/15
End User 10c
End User 10d
End User 10e

FIG. 2

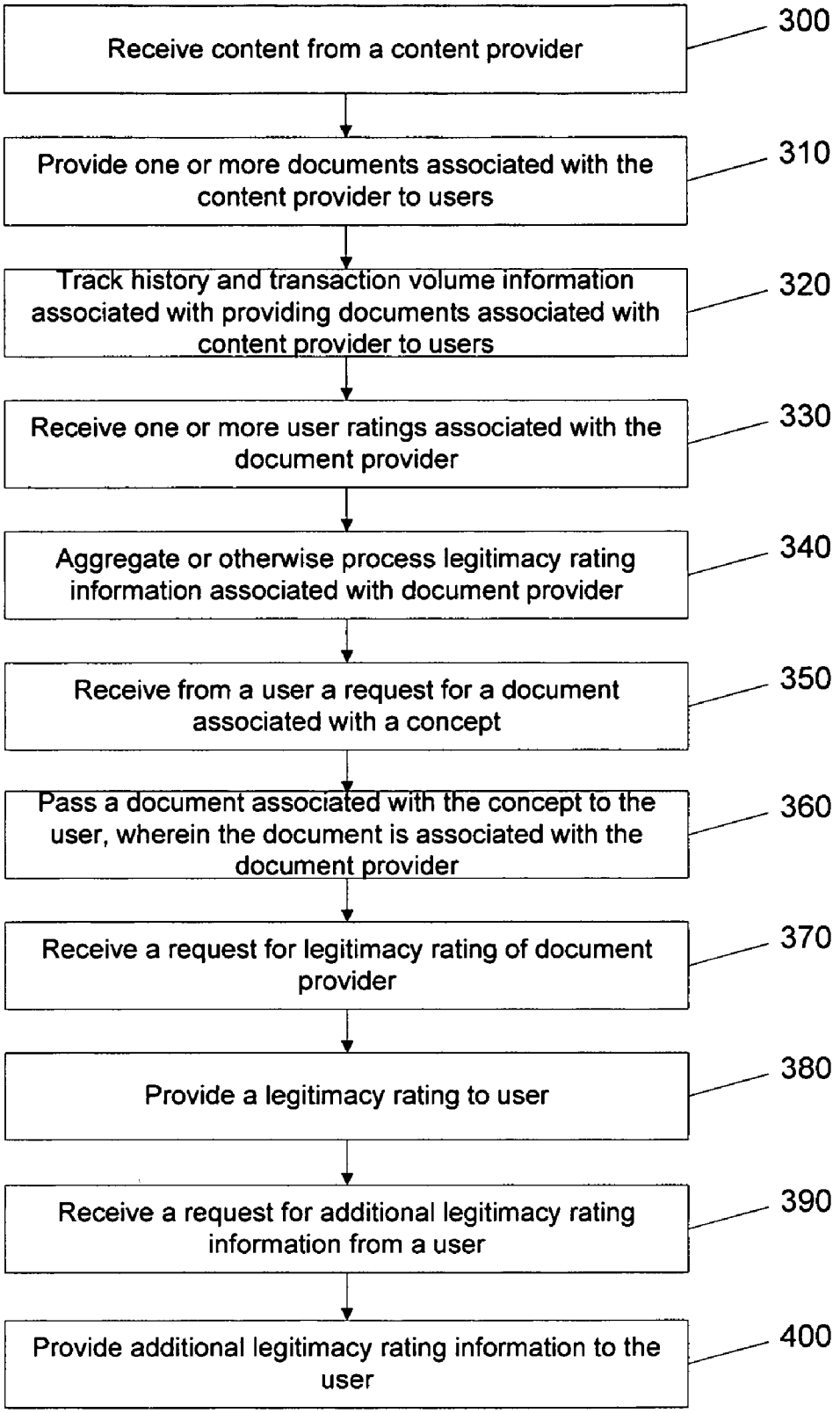

Receive content from a content provider
300
Provide one or more documents associated with the content provider to users
310
Track history and transaction volume information associated with providing documents associated with content provider to users
320
Receive one or more user ratings associated with the document provider
330
Aggregate or otherwise process legitimacy rating information associated with document provider
340
Receive from a user a request for a document associated with a concept
350
Pass a document associated with the concept to the user, wherein the document is associated with the document provider
360
Receive a request for legitimacy rating of document provider
370
Provide a legitimacy rating to user
380
Receive a request for additional legitimacy rating information from a user
390
Provide additional legitimacy rating information to the user
400

FIG. 3

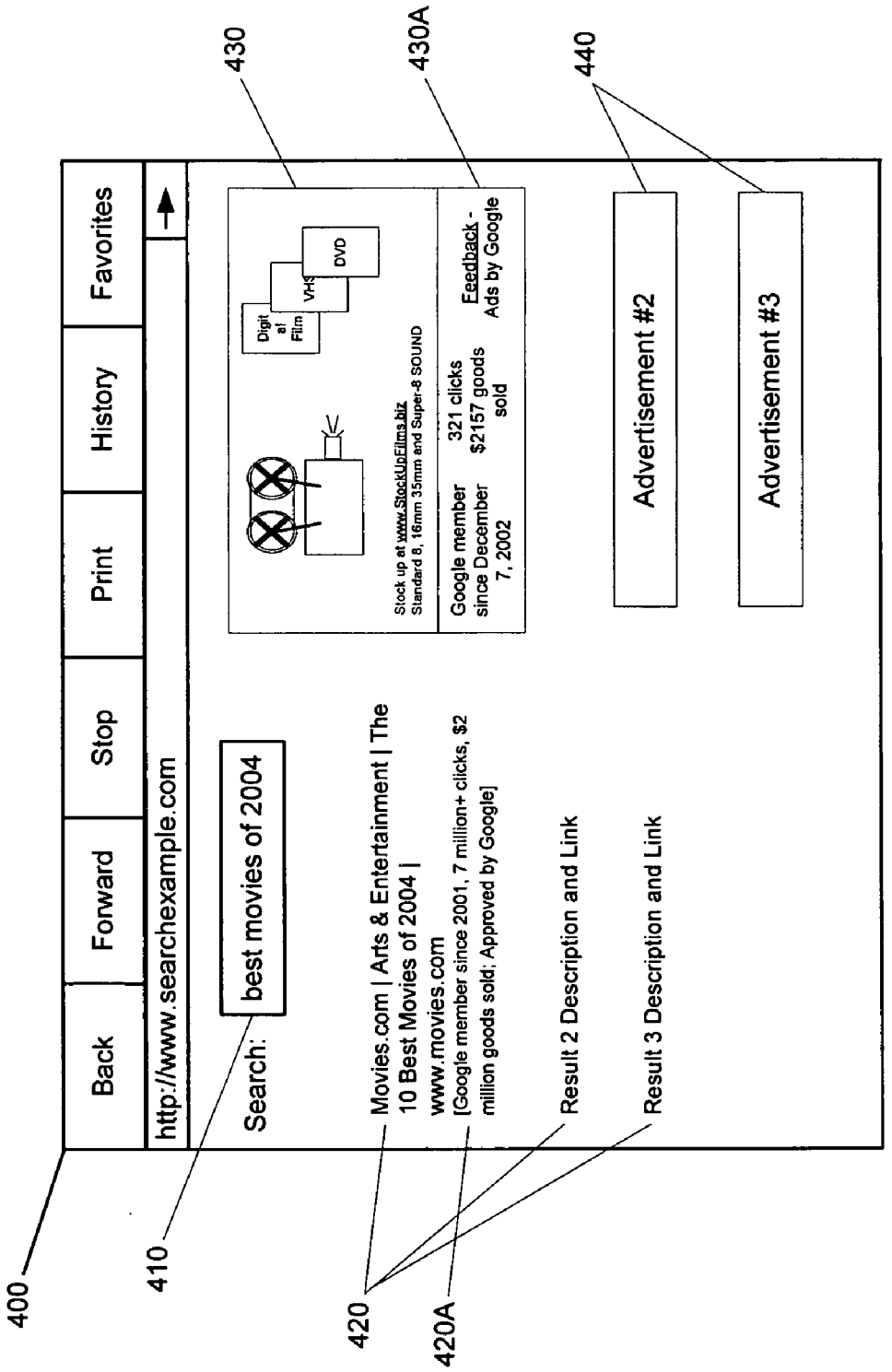

400
410
420
420A
430
430A
440
Back
Forward
Stop
Print
History
Favorites
http://www.searchexample.com
Search:
best movies of 2004
Movies.com | Arts & Entertainment | The 10 Best Movies of 2004 |
www.movies.com
[Google member since 2001, 7 million+ clicks, $2 million goods sold; Approved by Google]
Result 2 Description and Link
Result 3 Description and Link
Digit al Film
VHS
DVD
Stock up at www.StockUpFilms.biz
Standard 8, 16mm 35mm and Super-8 SOUND
Google member since December 7, 2002
321 clicks $2157 goods sold
Feedback - Ads by Google
Advertisement #2
Advertisement #3

FIG. 4

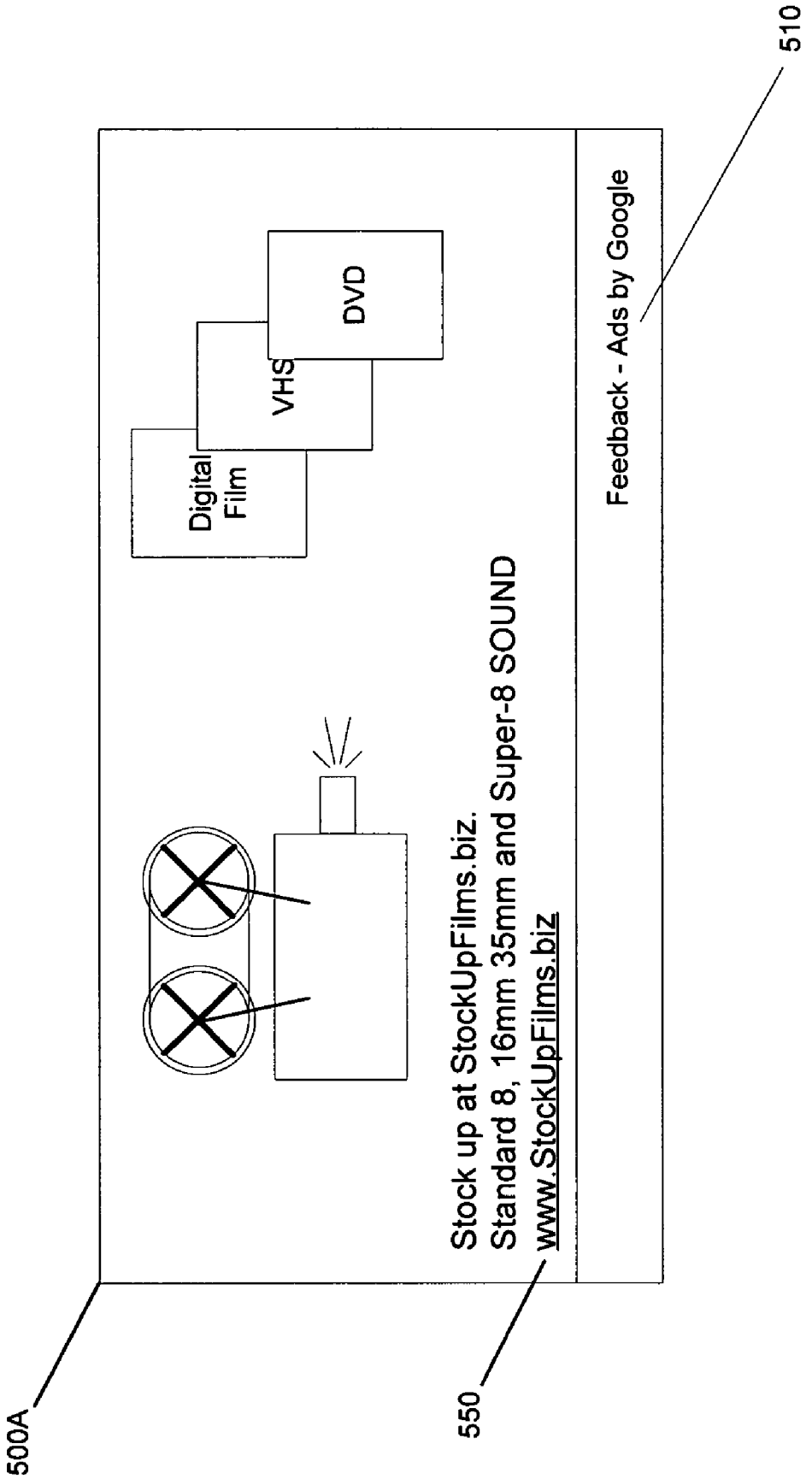

500A
550
510
Stock up at StockUpFilms.biz.
Standard 8, 16mm 35mm and Super-8 SOUND
www.StockUpFilms.biz
Digital Film
VHS
DVD
Feedback - Ads by Google

FIG. 5A

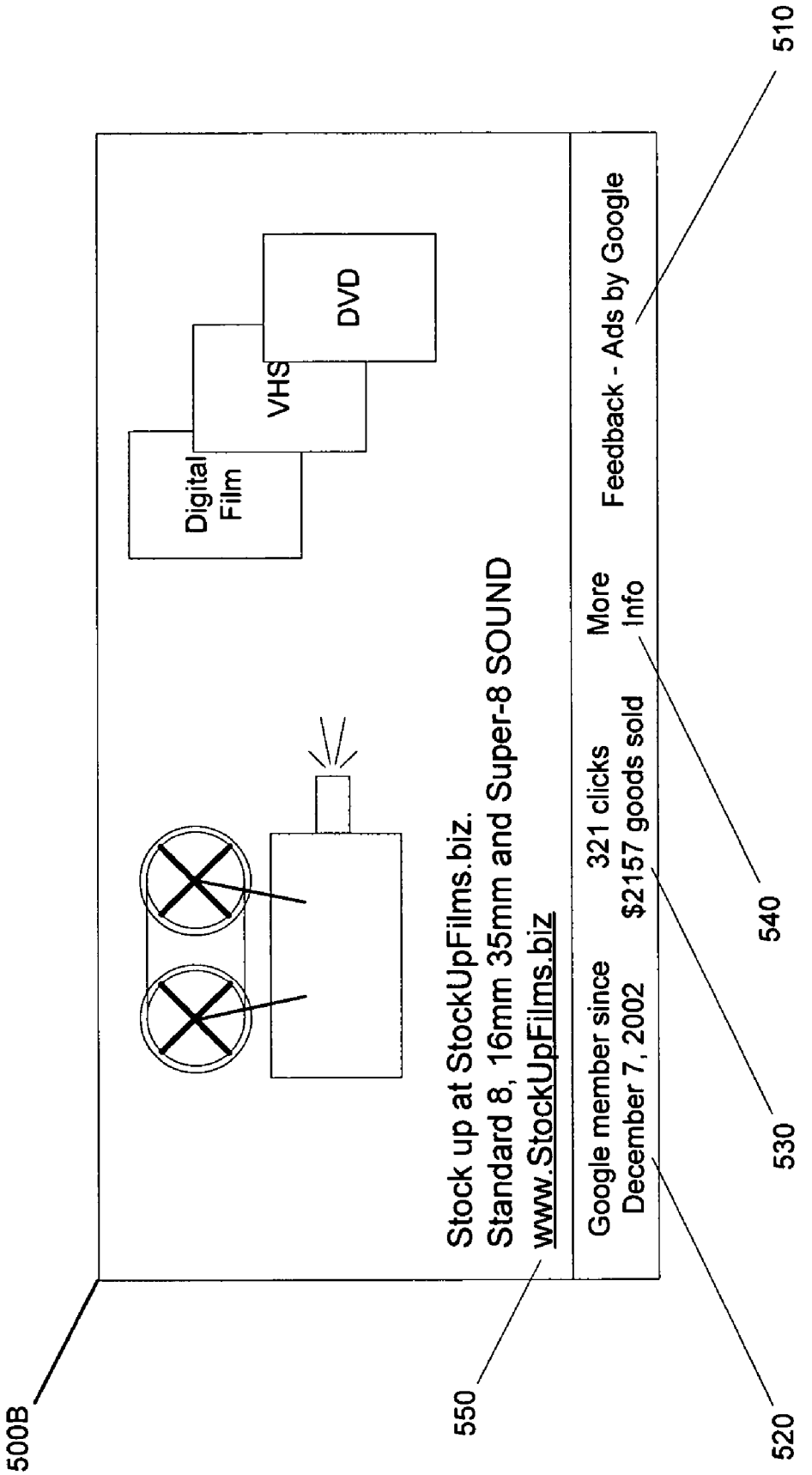

500B
Digital Film
VHS
DVD
Stock up at StockUpFilms.biz.
Standard 8, 16mm 35mm and Super-8 SOUND
www.StockUpFilms.biz
Feedback - Ads by Google
More Info
321 clicks
$2157 goods sold
Google member since December 7, 2002
510
540
530
520
550

FIG. 5B

600

WIDGETCO ADVERTISER LEGITIMACY INFORMATION
----- GOLD MEMBER -----

Transaction Volume Information

Rating among related advertisers:	8.2/10 - Great
among all advertisers:	0.0041/10
User clicks:	75,235
User click/buy ratio:	1.3%
User click/buy ratio rating:	6.5/10 for related advertisers 5.3/10 for all advertisers
Average buyer purchase:	$56.44
Total goods sold to users:	$55,204.98 -- BRONZE
Ad revenue paid:	$4,302.75 -- GOLD

History Information

Advertiser since:	March 1, 1999 -- GOLD
Length of time compared to peers:	4.2/10
Length of time compared to all:	2.5/10
100 clicks:	January 30, 2000
1000 clicks:	October 23, 2002
5000 clicks:	March 19, 2003
50,000 clicks:	May 2, 2004

User Approval Score	98.4% - EXCELLENT (of 35 respondents)
Last six months:	100% (2 respondents)
Industries of approval:	Widgets, ball bearings, connectors
User Complaint Score	1.05% - OK

CLICK HERE to see user reviews

Keyword bids:	widget, ball bearings
Location bids:	US, Canada, Great Britain, Australia
Company location:	US, Canada

ADVERTISEMENT CONTENT RATINGS

Adult content:	0.3% - Negligible
Alcohol-related content:	0.5% - Negligible
Drug-related content:	0.0% - None
General Approval Rating:	8/10
Approval Status:	Approved for general audiences

FIG. 6

PROVIDING HISTORY AND TRANSACTION VOLUME INFORMATION OF A CONTENT SOURCE TO USERS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a system and method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source associated with a document such as an advertisement.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] With the advent of the Internet, a seemingly limitless variety of content has become available to users. Countless websites provide information about countless subjects and sell a myriad of products to end users. The amount of information and consumer items accessible to a user appears to be limited only by the user's download speed, time, pocket book, and imagination. While the freedom to publish content and reach users over the Internet has brought forth an unprecedented amount of content, the wide variety of such content has a correspondingly wide range of quality and reliability. While many websites provide reliable information or sell quality products at competitive prices, many others provide inaccurate information, intentionally defraud users, or sell illegal wares.

[0003] In addition to harming users, disreputable content providers can also harm otherwise innocent referring websites by association. For instance, if one website refers a user to a disreputable site that harms the user, the bad experience may degrade the user's trust in the otherwise innocent referring site. Unfortunately, it is practicably impossible to monitor the quality of such linked sites, especially for search engines that link to a large number of websites (e.g., by publishing keyword-triggered advertisements that link to one of many advertiser websites).

[0004] It is also difficult or impossible for users to discern between websites and advertisements from legitimate business operations with proven track records and those from fly-by-night operations that intend to acquire users' credit card numbers for nefarious purposes. Competent graphic artists can make a reputable-looking document, and there are few third-party resources to tell users the difference. The sheer number of websites on the Internet make it difficult for any independent reviewing entity to evaluate even a fraction of the existing websites, and the cost of labor for such an undertaking would be similarly prohibitive. Some rating entities such as Consumer Reports provide independent ratings of companies that advertise on the Internet, but their ratings barely cover a fraction of Internet sellers. While ratings of many content providers exist somewhere in cyberspace, their lack of centralization can make them difficult to find, and the reliability of each disparate rating entity can only be verified by yet another appeal to another independent rating entity.

[0005] Other rating websites such as www.resellerratings.com provide user ratings about a variety of etailers. However, user ratings exist only for those sites that happen to be rated by one or more users, and the quality of the ratings are only as truthful and reliable as the anonymous users who post them. Another danger with most user ratings is that disreputable sites can boost their ratings by providing falsely positive ratings as a fake user.

[0006] These and other drawbacks exist with current systems and methods.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Accordingly, various embodiments of the present invention may be directed to a computer-implemented system and method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source. A request for a document is received. An electronic document associated with a content source is passed by a document provider in response to the request. A legitimacy rating of the content source is passed. Examples of legitimacy rating information include, for example, a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source and a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed by the document provider.

[0008] According to another embodiment, a computer-implemented system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source is provided. An input device receives a request for a document. An output device passes an electronic document associated with a content source by a document provider in response to the request. The output device also provides a legitimacy rating of the content source. Examples of legitimacy rating information include, for example, a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source and a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed by the document provider. A processor determines the legitimacy rating of the content source based on at least one of transaction and history information associated with the content source.

[0009] According to another embodiment, a computer-implemented method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source is provided. A request for a document associated with a criteria is received from a user. An electronic advertisement is selected based on a relevance to the criteria, wherein the electronic advertisement is associated with an advertiser. The electronic advertisement is passed to the user by a document provider in response to the request. A legitimacy rating of the advertiser is provided to the user. The legitimacy rating comprises at least one of a history rating of the advertiser based on the length of time the document provider has published electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser and a transaction volume rating of the advertiser based on the number of electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser that are passed to users by the document provider.

[0010] According to another embodiment, a system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source is provided. An input device receives from a user a request for a document associated with a criteria. A processor selects an electronic advertisement based on a relevance to the criteria, wherein the electronic advertisement is associated with an advertiser. An output device passes the electronic advertisement from the document provider to the user in response to the request. The output device also provides to the user a legitimacy rating of the advertiser. The legitimacy rating comprises at least one of: a history rating of the advertiser

based on the length of time the document provider has published electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser; and a transaction volume rating of the advertiser based on the number of electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser that are passed to users by the document provider.

[0011] According to another embodiment, a computer-implemented method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source is provided. A request for a document associated with a concept is received from a user. An electronic document associated with a content source is selected based on a relevance to the concept. A legitimacy rating of the content source is determined. The legitimacy rating comprises at least one of a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source and a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed to users by the document provider. The electronic document and the legitimacy rating are passed to the user together in a single transmission in response to the request.

[0012] According to another embodiment, a system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source is provided. An input device receives from a user a request for a document associated with a concept. A selection processor of a document provider selects an electronic document associated with a content source based on a relevance to the concept. A legitimacy rating processor determines a legitimacy rating of the content source. The legitimacy rating comprises at least one of: a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source; and a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed to users by the document provider. An output device passes the electronic document and the legitimacy rating together in a single transmission to the user in response to the request.

[0013] Other embodiments are also within the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] **FIG. 1** depicts a system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0015] **FIG. 2** depicts a networked environment for operation of a system for providing a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0016] **FIG. 3** depicts a flow chart illustrating an exemplary method for providing a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0017] **FIG. 4** depicts an exemplary web page containing a document comprising legitimacy rating information according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0018] **FIGS. 5A and 5B** depict an exemplary document for which legitimacy rating information may be provided according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0019] **FIG. 6** depicts an exemplary detailed view of a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0020] The embodiments described herein solve many problems with existing systems and methods. One problem is the lack of reliable information about content providers (also called content sources) who provide content that is published on network sites. Content providers such as advertisers may potentially harm users by selling them defective products or stealing their credit card information. Thus, users need easily accessible and reliable information about the legitimacy of such content providers.

[0021] According to various embodiments of the invention, a publisher such as a server or other content provider may provide legitimacy information about various other content sources, such as information about each content source's history and transaction volume with the publisher. In some embodiments, the publisher may provide this information whenever it publishes documents such as advertisements associated with the content source. For instance, a publisher of Internet search results and related advertisements may include legitimacy information about each advertiser at the bottom of each advertisement.

[0022] In this way, users may easily acquire unbiased factual information about content sources such as advertising businesses. This information may better equip users to decide whether to engage in relationships with content providers, such as by purchasing their products or relying on their published information. For instance, a user viewing advertisements of a variety of companies advertising automobile parts may choose to purchase from the company who has had the longest relationship with the publisher.

[0023] Another advantage of various embodiments described herein is that, to the extent that legitimacy information affects user behavior such as purchasing decisions, advertisers and other content sources will have an extra incentive to achieve and maintain a positive legitimacy rating. For instance, advertisers may seek to have a long relationship with the publisher (and accordingly achieve a stronger history rating) and also increase their transaction volume, e.g., by bidding higher amounts for Internet search keywords to increase the likelihood that their advertisements are displayed and selected by users. In some embodiments, the publisher may enable users to rate their experiences with content providers and publish the user rating information as part of the legitimacy information.

[0024] As used herein, the term "document" and "electronic document" may encompass one or more advertisements, content pages (e.g., web pages), search results, emails, applications, IM messages, audio content or files, video content or files, other files, other data or applications that may reside on one or several (e.g., a network) of computer systems, or other definable concepts or content. Although an advertisement is often used herein as an exemplary document, it should be understood that any document may be used.

[0025] This application is related to the technology described in U.S. application Ser. No. 10/841,834 entitled "System and Method for Rating Documents Comprising an Image," the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[0026] Overview and System Illustration

[0027] **FIGS. 1 and 2** depict an exemplary system **100** for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source **12** according to an embodiment of the invention. The system may comprise: a server **2**, one or more providers **8**, one or more content sources **12**, one or more end users **10**, and one or more databases **50** operatively connected to server **2**.

[0028] Content sources **12**, providers **8**, and end users **10** may communicate with one or more servers **2** via electronic communication, including Internet communications. Content sources **12**, providers **8**, and end users **10** may include or have access to one or more servers **2** for providing functionality associated with electronic documents. Information that may be communicated between and among server **2**, providers **8**, content sources **12**, and end users **10** may include any one or more of the following: document information, content rating information, volume information, history information, provider information, or other information.

[0029] System **100** may enable server **2** to request, receive, and/or process rating information associated with a content source **12** and/or a document (e.g., a document associated with a content source **12**).

[0030] As shown in **FIG. 1**, one or more content sources **12** may provide content such as one or more documents to a server **2**. Server **2** may also create documents, e.g., based on content received from content sources **12**.

[0031] Providers **8** may provide documents to one or more end users **10***a*-**10***n*. Providers **8** may comprise a content provider, search engine or other entity that makes available information, services, and/or products over an electronic network, such as the Internet. A provider **8** may include one or more of the following, for example: an advertisement listings provider, a content provider, a website host, a server **2**, any other entity that provides electronic documents to users or other entities, or any other provider of content. A provider **8** may also be a content source **12**.

[0032] Documents received by (or created by) server **2** may be passed to and from users **10** directly or indirectly via providers **8**. For instance, a provider **8** and/or end user **10** may request a document. The requestor may transmit a signal to a server **2** that requests a document such as a web page, and that signal may be interpreted as a request for a document. For instance, user **10** may submit a search query comprising a keyword. The server **2** may pass one or more documents to the user **10** (or provider **8**) based on the keyword or other criteria. The user **10** may receive the document and then provide rating information about the content source **12** associated with the document (and/or the document itself) to the server **2**.

[0033] Content sources **12** may comprise any source of content, such as a server, provider, document listings provider, or any other entity that causes a document to be created or passed to another party. For instance, while one party may provide a document such as an advertisement to server **2** for distribution to users **10** under instructions from (or as a direct result of a relationship with) a second party, both the first and second parties may be considered content sources for purposes of various embodiments. In some embodiments, content source **12** may comprise an advertisement listings provider.

[0034] It should be understood that the following entities may be distinct entities: the entity that creates an advertisement (or other document); the entity that sends the created advertisement to the server **2**; the entity that directs the server **2** to provide the advertisement to users; the entity that controls the company or website linked to or featured in the advertisement (or that is otherwise the subject of the ad or the entity controlling the subject of the ad); the entity that sells the advertised product to users; the entity that receives money from users for an advertised product; and the entity that pays the server **2** (or an entity associated with the server **2**) for providing the advertisement to users. However, it should be appreciated that for purposes of various embodiments, these various entities may be collectively considered a single content source.

[0035] Content source **12** may provide documents to server **2**, or server **2** may "pull" or retrieve documents or other content from content sources **12**. For instance, the content source **12** may provide an advertisement to server **2** so that the server **2** may then provide the advertisement to one or more content providers **8** that may provide the ad to one or more end users **10**. (It should be appreciated that in some embodiments, server **2** or content source **12** may provide the ad directly to the end user **10**.) Content sources **12** may include any content creator or content provider **8**, such as an advertisement listings provider or server **2**.

[0036] The server **2** may comprise any server, hub, central processor, provider, search engine, or other entity in a network. Although a single server **2** is depicted, it should be appreciated that multiple servers **2** may be provided and that such multiple servers may share data and operational tasks to achieve efficiency and operation of the functions described herein.

[0037] The server **2** may comprise one or more modules **20**-**36** to process content, legitimacy information (e.g., ratings), and other data.

[0038] Volume module **20** may receive and process volume information, including any information related to the number or amount of documents (or other content) associated with a content source **12**, such as an advertisement listings provider. Volume module **20** may receive and process information about one or more of the following, for example: the publication of a document associated with a content source **12**, e.g., by server **2**; a user **10** selection of a document associated with a content source **12**, such as a document published by server **2**; a user **10** purchase from a content source **12** (including an entity associated with the content source **12**), such as a purchase made after selecting a document associated with the content source **12**; the number of documents received at (or created by) the server **2** that are associated with a particular content source **12**. For instance, volume module **20** may use a counting or aggregating function to monitor the number of times a particular advertisement is selected in order to determine the total number of times it is selected.

[0039] Volume module **20** may communicate with providers **8**, users **10**, and content sources **12** to acquire such information. Volume information may be stored in volume database **58**.

[0040] History module **22** may receive and process history information. History information may comprise any infor-

mation related to one or more of the following, for example: the length of time a content source **12** has provided content to the server **2** (or otherwise provided content); the length of time the server **2** has distributed content related to the content source **12**; the length of time a content source **12** has been in business; the length of time a content source **12** has been associated with a particular country or geographical location; the amount of time that passed before a particular document (or type of document) associated with a content source **12** was published or selected by users a certain number of times (e.g., the time it took for the first **1000** clicks on an advertiser's ad or ad campaign); or other historical information related to the content source **12** and its associated documents. History module **22** may communicate with providers **8**, content sources **12**, users **10**, and third party entities to acquire such information.

[**0041**] Feedback module **24** may receive and process user feedback information, e.g., information received via a feedback link in a document such as an advertisement (e.g., as shown in **FIGS. 5A and 5B**).

[**0042**] User rating module **26** may receive and process content ratings received from end users and other evaluators. User ratings and user rating requests may be communicated via traditional mail, email, or other methods. For instance, a document associated with a content source **12** may include a feedback link for providing a user rating. The feedback link may link the user to a feedback document that requests evaluation of specific features of the document or its associated content source **12**, such as the quality of the user's experience of the content source **12**, the truthfulness and reliability of the content source **12**, the appropriateness of content of the content source **12**, the dollar amount the user **10** has spent on products provided by the content source **12**, the length of time the user **10** has known about or had a relationship with the content source **12**, and other criteria. The end user **10** or other evaluator of content sources may then pass the user rating information to the server **2**, e.g., by completing a feedback document hosted on the server **2** site. The user rating module **26** may then electronically process the rating information.

[**0043**] The server **2** may also use other methods to request a user **10** to provide information about an advertiser (or other content source **12**) associated with a particular document such as an advertisement.

[**0044**] Source comparison module **28** may process content source **12** information in order to associate one or more content sources **12** with one or more other content sources **12**. Associations may be based on similarities between and among the content sources **12**.

[**0045**] For instance, for content sources **12** that are advertisers who bid on specific keywords wherein the highest bidder will have their ads displayed in a highest position on a search result page when those keywords are submitted to an Internet search engine, source comparison module **28** may associate together the content sources **12** that bid on the same keywords or keywords that are related (e.g., closely related) in semantic space. In other words, source comparison module **28** may associate together all the advertisers **12** who bid on the phrase "cellular phone," and it may also include in such association all the advertisers who bid on the words "mobile phone,""wireless," and "wireless handset".

[**0046**] Source comparison module **28** may also determine a degree of association between a plurality of content sources **12**. For instance, two advertisers who bid on the exact phrase "cellular phone" may have a correlation factor of 1.0, while these advertisers may have a correlation factor of 0.85 to those advertisers who bid only on "wireless handset," a correlation factor of 0.95 to those who bid on both "cellular phone" and "wireless," and a correlation factor of 0.5 to those advertisers who bid on "wireless" and "phone antenna." Thus, the degree of association (or correlation factor or other metric) may be based on the degree of association between keywords (from keyword bids) in semantic space.

[**0047**] The correlation metric may also be based on an advertiser's actual bid (or relative bid) on a keyword. For instance, advertisers who bid $0.50 on the keyword "wireless" may have an increased correlation factor. In some embodiments, advertisers who each bid on several different keywords may have a higher degree of association to the extent that their highest bids were for the same or similar words (and/or their next highest bids were for similar words, and/or the third highest keyword bids, etc.).

[**0048**] It should be appreciated that a single content source **12** such as an advertiser may effectively have several different ratings and correlations. In some embodiments, an advertiser **12** or other content source **12** may bid on keywords, wherein the ad will be selected for display to a user on a search result page based on the amount of their bid and the degree of association between their keyword and the user's search query. An advertiser with advertisements for a variety of completely different products (each having different concept or keyword monetary value bids) may have separate ratings for each set of keyword bids. Thus, in some embodiments, a single content source **12** may be effectively treated as several different content sources **12**, each with separate ratings. For instance, the volume ratings for each distinct "entity" of the single content source **12** may be completely different, and each "entity" may be associated with a different set of other content sources **12**. However, it should be noted that some of the history information for the various "entities" of a single content source **12** may be the same, since some time measurements may be based on the length of time the server **2** has had a relationship with the content source **12** (which may be considered the same (or different) for all distinct "entities").

[**0049**] Other factors that may be taken into consideration in determining an association between different content sources **12** include, for example, one or more of the following factors in regard to each content source **12**: geography (e.g., location of headquarters of an advertiser); industry (e.g., the industry of an advertiser as specified by the advertiser); language (e.g., English-language content may be distinguished from Spanish-language content); number of advertisements; history information (e.g., length of time an advertiser has been in business or length of time the server **2** has published the content provider's content); volume information (e.g., the number of ads published by the server **2**); type of content provided by the content source (e.g., image ad providers may be treated differently from text ad providers and pop-up providers); content (e.g., the words and images comprised in an advertisement, such that content providers **12** with text ads having similar language or image ads having similar language may have an increased correlation); and other factors.

[0050] Correlation factors or other metrics based on a degree of association between content sources may be used by the rating aggregation module **30** to compare a particular content source **12** to "related" content sources.

[0051] Rating aggregation module **30** may aggregate or otherwise process rating information for one or more content sources **12** and determine aggregate volume, history, and user ratings for each content source **12**.

[0052] It should be appreciated that ratings may be based on absolute ratings as well as normalized ratings. For instance, while a highest score in a particular category such as transaction volume may be $750,271, this amount may be normalized as 100%, 10, or 1.0 (among other normalizations). It should also be appreciated that aggregate ratings may use means, modes, medians, standard deviations, and other statistical comparison tools and measurements.

[0053] An aggregate rating for a particular content source **12** may be based on rating information for the particular content source **12** as well as ratings of other content sources **12** related to the particular content source **12** (e.g., content sources determined to be related by the source comparison module **28**). For instance, a content source rating may be based on the average content source rating of related content sources. Any comparisons to related content sources may be based on a weighted average calculated based on a degree of correlation between the content source **12***a* in question and each of the comparison content sources **12***b-n*.

[0054] The rating aggregation module **30** may determine an aggregate rating for a content provider by processing ratings created by rating modules **24**, **26**, **30**. The rating aggregation module **30** may use any aggregation algorithm or methodology to determine aggregate ratings. For instance, the aggregation may be a total score, a mean, a mode, a median, a step function, a 75^{th} (or other) percentile score, or any other measure that relates to the data considered. The algorithm may consider one or more of the following, for example: volume information, history information, user ratings, document performance data (such as click through rate and frequency of display), and other information relevant to the end users (or other evaluators of content or content providers), document, document content, or aggregation.

[0055] An aggregate rating may comprise one or more distinct numerical scores (e.g., for different subject areas like volume and history). Ratings may also comprise one or more binary scores (such as yes/no or flag/no-flag). The numerical scores may comprise one or more measures of a total rating in a particular area, and the numerical scores may also indicate other information about the various ratings aggregated. For instance, a score may comprise a mean in addition to a standard deviation of the mean. The aggregate rating may also comprise (or be computed using) a multidimensional vector.

[0056] Content module **32** may receive and process content received from content sources **12**. Content module **32** may also create documents based on content received from content sources **12**. For instance, content module may receive ads from advertisers and/or create ads based on content received from advertisers.

[0057] Content module **32** may store such received and/or created documents and other content in content database **52**. The ads or other documents received or created by content module **32** may be passed to providers **8** and end users **10**.

[0058] Document selection module **34** may select one or more documents and pass them to providers **8** and/or end users **10**. Document selection module **34** may select and provide such documents in response to a request from a provider **8**, end user **10**, or other entity. For instance, document selection module **34** may select a document in response to a keyword search query from a user **10**.

[0059] Document selection module **34** may select a document from the content database **52**. For instance, document selection module **34** may select a document provided by a content source **12** or created by server **2**, and/or it may select (and/or create) one or more search results, wherein each search result is associated with a content source such as a website. The document may be selected based on one or more of the following, for example: its relevance to a criteria, such as a keyword provided in a search query; an amount of a bid on one or more keywords; user rating information; legitimacy information; or other criteria. For instance, document selection module **34** may receive a search query from a user **10** and provide a plurality of search result and advertisement documents on a website document, which it may then pass to the user **10**.

[0060] Document selection module **34** may pass documents created or selected by the module **34** to users **10** and providers **8**. Document selection module **34** may also pass legitimacy information associated with the document (and/or associated with a content provider associated with the document), such as information created by volume module **20**, history module **22**, user rating module **26**, and rating aggregation module **30**. The legitimacy information may be passed together with the document. For instance, the legitimacy information may added to the document (e.g., at the bottom of the document or as a visible attachment to the document). The legitimacy information may also be embedded in code associated with the document, such that the information is not displayed with the document but may be accessed by the user via alternate means, such as by right-clicking on the document (or an icon associated with the document) or mousing over the document (or otherwise selecting the document or a link or other entity associated with the document).

[0061] It should be understood that for search result documents, document selection module **34** may identify legitimacy information based on a link associated with the search result document. For instance, if www.movies.com is a search result for the query "best movies of 2004," document selection module **34** may access database **50** to determine if any legitimacy information exists for www.movies.com. If it does, it may provide the legitimacy information to a user as described herein.

[0062] Other module(s) **36** may accomplish other functions related to providing volume and history information.

[0063] A database **50** coupled to the server **2** may include one or more databases **50-66**. The server **2** and its modules **20-36** may store and access information stored in the database(s) **50-66**. Databases **52-66** may comprise portions of a single database **50**. It should be appreciated that the databases **50-66** may or may not be physically distinct.

[0064] Content database **52** may store content such as documents and other content received from content sources

12 and documents created by server 2. The content may be provided to users 10 and providers 8 by server 2, e.g., when a user 10 requests a document by submitting a keyword at a search engine. The documents may be associated with their originating content sources 12, e.g., the content source 12 that provided the document or provided instructions or content giving rise to the document. For instance, a content source 12 may provide instructions to the server 2 to create a document. A document created by the server 2 in response to these instructions may be associated with that content source 12.

[0065] Source comparison database 54 may store information about one or more content sources 12, including content source 12 correlation and association information. For instance, content source database may store information indicating which content sources 12*b-n* are similar to a particular content source 12*a*, and the degree of similarity between and among the content sources 12*a-n* along a plurality of metrics. In particular, source comparison database 54 may store information used or created by source comparison module 28.

[0066] Volume database 56 may store volume information for one or more content sources 12, including volume information received from the volume module 20. Volume rating information may comprise any transaction or other information that may be used by volume rating module 24 in determining volume rating information. For instance, volume database 56 may store numerical information relating to the number of occurrences of a particular event, such as: a user selection of a content source's 12 document; an accumulated amount of money such as the amount paid by a particular content source to the server 2 (or an entity associated with the server 2) over the course of a year or the lifetime of their relationship; or another amount.

[0067] History database 58 may store history information for one or more content sources 12, including history information received from the history module 22. History information may comprise any information that may be used to determine a time or length of time, or other information that may be used by the history rating module 26 in determining history rating information. For instance, the first time a user 10 selects a document provided by a particular content source 12, information about this event may be recorded in the history database 58. This information may include: the identity of the content source; the identity of the selected document; keywords associated with the document (including keyword bids by the content source as well as keywords entered by the user for a search query, if any); the date and time of the selection; and other information concerning the selection. Similar information may be stored for other events.

[0068] User rating database 60 may store user rating information, such as ratings concerning the quality of a content source 12 and other rating information used or created by user rating module 26 and rating aggregation module 30. For instance, when a rating of a content source 12 is received by server 2, the content of the rating may be stored here.

[0069] Volume rating database 62 may store volume rating information, including information used and created by volume rating module 24 and rating aggregation module 30.

[0070] History rating database 64 may store history rating information, including information used and created by history rating module 26 and rating aggregation module 30.

[0071] An aggregate rating database 48 may store aggregate ratings. Each aggregate rating may include ratings across a variety of criteria.

[0072] Other database(s) 54 may store other information relating to the providers 8, end users 10, content sources 12, server 2, volume information, history information, ratings, and aggregate ratings, and other content.

[0073] Illustrative System Network Environment

[0074] **FIG. 2** depicts a networked environment for operation of a system for providing a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention. In such an environment, content sources 12 and providers 8 may connect over a network 14, 15 to a server 2 (e.g., using a secure https connection) to provide documents and rating information (e.g., legitimacy rating information) to server 2 and to receive documents and rating request information from server 2. The server 2 may store the document and rating information in a database 50. The server 2 may distribute the documents through various forums or feeds, including direct distribution in print media, providing the documents on one or more web sites affiliated with the server 2 and through providers 8. It should be noted that providers may comprise syndication partners of the server 2 (e.g., connected over network 14 or 15 depending on security desired), content systems (e.g., with associated content databases) and search engine systems operated by the server 2 or provider(s) 8.

[0075] Through these various forums, the documents provided to the providers 8 may be included in pages (or other documents) displayed to end-users 10 (often called an impression).

[0076] Each of server 2, providers 8, and content sources 12 may comprise computerized systems that include one or more of the following systems, for example: a web server 2, a database server 2, proxy server 2, network balancing mechanisms and systems, and various software components that enable the system to operate on the Internet or other network type system. Additionally, networks 14 and 15, although depicted as http networks, may comprise other networks such as private lines, intranets, or any other network. In an exemplary embodiment, the connection between a content source 12 such as an advertisement provider and server 2 (and other connections such as between a provider 8 and server 2) may comprise secure network connections to insure that data is not subject to attack or corruption by any hacker or other third party. In addition, whereas two content sources 12 are depicted, it should be appreciated that one or more content sources 12 may be provided in the network. Similarly, although one database 50 is depicted, it should be appreciated that multiple database 50 may be provided and that such database 50 may be connected to the server 2 via any type of network connection, including a distributed database server 2 architecture.

[0077] Similarly, provider 8*a* may comprise any number of such systems connected to the server 2 via any type of network, including an http or https network. Provider 8 may comprise a system such as server 2 that provides functionality for enabling connection over the Internet or other

network protocols. Providers **8** may comprise any system that distributes content such as advertising to end-users **10**.

[**0078**] End users **10** may comprise any user (such as users connected to the Internet) and may comprise computerized systems that enable that connection through any of various types of networks, including through Internet service providers, cable companies, and any other method of accessing data on the Internet.

[**0079**] Illustrative Process

[**0080**] **FIG. 3** depicts a flow chart illustrating an exemplary method for disclosing a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention. The methods described herein may be implemented by the systems described in **FIGS. 1 and 2**.

[**0081**] In block **300**, content may be received from a content provider. The content may be received from a document provider such as a server. For instance, an advertisement or request to produce an advertisement may be received from an advertiser or advertiser agent. Alternately or in addition, the server **2** may generate one or more documents. For instance, a content source may provide instructions to the server **2** to generate an advertisement for the content source.

[**0082**] In block **310**, one or more documents associated with the content provider may be provided to users. They may be provided to users by a document provider, such as a server. For instance, a plurality of different ads associated with a particular advertiser may be passed to a plurality of different users over time.

[**0083**] In block **320**, transaction and/or history information associated with the content provider may be tracked, e.g., by the server. For instance, the server may monitor how many times it publishes a document that is associated with the content provider. The server may also monitor how many times a user selects a document associated with a content provider such as an advertiser, e.g., by clicking an advertisement of the advertiser. The server may also store the date of any of these occurrences.

[**0084**] For example, the server may determine the number of times a particular advertisement associated with an advertiser has been provided to (or selected by) users. It may also determine the total number of times any advertisements associated with the advertiser have been provided to (or selected by) users. Using cookies, it may also monitor the number of times those users made purchases after selecting a particular document.

[**0085**] In block **330**, one or more user ratings associated with content providers (such as the content provider of **320**) may be received, e.g., by the server. For instance, an end user or other evaluator may elect to provide rating information, e.g., by clicking on a feedback link in the document (e.g., as shown in **FIGS. 5A and 5B**). The feedback link may direct the evaluator to a site (or other location in cyberspace) where the evaluator may provide rating information. For instance, the feedback link may direct the evaluator to a site which prompts the evaluator for various rating information (see, e.g., **FIG. 7**). Rating information may be input at the prompts.

[**0086**] For instance, users may leave feedback about their experience with a particular content provider associated with an advertisement or other document provided by the server. Some users might complain about the content provider. For instance, some users may indicate that a particular advertiser sold a falsely advertised product and/or overcharged them for a purchase. Any variety of consumer complaints are contemplated herein.

[**0087**] Other users may leave feedback indicating positive experiences with a content provider, such as an indication that information provided by the content provider was accurate and reliable, or that an advertiser processed an order quickly and had good customer server.

[**0088**] Feedback information and the methods of obtaining it may comprise any feedback information from users or other parties as discussed in U.S. application Ser. No. 10/841,834 entitled "System and Method for Rating Documents Comprising an Image," the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[**0089**] In block **340**, legitimacy rating information and/or user rating information may be aggregated or otherwise processed, e.g., by the server.

[**0090**] For instance, the server may determine aggregate user and/or legitimacy ratings for a particular advertiser or other content provider. For instance, mean, median, and mode rating values of a particular content provider may be compared to those of other content providers, such as all or a subset of content providers who provide content to the server, to determine an aggregate rating for that content provider.

[**0091**] One relevant subset of content providers for comparison may comprise content providers who have a relevance or similarity to the particular content provider. For instance, an advertiser who advertises cars may be compared to others advertisers who advertise cars or other advertisers in the automobile industry. A content provider who has had a relationship with the server for two years may be compared to other content providers who have had relationships with the server for 2 years (or more or less). An advertiser may be compared to other advertisers who have a similar transaction volume. In other embodiments, advertisers who bid on one or more identical or similar keywords may be compared to one another.

[**0092**] For instance, the server may determine that advertisements from one particular advertiser were selected by users 300 times over the course of a year, while advertisements from other comparable advertisers were selected by users an average of 500 times for each advertiser, wherein the standard deviation is 100 and the maximum is 1500. The server may use statistical methods to determine a metric for measuring each advertiser's selection score on a scale of 1-10, and it may determine that the particular advertiser earned a 2.8 rating.

[**0093**] Using similar methods, the server may determine that an advertiser who has had a relationship with the document provider for 5 years (compared to an average of 8 years for similarly situated advertisers) has history rating of 6.5/10.

[**0094**] Similarly, the server may determine that an advertiser who has paid $75,000 to the server (or an associated entity) for publishing its advertisements to users (compared to $40,000 average) has an advertisement payment rating of 9.1/10.

[0095] In block **350**, a request for a document associated with a concept may be received from a user, e.g., by the publisher. For instance, a user may enter a search query such as "best movies of 2004" at a search engine website such as Google™ to request documents associated with the query.

[0096] In block **360**, one or more documents associated with the concept may be passed to the user. For instance, a list of search results and advertisements may be provided on a search result page (e.g., as shown in **FIG. 4**), wherein each search result and advertisement is related to a search query provided by a user. Each document may be associated with a content source; for instance, a merchant may be associated with each advertisement, and a company may be associated with each website linked in a search result.

[0097] The documents may comprise legitimacy information and user rating information. For instance, the documents may comprise the documents shown in **FIGS. 5A and 5B**. Thus, it should be appreciated that the actions of block **360** (passing document to user) may be combined with the actions of block **380** (passing legitimacy rating to user) if legitimacy information is comprised in the document.

[0098] In block **370**, a request for legitimacy information (or additional legitimacy information) associated with a document (or content provider) may be requested by the user. If the provided document already contains or shows legitimacy information, this action may comprise requesting additional legitimacy information, such as by clicking a link to more legitimacy information. It should be understood that any of a variety of actions may be considered a request for a legitimacy rating. In some embodiments, a user may mouse over or otherwise select a particular document and thereby cause legitimacy information to appear in the document or in another document.

[0099] In block **380**, a legitimacy rating of a document provider (or other content source) may be provided to a user, e.g., by the server. The legitimacy information provided may comprise additional legitimacy information if legitimacy information was already displayed to the user. The legitimacy rating may comprise any legitimacy information described above, such as information relating to the length of time the content provider has provided documents to the server **2** or the number of times users have selected the content source's documents. The legitimacy information may also comprise any user ratings and aggregate ratings as described herein, such as aggregate user ratings, aggregate history rating information, and aggregate volume rating information. The aggregate ratings may also comprise a general approval or disapproval based on that information. Legitimacy information may also comprise user rating information.

[0100] Legitimacy information may be provided automatically or in response to a request from the user (e.g., as indicated in block **370**). For instance, each document may comprise legitimacy rating as part of the document, such as in advertisement **430**. In other embodiments, legitimacy information for a document may be downloaded and displayed on the user's computer in response to the user selecting a link **540** to a legitimacy rating document **600**. In other embodiments, a user selection of the document shown in **FIG. 5A** may cause the server to provide the legitimacy information shown in **FIG. 5B**.

[0101] It should be appreciated that the legitimacy information may be provided to the user's computer before it is displayed to the user. For instance, in some embodiments the legitimacy information may be stored in a temporary Internet file (or cookie, etc.), and then the legitimacy information may be displayed once the user selects the document by mousing over or clicking on it. In some embodiments, the legitimacy information may be a part of the document itself, such as in **410** and **500**B.

[0102] It will be appreciated to those skilled in the art that the acts described above may be performed by hardware, software, or a combination thereof, with or without human intervention, as may be embodied in one or more computing systems such as a server **2** system coupled to entities such as providers and end users. Further, it should be appreciated that not all of the blocks must be accomplished. For instance, in one embodiment, the method may begin at block **340** and end at block **380**. Also, it is not necessary that the action(s) of each block be performed in the order shown in **FIG. 3**. Any order of performance may be considered.

[0103] Illustrative User Interface and Results

[0104] **FIG. 4** shows an exemplary documents **400**, **430**, **440** according to an embodiment of the invention. **FIG. 4** depicts an exemplary web page **400** search result from an Internet search engine comprising a search query **410**, search results **420** (e.g., comprising legitimacy information **420**A), an advertisement **430** comprising legitimacy information **430**A, and other advertisements **440**. The advertisements **430**, **440** may comprise a banner ad, another ad that can be displayed on a web page, or another graphical or text advertisement that can be displayed via electronic means.

[0105] It should be noted that the web page **400** itself may be a document, and the advertisements **430**, **440**, search results **420**, and other content on the page **400** may also be documents for purposes of various embodiments. Although advertisements **430**, **440** and search results **420** are shown in **FIG. 4**, other types of documents may be considered, such as pop-ups, files, programs, and other information. The documents **400**, **430** may have various types of content. For instance, the document may have words, images, sounds, and other information, as well as functions or programs which may dynamically produce words, images, sounds, and other information.

[0106] Here, the keyword search query **410**"best movies of 2004" may return search results **420** as well as advertisements **430**, **440** related to the search query **410**. For instance, server **2** may comprise a search engine that returns search results **420** and advertisements **430**, **440** that are related (e.g., by subject matter) to the search query **410**. The advertisements may be ordered on the right side of the document based on their relevance to the search query as well as a bid on specific keywords. The advertisement **430** may be for the a company called www.StockUpFilms.biz, and the advertisement **430** may be in the top advertisement position because its associated content source (e.g., the company www.StockUpFilms.biz) bid a high amount on the keywords "movies 2004."

[0107] Legitimacy information **430**A may comprise volume and/or history information related to the source of the advertisement (e.g., an entity who created the document, instructed to have the document published, or an entity otherwise associated with the document). For example, legitimacy information **430**A may indicate one or more of

the following, for example: that the advertiser (or other associated content source) has had a relationship with the search engine since Dec. 7, 2002; that this advertisement (or other advertisements from this advertiser) have been selected by users a total of 321 times; and that a total of $2157 of goods have been sold to the users who clicked on the ad.

[0108] Legitimacy information may also be indicated in the document in other ways. For instance, the bottom portion of the document showing the legitimacy information **430**A (or the legitimacy information itself, such as a dollar amount) may be colored gold to indicate that the advertiser is a highly rated "gold" member, while other advertisers may have other associated colors such as bronze or platinum to indicate a lower or higher rating, respectively. Different pieces of legitimacy information may have different associated colors. For instance, a new advertiser with a high user transaction volume may have "bronze" (e.g., relatively weak) history information but and "platinum" (superior) volume information, indicated by colors or labels associated with such information. In other embodiments, a sound file such as a voice clip may provide an audio indication of the legitimacy information, such as by stating "321 user selections" or "www.StockUpFilms.biz is a bronze advertiser."

[0109] Here, the legitimacy information **430**A may also comprise a link for users to provide feedback about the advertisement or advertiser (or document or other content source). Although not shown in **FIG. 4**, the other advertisements **440** may also comprise similar legitimacy information for their respective content sources.

[0110] **FIGS. 5A and 5B** depict exemplary documents **500**A and **500**B for which legitimacy rating information may be provided according to an embodiment of the invention. The documents **500**A and **500**B may comprise a feedback link **510** and advertiser link **550**. Document **500**B may also comprise legitimacy information **520**, **530** and a legitimacy link **540** that links to additional volume and/or history information (e.g., a link to the document shown in **FIG. 6**). The documents **500**A and **500**B may be comprised in a web page, such as in the search result page shown in **FIG. 4**.

[0111] Here, documents **500**A and **500**B are advertisements, although the documents **500**A and **500**B may be any type of document, such as an email, web page, pop-up, graphic, search result, or other document. **FIG. 5A** shows a document **500**A being displayed without explicit legitimacy rating information, and **FIG. 5B** shows the same (or similar) document **500**B showing explicit legitimacy rating information including history information **520** and volume information **530**.

[0112] The document **500**A in **FIG. 5A** may contain embedded volume and history information that is displayed when the document is selected by a user, such as when a user mouses over the document **500**A, right-clicks on the document, or otherwise selects the document.

[0113] The feedback link **510** may enable users to provide feedback information about a document or associated content source, as described elsewhere herein.

[0114] The advertiser link **550** may comprise a link to another document, such as the web page URL of the advertiser (e.g., or content provider or content source). For instance, the advertiser link **550** may comprise an embedded hypertext link, and the embedded link may be associated with the advertiser link **550** displayed in the image of the document **500**A, **500**B. In some embodiments, selecting (e.g., clicking on) the displayed URL or other link **550** while viewing the documents **500**A, **500**B (e.g., in a web browser) may direct the viewer's mechanism for viewing documents (e.g., web browser) to the content associated with the link (e.g., the advertiser's web page).

[0115] The documents **500**A, **500**B may explicitly display the advertiser link **550**. Also, the advertiser link **550** may be embedded in the document (e.g., in the programming of the document) or a portion thereof such that the link **550** is not visible. Here, selecting (e.g., clicking on) the documents **500**A, **500**B may direct a user's document viewing mechanism to the linked document(s). The document **500**A, **500**B may also comprise one or more additional links. For instance, an ad that advertises a plurality of products may comprise a link for each product, wherein selecting (e.g., clicking on) an image, icon, or text in the document **500**A or **500**B relating to a specific product (or other content) may direct a web browser (or other document viewing mechanism) to a page at a merchant's site associated with the specific product (or to another document). It should be appreciated that in such embodiments, the document may display (or enable the display) of separate (or combined) legitimacy information for each separate product or link.

[0116] **FIG. 6** depicts a document **600** comprising an exemplary detailed view of a legitimacy rating according to an embodiment of the invention. Document **600** may be accessed by selecting a link in another document, such as legitimacy link **540** in document **500**B. Document **600** may also be passed to the user in response to a user selecting another document, e.g., by mousing over (or right clicking on or otherwise selecting) document **500**A or **500**B.

[0117] The legitimacy information may comprise volume information, history information, and user rating information, such as aggregate rating information. The legitimacy information may be determined and aggregated by volume module **20**, history module **22**, user rating module **26**, source comparison module **28**, and rating aggregation module **30**.

[0118] As shown in **FIG. 6**, legitimacy information may comprise one or more of the following information concerning an exemplary advertiser and/or advertisement document, for example: a rating of its transaction volume compared to the transaction volume of comparison advertisers (e.g., advertisers in the same industry, advertisers who bid on the same or similar keywords, or other advertisers determined to be similarly situated advertisers); a rating of its transaction volume compared to all advertisers (or all content sources of a particular type); the number of times a user has selected the document; the number of times a user made a purchase from the content source after selecting the document; a ratio of the number of user clicks to user purchases; a rating of this ratio compared to comparison advertisers (or all content sources of a particular type); the amount of the average buyer purchase; the total value of goods purchased from the advertiser as a result of selecting the advertisement; the amount paid by the advertiser to the advertisement distributor who passed the advertisement to users; the date or length of time the document provider first provided the advertisement (or any advertisement from the advertiser) to a user (or the date the advertiser first engaged in a relationship with the

document provider); a rating of this length of time compared to comparison advertisers (or all advertisers); the date (or length of time) when the advertisement (or the advertiser's advertisements generally speaking) were selected a certain number of times; the number of rating users; a user approval score, such as a percentage of rating users who approve of the advertiser (e.g., within a certain period of time); the industry of the advertiser (or other identifying information about the advertiser, such as an identification of the keywords bid); industries for which users have approved the advertiser; geographical areas associated with the advertiser (e.g., locations where the advertisement has been published to users, or the location of the advertiser's headquarters); number or percentage of user complaints; status with the document provider (e.g., whether the content source is approved by the document provider); and/or appropriateness ratings along a variety of criteria.

[0119] It should be understood that the server, processors, and modules described herein may perform their functions (e.g., reading optical information or determining rating information) automatically or via an automated system. As used herein, the term "automatically" refers to an action being performed by any machine-executable process, e.g., a process that does not require human intervention or input.

[0120] The embodiments of the present inventions are not to be limited in scope by the specific embodiments described herein. For example, although many of the embodiments disclosed herein have been described with reference to advertisements, the principles herein are equally applicable to other documents and content. Indeed, various modifications of the embodiments of the present inventions, in addition to those described herein, will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art from the foregoing description and accompanying drawings. Thus, such modifications are intended to fall within the scope of the following appended claims. Further, although some of the embodiments of the present invention have been described herein in the context of a particular implementation in a particular environment for a particular purpose, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that its usefulness is not limited thereto and that the embodiments of the present inventions can be beneficially implemented in any number of environments for any number of purposes. Accordingly, the claims set forth below should be construed in view of the full breath and spirit of the embodiments of the present inventions as disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

receiving a request for a document;

passing an electronic document by a document provider based on the request, wherein the electronic document is associated with a content source; and

providing a legitimacy rating of the content source.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed by the document provider.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the request comprises a request for a document associated with a concept, and wherein the electronic document is selected based on a relevance to the concept.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic document is output on a computer display device of a user, and wherein the legitimacy rating is provided in response to a user action.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic document is output on a computer display device of a user, and wherein the legitimacy rating is provided in response to at least one of the user moving a cursor over at least a portion of the electronic document and the user right-clicking on the document.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the legitimacy rating further comprises a metric based on the number of documents associated with the content source that have been provided by the document provider.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the document is an advertisement, and wherein the content source is an advertiser.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the document is a search result, and wherein the content source is a website that is linked in the search result.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic document comprises a link to a legitimacy rating document, wherein the legitimacy rating document comprises additional legitimacy rating information.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the additional legitimacy rating information comprises a metric corresponding to a dollar amount paid by the content source to the document provider for publishing documents associated with the content source.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the additional legitimacy rating information comprises a metric corresponding to a number of users who have provided negative feedback about the content source.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the additional legitimacy rating information comprises a metric corresponding to a user approval rating of the content source.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the additional legitimacy rating information comprises a metric corresponding to the document provider's approval rating of the content source.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the history rating and the transaction volume rating comprises a metric that is normalized based on at least one of history ratings and transaction volume ratings of a plurality of content sources who provide documents to the document provider.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the history rating and the transaction volume rating comprises a metric that is normalized based on at least one of history ratings and transaction volume ratings of a subset of content sources who provide documents to the document provider, wherein the subset of content sources are selected based on a similarity to the content source.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the legitimacy rating further comprises an aggregate user rating of the document provider.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of providing the legitimacy rating comprises:

causing the legitimacy rating to be displayed to a user in response to a user selecting the electronic document.

19. A system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

an input device for receiving a request for a document;

an output device for:

passing an electronic document by a document provider in response to the request, wherein the electronic document is associated with a content source; and

and providing a legitimacy rating of the content source; and

a processor for determining the legitimacy rating of the content source based on at least one of transaction and history information associated with the content source.

20. A computer-implemented method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

receiving from a user a request for a document associated with a criteria;

selecting an electronic advertisement based on a relevance to the criteria, wherein the electronic advertisement is associated with an advertiser;

passing the electronic advertisement to the user by a document provider in response to the request; and

providing to the user a legitimacy rating of the advertiser, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises at least one of:

a history rating of the advertiser based on the length of time the document provider has published electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser; and

a transaction volume rating of the advertiser based on the number of electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser that are passed to users by the document provider.

21. A system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

an input device for receiving from a user a request for a document associated with a criteria;

a processor for selecting an electronic advertisement based on a relevance to the criteria, wherein the electronic advertisement is associated with an advertiser; and

an output device of a document provider for:

passing the electronic advertisement to the user in response to the request; and

providing to the user a legitimacy rating of the advertiser, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises at least one of:

a history rating of the advertiser based on the length of time the document provider has published electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser; and

a transaction volume rating of the advertiser based on the number of electronic advertisements associated with the advertiser that are passed to users by the document provider.

22. A computer-implemented method for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

receiving from a user a request for a document associated with a concept;

selecting an electronic document associated with a content source based on a relevance to the concept;

determining a legitimacy rating of the content source, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises at least one of:

a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source; and

a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed to users by the document provider; and

passing the electronic document and the legitimacy rating together in a single transmission to the user in response to the request.

23. A system for providing a legitimacy rating of a content source, comprising:

an input device for receiving from a user a request for a document associated with a concept;

a selection processor of a document provider for selecting an electronic document associated with a content source based on a relevance to the concept;

a legitimacy rating processor for determining a legitimacy rating of the content source, wherein the legitimacy rating comprises at least one of:

a history rating of the content source based on the length of time the document provider has published documents associated with the content source; and

a transaction volume rating of the content source based on the number of electronic documents associated with the content source that are passed to users by the document provider; and

an output device for passing the electronic document and the legitimacy rating together in a single transmission to the user in response to the request.

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