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(54) **PROVIDING USEFUL INFORMATION
ASSOCIATED WITH AN ITEM IN A
DOCUMENT**

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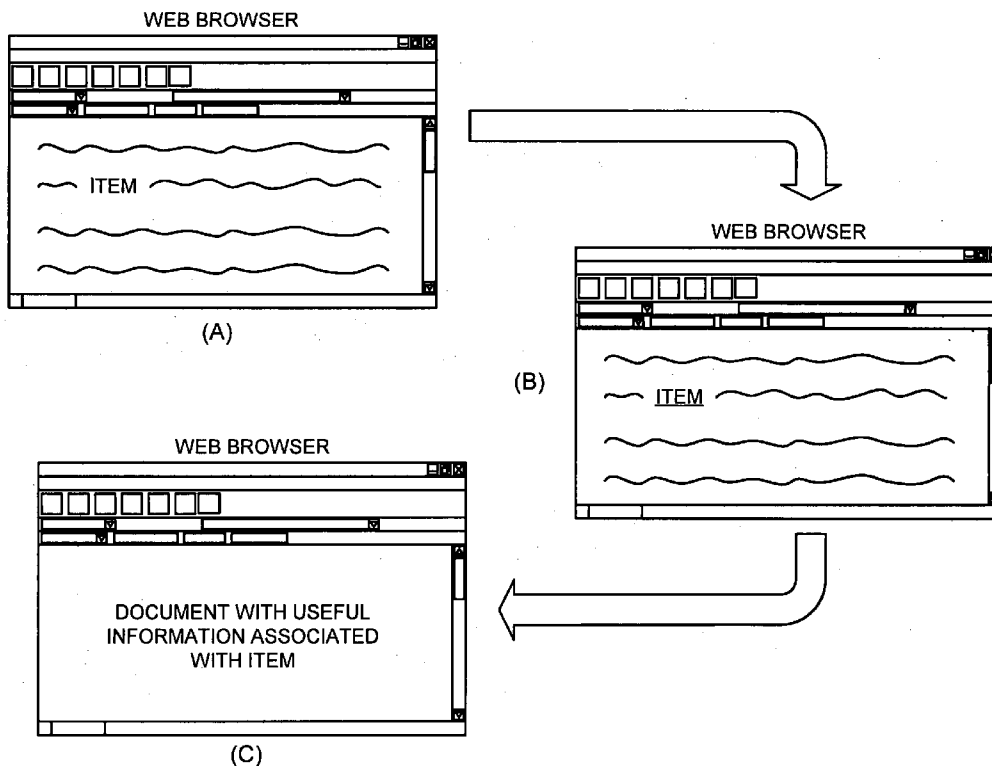
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method includes recognizing an item within a first document based on a pattern associated with the item but not the exact content of the item. The method further includes identifying a link for the item and providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

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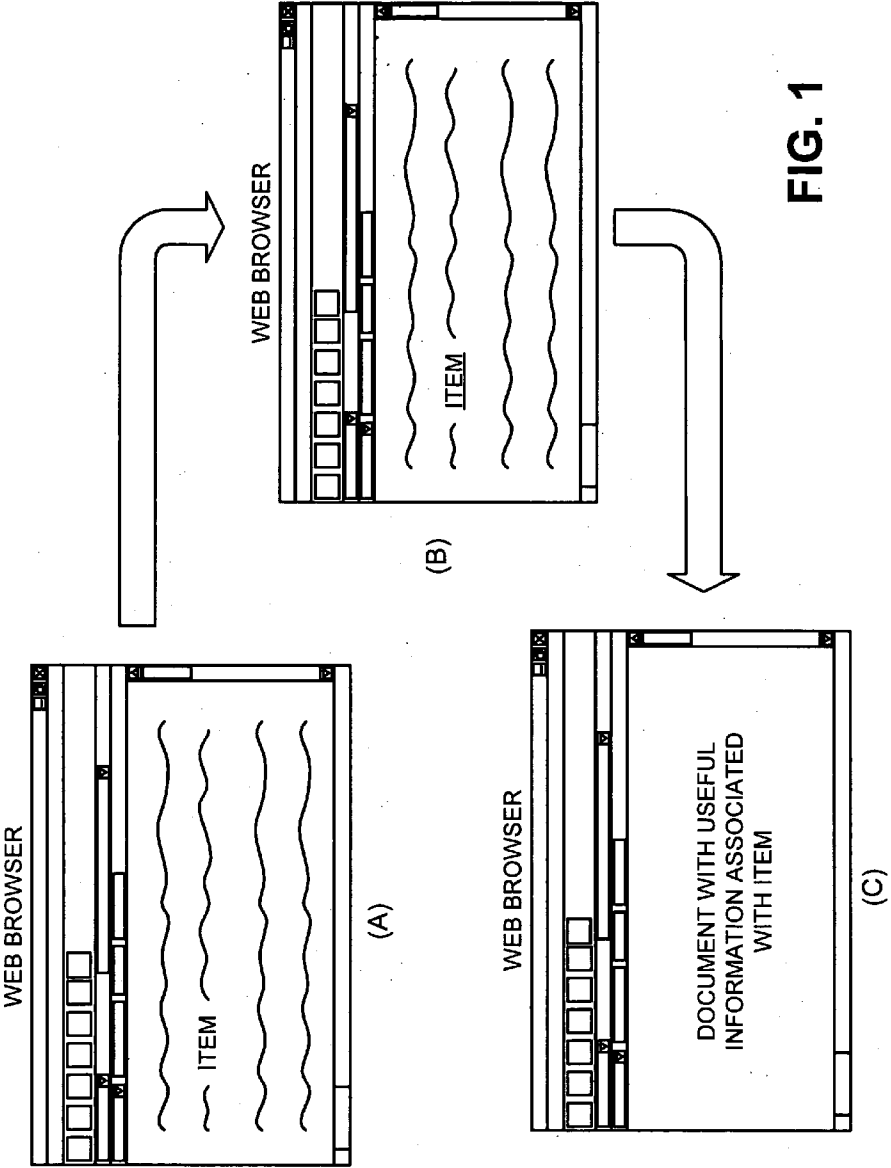


FIG. 1

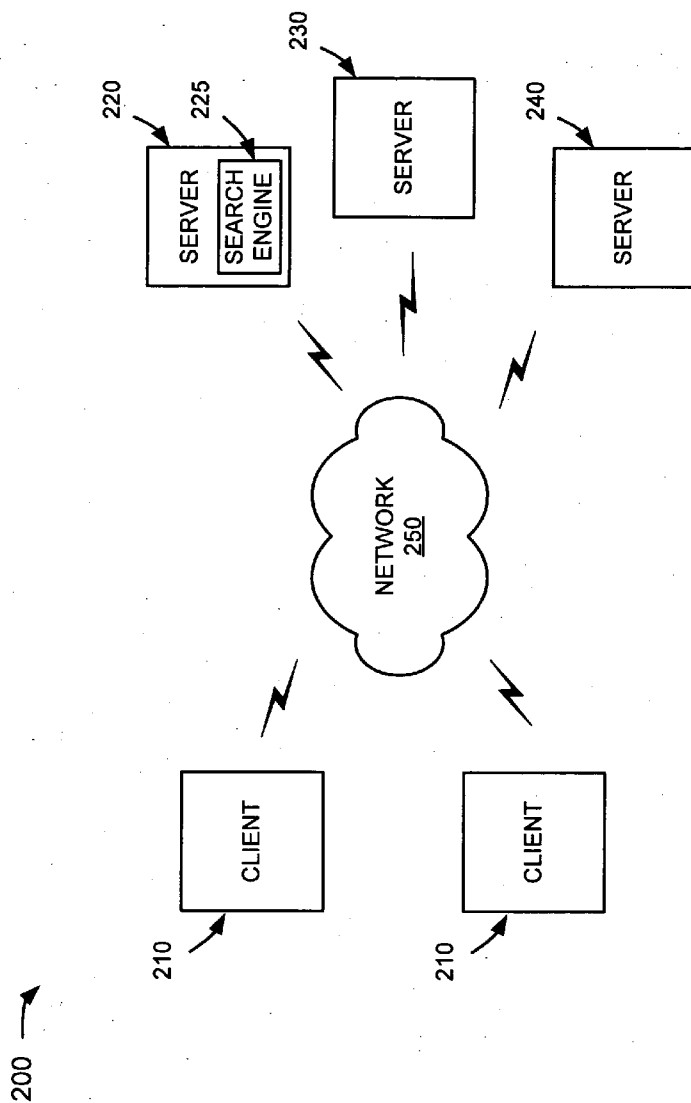


FIG. 2

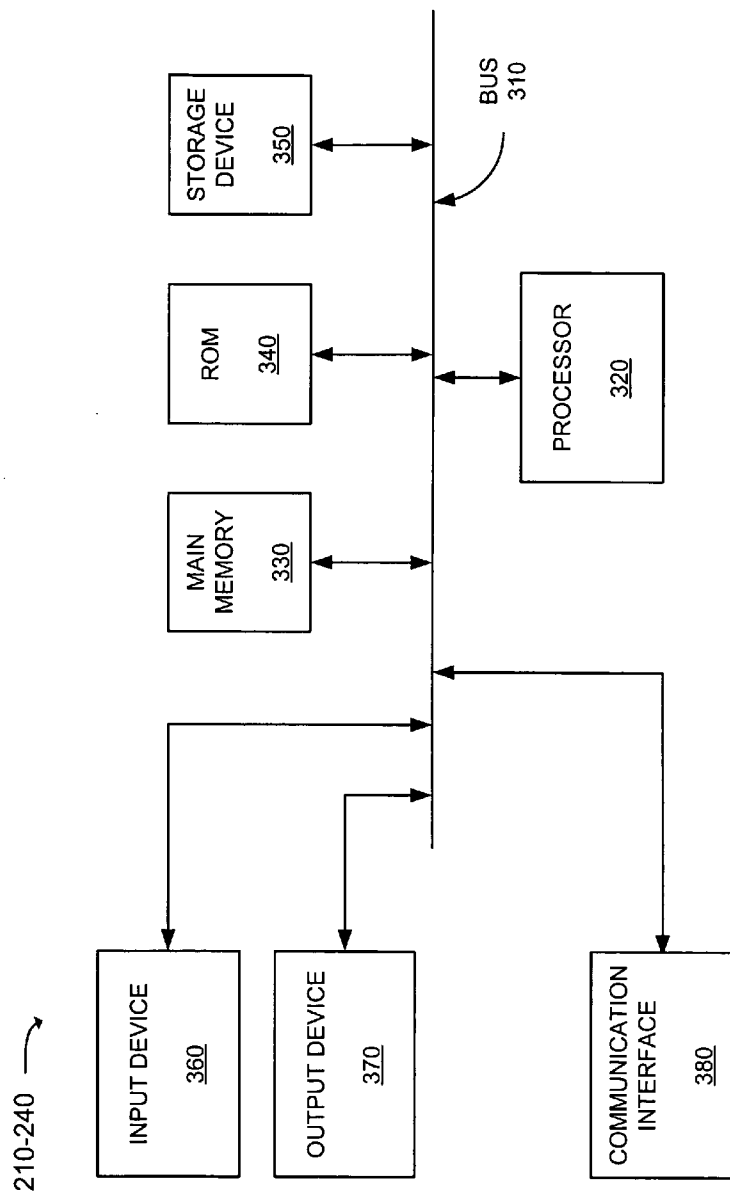


FIG. 3

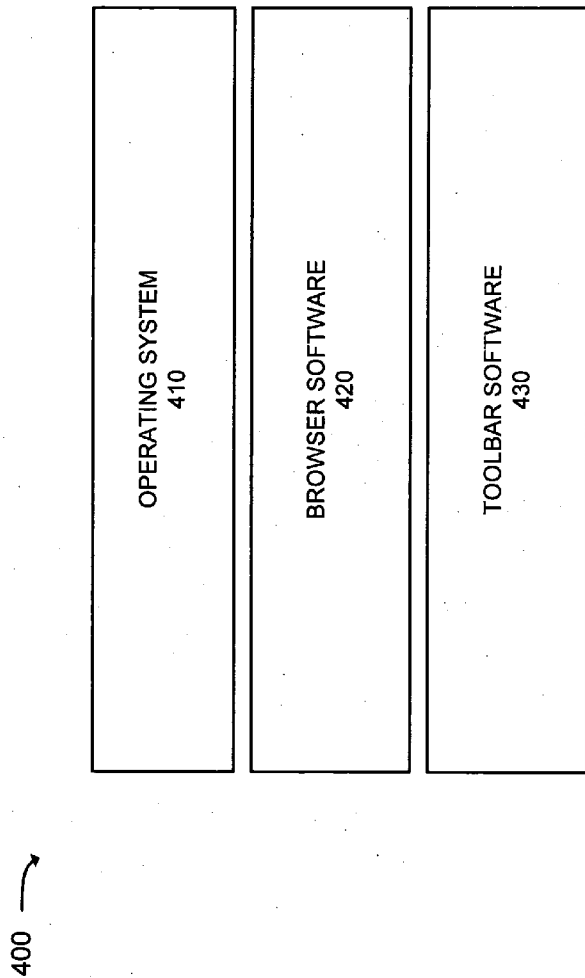


FIG. 4

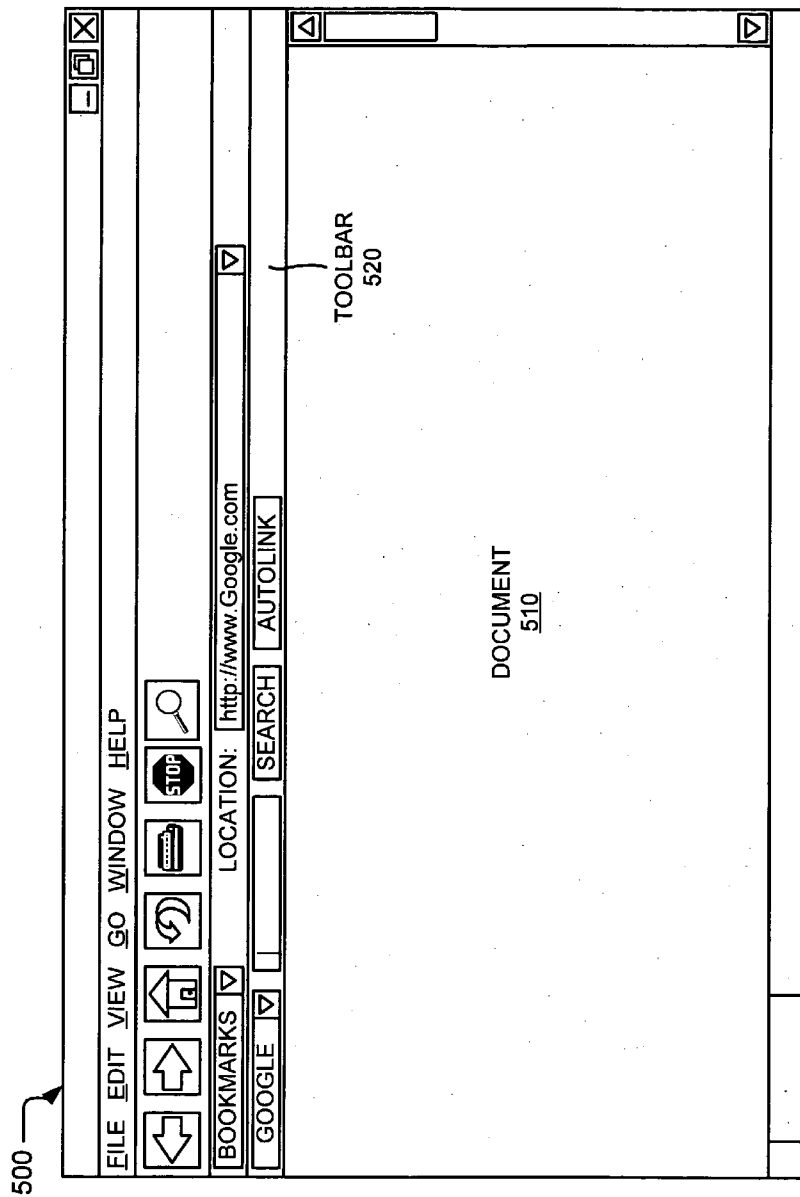


FIG. 5

FIG. 6A

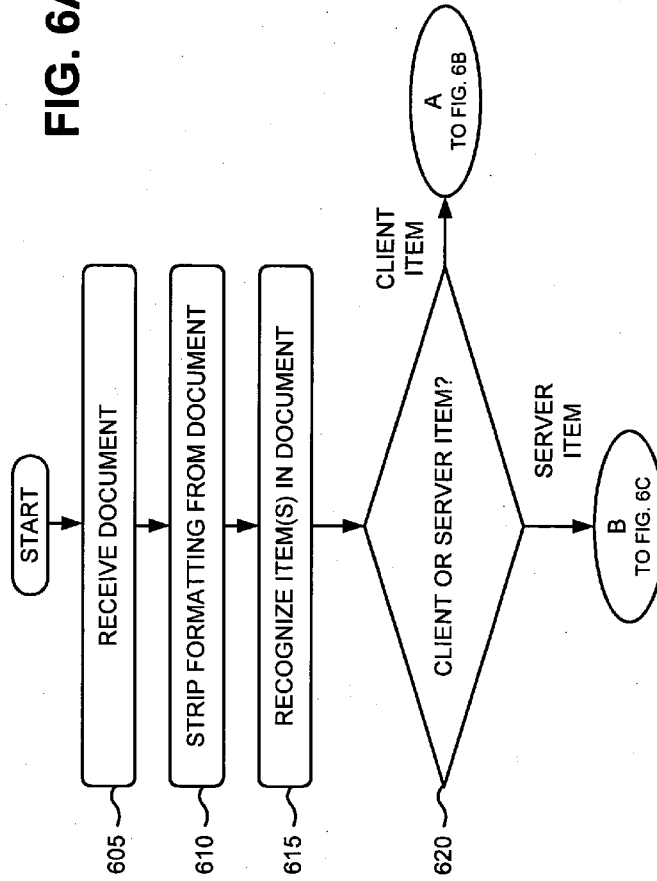


FIG. 6B

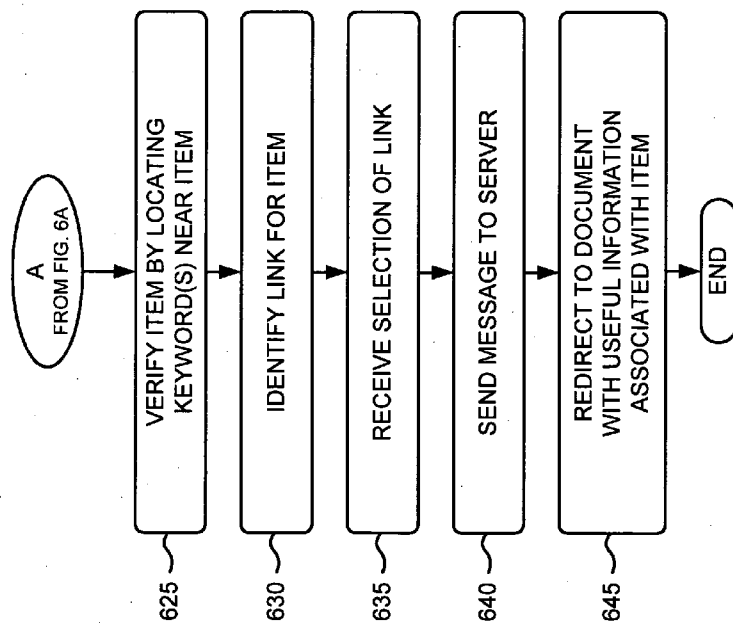
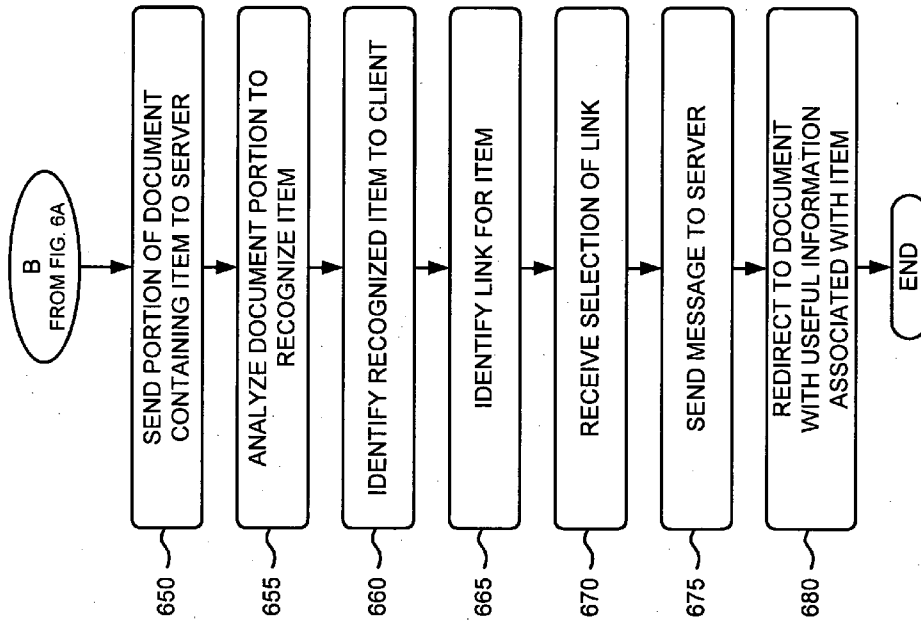


FIG. 6C



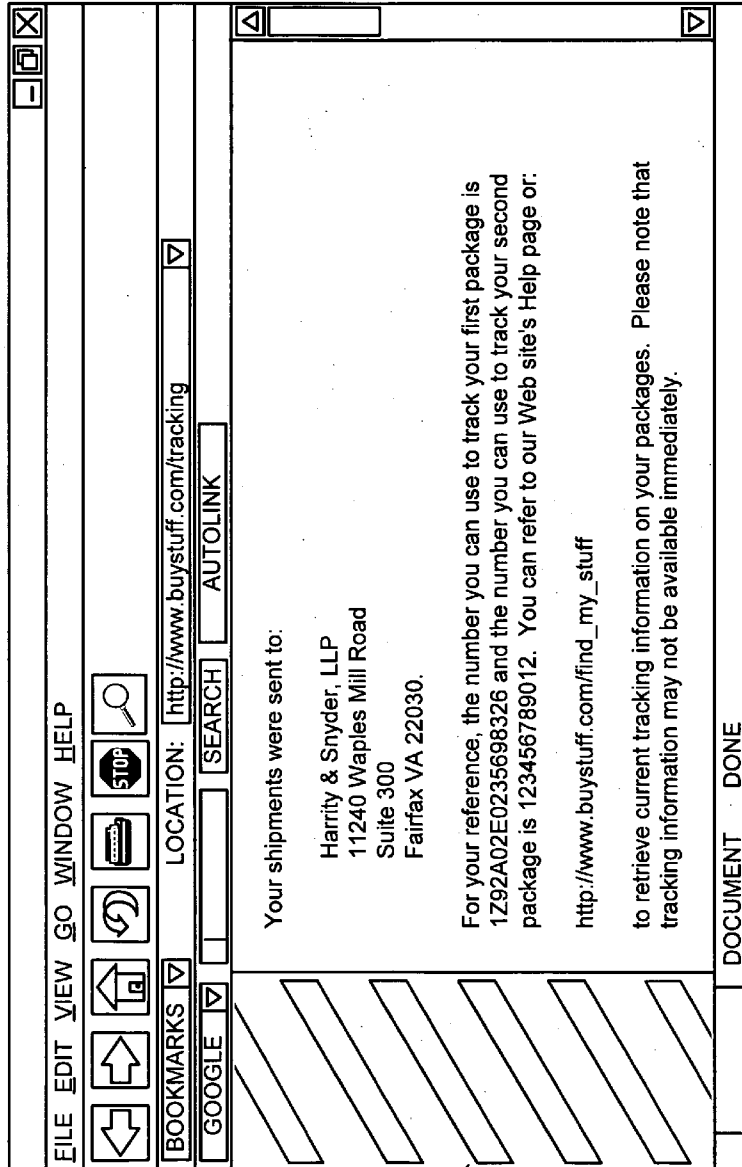


FIG. 7

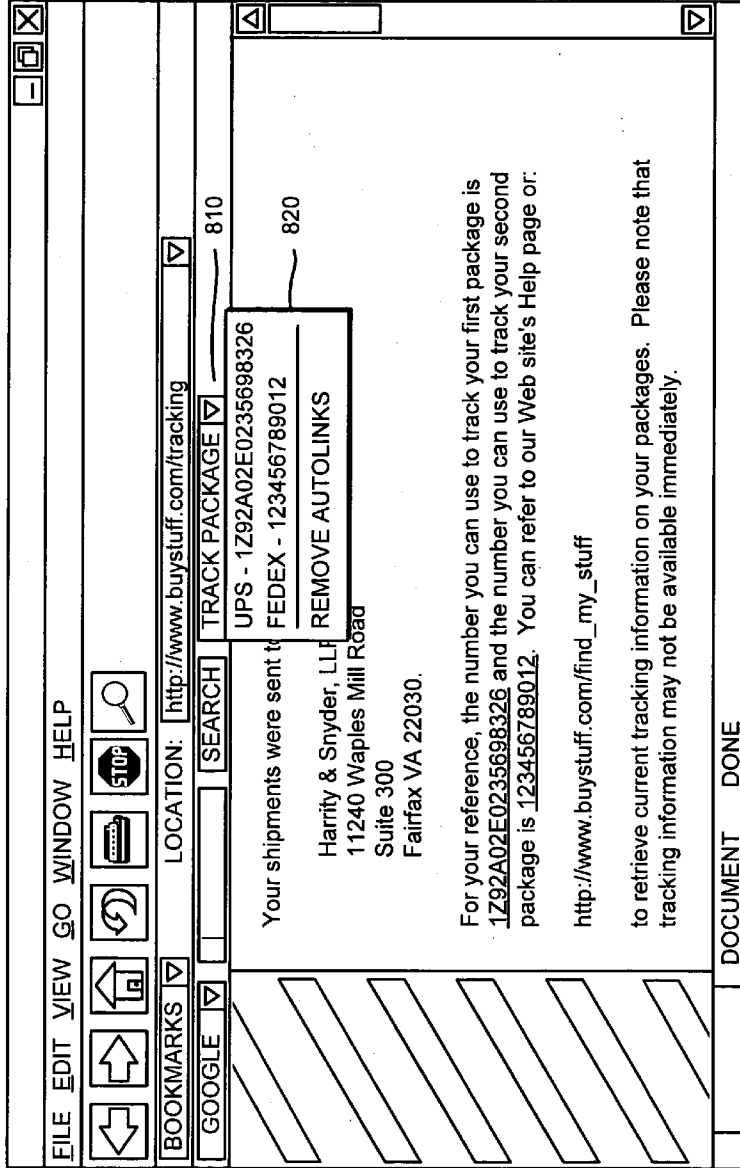


FIG. 8

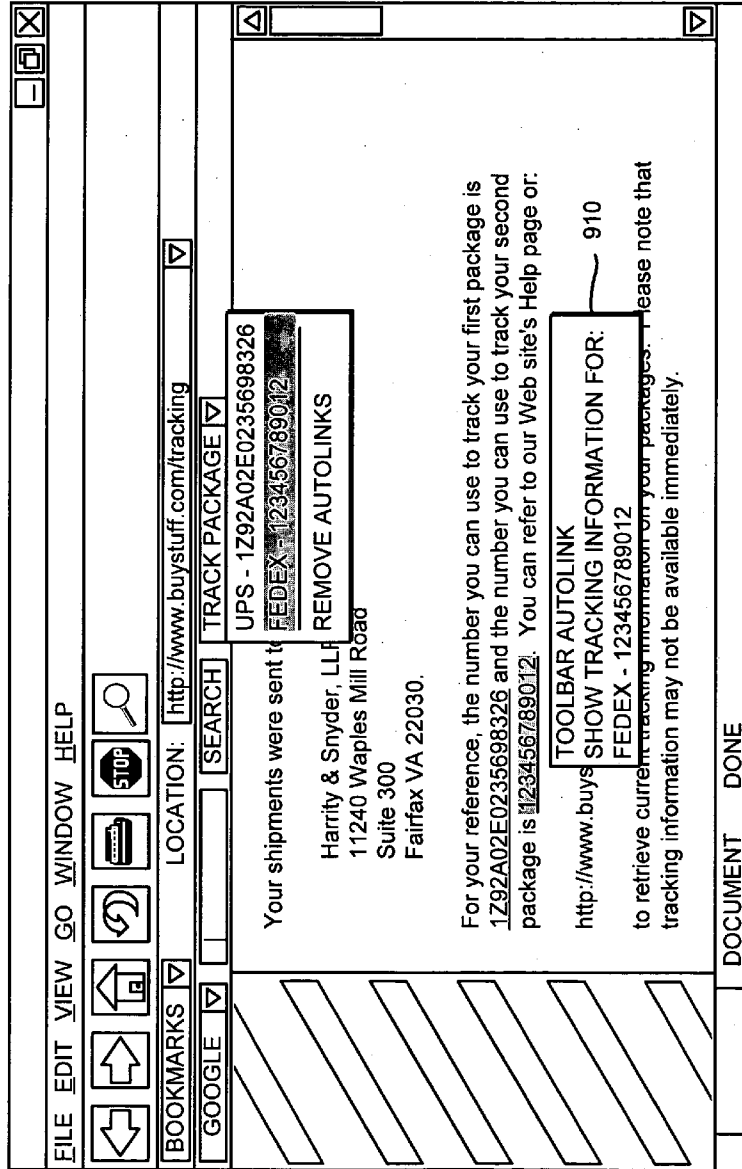


FIG. 9

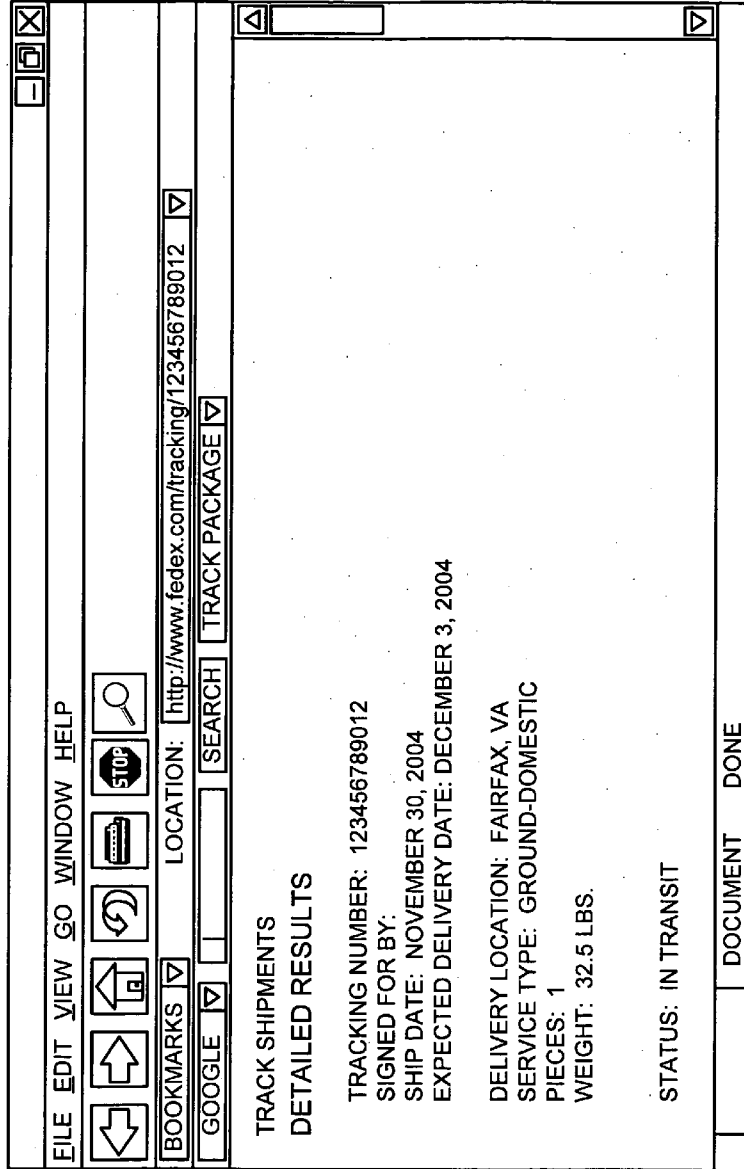


FIG. 10

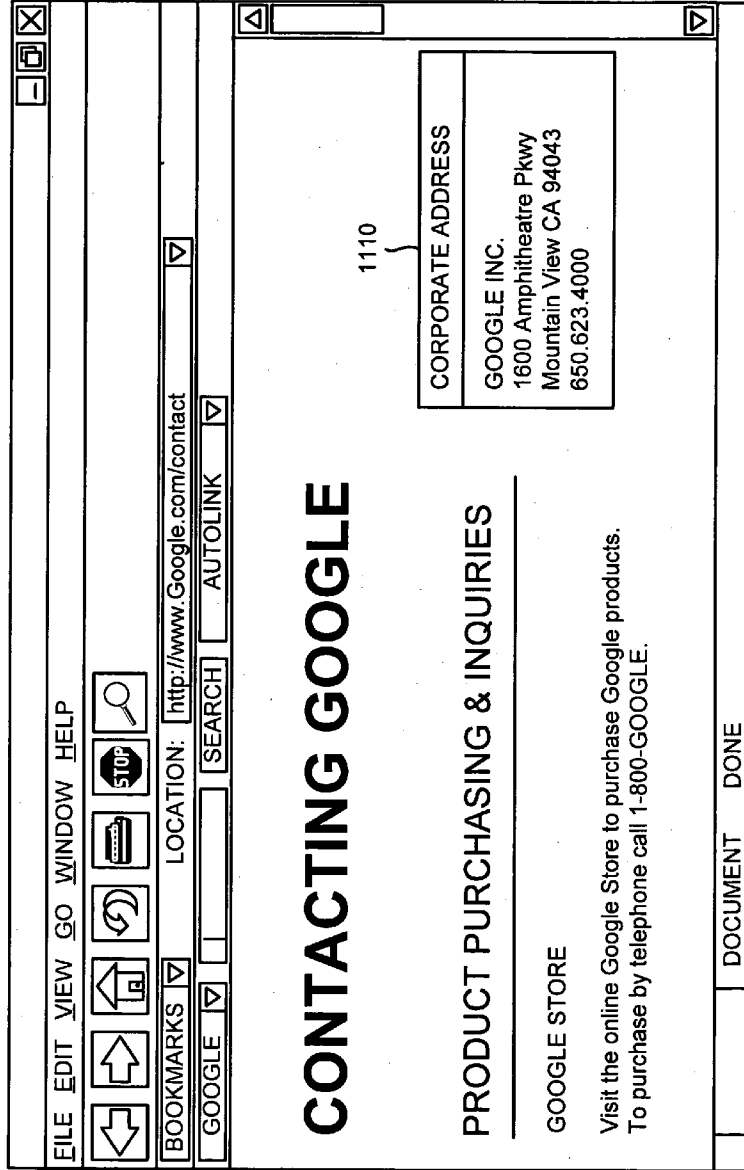


FIG. 11

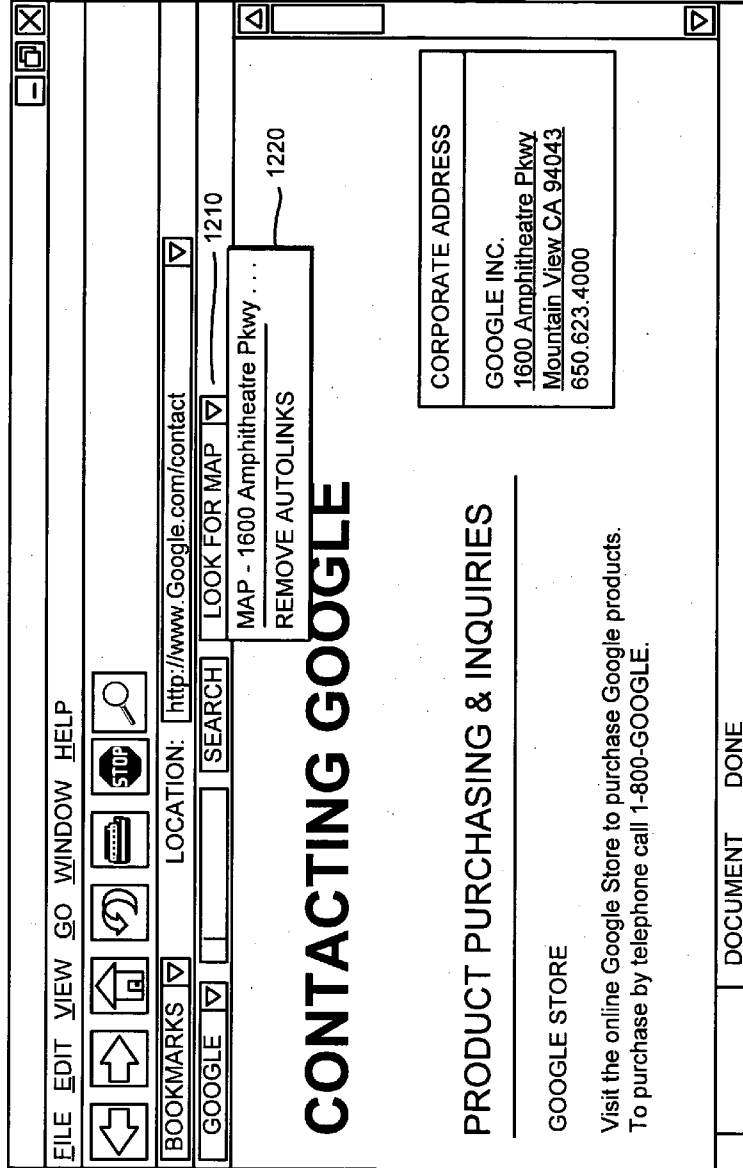


FIG. 12

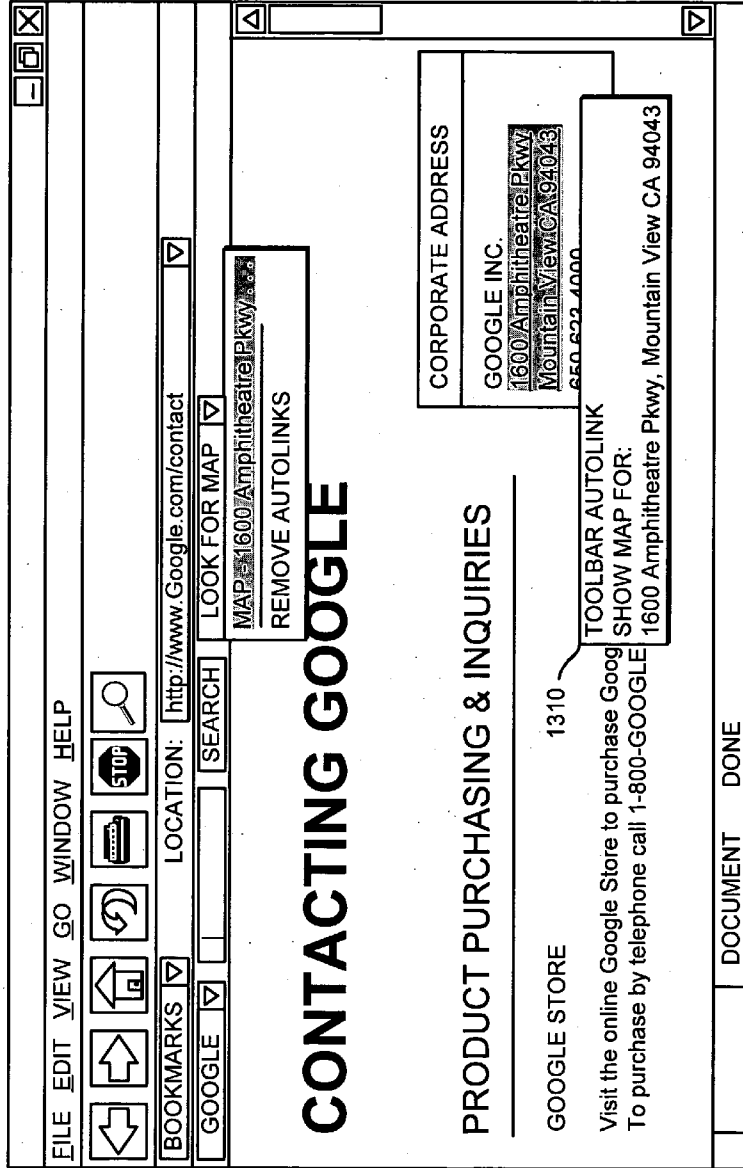


FIG. 13

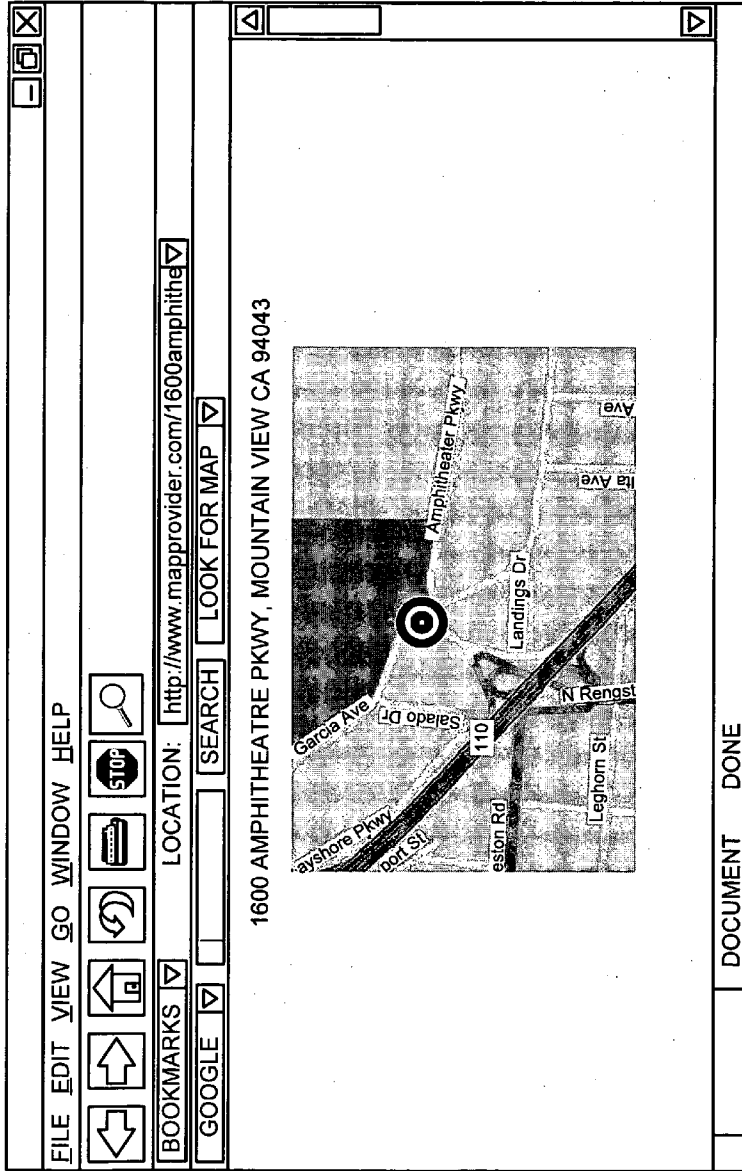


FIG. 14

PROVIDING USEFUL INFORMATION ASSOCIATED WITH AN ITEM IN A DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] Implementations relate generally to information retrieval and, more particularly, to the presentation of useful information associated with items in documents.

[0003] 2. Description of Related Art

[0004] Modern computer networks, and in particular, the Internet, have made large bodies of information widely and easily available. Internet search engines, for instance, index many millions of web documents that are linked to the Internet. A user connected to the Internet can enter a simple search query to quickly locate web documents relevant to the search query.

[0005] Sometimes a user desires more information about an item in a web document that the web document itself does not provide.

SUMMARY

[0006] According to one aspect, a computer-readable medium includes computer-executable instructions, including instructions for obtaining a first document; instructions for recognizing an item within the first document based on a pattern associated with the item but not the exact content of the item; instructions for identifying a link for the item; and instructions for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

[0007] According to another aspect, a method includes recognizing an item in a first document; verifying recognition of the item by locating one or more keywords within a predetermined distance of the item in the first document; identifying a link for the item when recognition of the item has been verified; and providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

[0008] According to a further aspect, a computer-readable medium includes computer-executable instructions, including instructions for recognizing an item in a first document and instructions for transmitting a portion of the first document, where the portion includes less than all of the first document. The computer-readable medium further includes instructions for receiving identification of the item, instructions for identifying a link for the item, and instructions for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate an embodiment of the invention and, together with the description, explain the invention. In the drawings,

[0010] **FIG. 1** is an exemplary diagram illustrating a concept consistent with the principles of the invention;

[0011] **FIG. 2** is an exemplary diagram of a network in which systems and methods consistent with the principles of the invention may be implemented;

[0012] **FIG. 3** is an exemplary diagram of a client or server of **FIG. 2** according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention;

[0013] **FIG. 4** is a diagram of a portion of an exemplary computer-readable medium that may be used by a client according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention;

[0014] **FIG. 5** is an exemplary diagram of a graphical user interface that may include a toolbar according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention;

[0015] **FIGS. 6A-6C** are flowcharts of exemplary processing for presenting useful information relating to an item in a document according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention;

[0016] **FIGS. 7-10** are exemplary diagrams of information that may be presented to a user when an item corresponds to a tacking number; and

[0017] **FIGS. 11-14** are exemplary diagrams of information that may be presented to a user when an item corresponds to a postal address.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] The following detailed description of the invention refers to the accompanying drawings. The same reference numbers in different drawings may identify the same or similar elements. Also, the following detailed description does not limit the invention.

Overview

[0019] Systems and methods consistent with the principles of the invention may provide useful information associated with an item in a document. **FIG. 1** is an exemplary diagram illustrating a concept consistent with the principles of the invention. As shown at (A), a user may access a document, such as a web page, using a web browser. The document includes, among other things, an item of information. As shown at (B), the item may be supplemented or replaced with a link (where the underlining denotes a link). As shown at (C), selection of the link may cause another document to be presented to the user, where this other document may include useful information associated with the item.

[0020] A "document," as the term is used herein, is to be broadly interpreted to include any machine-readable and machine-storable work product. A document may include, for example, an e-mail, a web site, a file, a combination of files, one or more files with embedded links to other files, a news group posting, a blog, a web advertisement, etc. In the context of the Internet, a common document is a web page. Web pages often include textual information and may include embedded information (such as meta information, images, hyperlinks, etc.) and/or embedded instructions (such as Javascript, etc.). A "link," as the term is used herein, is to be broadly interpreted to include any reference to/from a document from/to another document or another part of the same document.

Exemplary Network Configuration

[0021] **FIG. 2** is an exemplary diagram of a network **200** in which systems and methods consistent with the principles of the invention may be implemented. Network **200** may

include multiple clients **210** connected to multiple servers **220-240** via a network **250**. Two clients **210** and three servers **220-240** have been illustrated as connected to network **250** for simplicity. In practice, there may be more or fewer clients and servers. Also, in some instances, a client may perform the functions of a server and a server may perform the functions of a client.

[0022] Clients **210** may include client entities. An entity may be defined as a device, such as a wireless telephone, a personal computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a lap top, or another type of computation or communication device, a thread or process running on one of these devices, and/or an object executable by one of these devices. Servers **220-240** may include server entities that gather, process, search, and/or maintain documents in a manner consistent with the principles of the invention.

[0023] In an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention, server **220** may include a search engine **225** usable by clients **210**. Server **220** may crawl a corpus of documents (e.g., web documents), index the documents, and store information associated with the documents in a repository of documents. Servers **230** and **240** may store or maintain documents that may be crawled or analyzed by server **120**.

[0024] While servers **220-240** are shown as separate entities, it may be possible for one or more of servers **220-240** to perform one or more of the functions of another one or more of servers **220-240**. For example, it may be possible that two or more of servers **220-240** are implemented as a single server. It may also be possible for a single one of servers **220-240** to be implemented as two or more separate (and possibly distributed) devices.

[0025] Network **250** may include a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), a telephone network, such as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), an intranet, the Internet, a memory device, or a combination of networks. Clients **210** and servers **220-240** may connect to network **250** via wired, wireless, and/or optical connections.

Exemplary Client/Server Architecture

[0026] FIG. 3 is an exemplary diagram of a client or server entity (hereinafter called "client/server entity"), which may correspond to one or more of clients **210** and/or servers **220-240**, according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention. The client/server entity may include a bus **310**, a processor **320**, a main memory **330**, a read only memory (ROM) **340**, a storage device **350**, an input device **360**, an output device **370**, and a communication interface **380**. Bus **310** may include a path that permits communication among the elements of the client/server entity.

[0027] Processor **320** may include a conventional processor, microprocessor, or processing logic that interprets and executes instructions. Main memory **330** may include a random access memory (RAM) or another type of dynamic storage device that may store information and instructions for execution by processor **320**. ROM **340** may include a conventional ROM device or another type of static storage device that may store static information and instructions for use by processor **320**. Storage device **350** may include a magnetic and/or optical recording medium and its corresponding drive.

[0028] Input device **360** may include a conventional mechanism that permits an operator to input information to the client/server entity, such as a keyboard, a mouse, a pen, voice recognition and/or biometric mechanisms, etc. Output device **370** may include a conventional mechanism that outputs information to the operator, including a display, a printer, a speaker, etc. Communication interface **380** may include any transceiver-like mechanism that enables the client/server entity to communicate with other devices and/or systems. For example, communication interface **380** may include mechanisms for communicating with another device or system via a network, such as network **250**.

[0029] As will be described in detail below, the client/server entity, consistent with the principles of the invention, may perform certain document processing-related operations. The client/server entity may perform these operations in response to processor **320** executing software instructions contained in a computer-readable medium, such as memory **330**. A computer-readable medium may be defined as a physical or logical memory device and/or carrier wave.

[0030] The software instructions may be read into memory **330** from another computer-readable medium, such as data storage device **350**, or from another device via communication interface **380**. The software instructions contained in memory **330** may cause processor **320** to perform processes that will be described later. Alternatively, hardwired circuitry may be used in place of or in combination with software instructions to implement processes consistent with the principles of the invention. Thus, implementations consistent with the principles of the invention are not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software.

Exemplary Computer-Readable Medium

[0031] FIG. 4 is a diagram of a portion of an exemplary computer-readable medium **400** that may be used by a client **210** according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention. In one implementation, computer-readable medium **400** may correspond to memory **330** of a client **210**. The portion of computer-readable medium **400** illustrated in FIG. 4 may include an operating system **410**, browser software **420**, and toolbar software **430**.

[0032] Operating system **410** may include conventional operating system software, such as the Windows, Unix, or Linux operating systems. Browser software **420** may include software associated with a conventional web browser, such as the Microsoft Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, or Mozilla Firefox browser.

[0033] Toolbar software **430** may include a plug-in, an applet, a dynamic link library (DLL), or a similar executable object or process. Client **210** may obtain the plug-in from server **220** or from a third party, such as a third party server, disk, tape, network, CD-ROM, etc. Alternatively, the plug-in may be pre-installed on client **210**.

[0034] Toolbar software **430** may cause a toolbar, or another type of user interface, to be implemented within a web browser window. The toolbar may operate in conjunction with the web browser. In another implementation, the toolbar is part of the web browser. In this latter implementation, the web browser may perform the functions of the toolbar. In yet another implementation, the toolbar is a process separate from and running concurrently with the

web browser. In this other implementation, the toolbar may interface between the web browser and network **250**.

[0035] Toolbar software **430** may be automatically activated upon initiation of the web browser. Alternatively, toolbar software **430** may be activated when instructed by a user. In either case, the toolbar may take the form of a user interface that provides an extension to the web browser (e.g., provides additional functionality not provided by the web browser).

[0036] **FIG. 5** is an exemplary diagram of a graphical user interface **500** that may include a toolbar according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention. In this implementation, graphical user interface **500** may correspond to a web browser window that currently displays a document **510**.

[0037] Graphical user interface **500** may include a toolbar **520** that may be implemented by toolbar software **430** executed by a client **210**. Toolbar **520** may include one or more search boxes, software buttons, and/or menu elements selectable by a user to initiate different functions by toolbar **520**. In this case, a user may activate a function of toolbar **520** by entering information into a search box and/or selecting one of the software buttons and/or menu elements. According to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention, one of the functions performed by toolbar **520** may include an autolink function that supplements items in a currently displayed document with useful information associated with those items. The autolink function will be described in more detail below.

Exemplary Processing

[0038] **FIGS. 6A-6C** are flowcharts of exemplary processing for presenting useful information relating to an item in a document according to an implementation consistent with the principles of the invention. Processing may begin with a client **210** receiving a document (block **605**) (**FIG. 6A**). In one implementation, a user uses a web browser associated with client **210** to locate a web document on a network, such as the Internet. The user may locate the document by entering an address (e.g., a uniform resource locator (URL)) into an address box of the web browser or by performing a search based on a search query entered into a search box associated with a search engine (e.g., entering a search term into the search box of toolbar **520**) (**FIG. 5**).

[0039] Toolbar **520** may strip the formatting from the document and analyze the contents of the document to recognize item(s) of information in the document (blocks **610** and **615**). An "item" may refer to any type of information that may be identified based on pattern matching. For example, many types of information may differ in content, but match in the general pattern of the characters they contain. Exemplary types of information that may match in the general pattern of the characters they contain may include postal addresses, telephone numbers, flight information, traffic information, product identification information, tracking numbers, document identification numbers (e.g., International Standard Book Number (ISBN), International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), and Digital Object Identifier (DOI)), and vehicle identification numbers (VINs). Other types of information will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art.

[0040] A postal address, for example, may contain information commonly associated with an address, such as a number (street or zip code), a street name, a street type (road, street, lane, etc.), a city name, and a state name in relative close proximity to one another. Similarly, tracking numbers for a particular company may contain the same format. For example, the United Parcel Service (UPS) uses the following three formats for its tracking numbers: 1Z 000 000 00 0000 000 0; 0000 0000 0000; and T000 0000 000. Therefore, these patterns of characters may be used to identify UPS tracking numbers. The other types of information identified above may contain their own patterns of characters.

[0041] Certain types of items are easy to recognize with high confidence and do not require much processing power or large sets of data. These types of items will hereafter be referred to as "client items." Examples of client items might include tracking numbers, document identification numbers, and vehicle identification numbers. Other types of items are not as easy to recognize with high confidence and require much more processing power and/or large sets of data. These types of items will hereafter be referred to as "server items." Examples of server items might include postal addresses, telephone numbers, flight information, and product identification information.

[0042] For client items, toolbar **520** may perform pattern matching against a predetermined set of item patterns to recognize the items. For example, a vehicle identification number contains seventeen characters, including a world manufacturer identifier section (three characters), a vehicle descriptor section (six characters), and a vehicle identifier section (eight characters). Each of the sections includes characters from a known, limited, set of characters. Toolbar **520** may use this information to recognize a vehicle identification number. Similarly, a document identification number, such as an ISBN, contains ten characters, including a country of origin or language code (one character), a publisher code (three characters), an item number (five characters), and a check digit (one character). The ISBN includes only numbers and the check digit provides a way to easily verify that a ten digit number is actually an ISBN. Toolbar **520** can recognize client items with high confidence, but typically less than total confidence.

[0043] For server items, toolbar **520** may perform some basic pattern matching to recognize the items. For example, a postal address may contain information typically associated with an address, such as a street number, a street name, a street type (full or abbreviated), a city name, a state name (full or abbreviated), and a zip code. Toolbar **520** may identify one or more of these pieces of information and conclude that the item possibly corresponds to a postal address. Toolbar **520** recognizes server items with lower confidence.

[0044] For a client item recognized by toolbar **520** (block **620**), toolbar **520** may verify the client item by locating keywords near the item (block **625**) (**FIG. 6B**). "Near" may be defined as any number of characters, words, or terms to the left and/or right of an item. In one implementation, **64** words/terms to the left and right of an item may be analyzed for the presence of keywords.

[0045] For each type of client item, toolbar **520** may maintain a list of keywords that typically appear in a

document near that type of client item. For example, possible keywords for a tracking number might include “ship,” “shipment,” “shipping,” “track,” “tracking,” “delivery,” and “package.” In one implementation, toolbar 520 may consider the appearance of a single one of the keywords near an item as verification that the item was correctly recognized. In another implementation, toolbar 520 may require the appearance of more than one keyword near an item to verify that the item was correctly recognized. The appearance of no keywords may be considered to be a false recognition and the item may, thereafter, be ignored.

[0046] Toolbar 520 may identify a link for the client item (block 630). The link may reference a server, such as server 220 (FIG. 2). The server may handle the reference by redirecting the reference to a document that contains useful information associated with the item. Alternatively, the link may reference a document containing useful information directly.

[0047] Toolbar 520 may present the link to the user in several ways. For example, toolbar 520 may insert the link into the document, possibly replacing the item in the document with a link whose anchor text matches the characters of the item. In this case, the user might perceive no difference in the contents of the document, but the item, in this case, would be underlined (or otherwise visually distinguished) to indicate that the item corresponds to a link, as is well known in the art. Alternatively or additionally, toolbar 520 may notify the user of the link via a button on the toolbar, a pop-up text block or window, and/or a drop-down list.

[0048] At some point, toolbar 520 may receive selection of the link (block 635). For example, when the link takes the form of a link inserted into the document, selecting the link may correspond to clicking on the link. When the link takes the form of a toolbar button or an element in a pop-up text block or window or a drop-down list, selecting the link may correspond to clicking on the button or the element.

[0049] As explained above, the link may reference server 220. Therefore, in response to selection of the link, toolbar 520 may send a message to server 220 (block 640). The message may include the client item and identify the type of item that the client item is. Server 220 may redirect to a document that includes useful information associated with the item (block 645). Server 220 may store information that relates different types of items to documents that contain useful information associated with those items. For a vehicle identification number, for example, server 220 may identify a document on a web site that provides information about specific vehicles, such as the CARFAX web site. Similarly, for a document identification number, server 220 may identify a document on a web site that provides information relating to the item, such as a web site associated with a publisher or an author of the document or a web site that sells a document identified by the item.

[0050] Server 220 may cause the identified document (i.e., the document with the useful information) to be appropriately populated with the client item. For example, in the case of a vehicle identification number, server 220 may cause the appropriate field(s) of the document on the CARFAX web site to be populated with the vehicle identification number. Accordingly, the user may be presented with a document that contains useful information associated with the item.

[0051] For a server item recognized by toolbar 520 (block 620) (FIG. 6A), toolbar 520 may send a portion of the document containing the item to a server, such as server 220 (block 650) (FIG. 6C). The portion of the document sent to the server may be less than the entire document and may include the item and any number of characters, words, or terms to the left and/or right of the item. In one implementation, the portion of the document may include the item and 12 words/terms to the left and right of the item. By sending only a portion of the document rather than the entire document, network traffic may be reduced.

[0052] Server 220 may analyze the portion of the document to recognize the item (block 655). Server 220 may perform known techniques, which may be processing-intensive or require large sets of data, to recognize the item from the portion of the document it received from toolbar 520. For example, when the item corresponds to a full or partial postal address, server 220 may perform a known address recognition technique to recognize the postal address.

[0053] Server 220 may identify the recognized item to toolbar 520 (block 660). For example, server 220 may inform toolbar 520 of the part of the document that contains the recognized item. For example, server 220 may identify the full postal address to toolbar 520. Alternatively or additionally, server 220 may mark the document portion to identify the start and end of the recognized item.

[0054] Toolbar 520 may receive notification of the recognized item from server 220 and identify a link for the server item (block 665). The link may reference a server, such as server 220 (FIG. 2). The server may handle the reference by redirecting the reference to a document that contains useful information associated with the item. Alternatively, the link may reference a document containing useful information directly.

[0055] As described above, toolbar 520 may present the link to the user in several ways. For example, toolbar 520 may insert the link into the document, possibly replacing the item in the document with a link whose anchor text matches the characters of the item. In this case, the user might perceive no difference in the contents of the document, but the item, in this case, would be underlined (or otherwise visually distinguished) to indicate that the item corresponds to a link, as is well known in the art. Alternatively or additionally, toolbar 520 may notify the user of the link via a button on the toolbar, a pop-up text block or window, and/or a drop-down list.

[0056] At some point, toolbar 520 may receive selection of the link (block 670). For example, when the link takes the form of a link inserted into the document, selecting the link may correspond to clicking on the link. When the link takes the form of a toolbar button or an element in a pop-up text block or window or a drop-down list, selecting the link may correspond to clicking on the button or the element.

[0057] As explained above, the link may reference server 220. Therefore, in response to selection of the link, toolbar 520 may send a message to server 220 (block 675). The message may include the server item and identify the type of item that the server item is. Server 220 may redirect to a document that includes useful information associated with the item (block 680). Server 220 may store information that relates different types of items to documents that contain

useful information associated with those items. For a postal address, for example, server **220** may identify a document on a web site that provides a map of the address. Server **220** may cause the appropriate field(s) of the document to be populated with the address so that map information associated with the address may be obtained. Accordingly, the user may be presented with a document that contains useful information associated with the item.

[**0058**] Any or all of the autolink operations can be turned on or off or preset by the user. For example, the user may select to perform autolink operations only on client items or server items. Alternatively or additionally, the user may select to only perform autolink operations on client items and/or server items when the user indicates, such as by clicking on a button in toolbar **520**. Alternatively or additionally, the user may select to only add links to a document when the user indicates, such as by clicking on a button in toolbar **520**.

[**0059**] Also if a document already contains a link associated with an item, toolbar **520**, in one implementation, may leave the link alone. In this case, toolbar **520** may inform the user of the presence of the item in the document. Toolbar **520** may give the user the option of accessing a document with useful information associated with the item using, for example, a button on toolbar **520**, a pop-up text block or window, and/or a drop-down list.

EXAMPLES

Tracking Number Example

[**0060**] **FIGS. 7-10** are exemplary diagrams of information that may be presented to a user when an item corresponds to a tracking number. As shown in **FIG. 7**, the user has accessed a document associated with a company from which it appears the user purchased something. The toolbar may strip the formatting from the document and analyze the contents of the document to recognize item(s) of information in the document.

[**0061**] The toolbar may perform pattern matching and identify two tracking numbers: 1Z92A02E0235698326 and 123456789012 in the document. Assume that the toolbar identifies the first tracking number (i.e., 1Z92A02E0235698326) as a UPS tracking number and the second tracking number (i.e., 123456789012) as a Federal Express (FedEx) tracking number.

[**0062**] As explained above, the toolbar may recognize these tracking numbers with high confidence, though less than total confidence. Therefore, the toolbar may verify the tracking numbers by determining whether certain keywords appear in the document near the tracking numbers. In this case, the toolbar may identify the keywords “track” and “package” near the tracking numbers.

[**0063**] In one implementation, the toolbar may change or add one or more buttons on the toolbar based on what types of items the toolbar recognizes in the document. As shown in **FIG. 8**, the toolbar may replace the “autolink” button with a “track package” button **810** based on the toolbar’s recognition of one or more tracking numbers in the document. In an alternate implementation, the toolbar may leave the autolink button and simply add track package button **810**. In yet another implementation, the autolink button may be used regardless of the type of item recognized in the document

(i.e., no button will be replaced or added). In this case, link information may be presented to the user via, for example, a drop-down list or a pop-up text block or window.

[**0064**] The toolbar may identify links for the tracking numbers. As shown in **FIG. 8**, the toolbar may insert links into the document. For example, the underlining of the tracking numbers in **FIG. 8** is intended to mean that the tracking numbers have been replaced with links whose anchor text matches the characters of the tracking numbers. As further shown in **FIG. 8**, the toolbar may identify and provide links to the tracking numbers via a drop down list **820**. Drop down list **820** may optionally label the first tracking number as a UPS tracking number and the second tracking number as a FedEx tracking number. Drop down list **820** may also optionally include an element for removing all autolinks (i.e., turning off the autolink feature).

[**0065**] In one implementation, the user may select track package button **810** on the toolbar to visually distinguish in some manner (e.g., highlight) the tracking numbers recognized in the document. Each selection of the track package button **810** may cause a next tracking number, if any, to be visually distinguished. As shown in **FIG. 9**, the FedEx tracking number is visually distinguished. As also shown in **FIG. 9**, a pop-up text block or window **910** may be presented to the user.

[**0066**] Assume that the user selects the FedEx tracking number. The user may select the tracking number by selecting (e.g., clicking) the link inserted into the document, the corresponding element in drop down list **820**, or pop-up text block or window **910**. As explained above, selection of an item may cause the toolbar to send a message identifying the item and the item type to a server. In this case, the toolbar may send a message to the server with the tracking number 123456789012 and identifying the item as a FedEx tracking number. The server may redirect to a document on the FedEx web site and may optionally populate the appropriate fields in the document to obtain tracking information associated with the FedEx tracking number. The server may cause the tracking information to be sent to the toolbar.

[**0067**] As shown in **FIG. 10**, the toolbar may present to the user a document with useful information associated with the FedEx tracking number. In this case, the document corresponds to a document on the FedEx web site that contains tracking information associated with the tracking number.

Postal Address Example

[**0068**] **FIGS. 11-14** are exemplary diagrams of information that may be presented to a user when an item corresponds to a postal address. As shown in **FIG. 11**, the user has accessed a document associated with a company. The toolbar may strip the formatting from the document and analyze the contents of the document to recognize item(s) of information in the document.

[**0069**] The toolbar may perform pattern matching and identify what appears to be a postal address. As explained above, the toolbar, in one implementation, may not have the requisite processing power and/or data set(s) to appropriately recognize a server item, such as a postal address. Accordingly, the toolbar may perform some basic pattern matching to recognize information commonly associated with a postal address, such as a street number, a street name,

a street type (full or abbreviated), a city name, a state name (full or abbreviated), and a zip code. In this case, the toolbar may recognize “Pkwy” as an abbreviation of a street type, “Mountain View” as the name of a city, “Calif.” as an abbreviation of a state name, and “94043” as a number containing an appropriate number of characters to match a zip code.

[0070] The toolbar may send a portion of the document containing the possible postal address to a server. The portion of the document sent to the server, in this case, may include everything in corporate address block 1110. The server may perform known recognition techniques to recognize the possible postal address it received from the toolbar. The server may identify the recognized postal address to the toolbar. For example, the server may inform the toolbar that the postal address corresponds to “1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy, Mountain View, Calif. 94043.” Alternatively or additionally, the server may indicate the start and end of the postal address in the document portion.

[0071] In one implementation, the toolbar may change or add one or more buttons on the toolbar based on what types of items the toolbar recognizes in the document. As shown in FIG. 12, the toolbar may replace the “autolink” button with a “look for map” button 1210 based on the toolbar’s identification of one or more postal addresses in the document. In an alternate implementation, the toolbar may leave the autolink button and simply add look for map button 1210. In yet another implementation, the autolink button may be used regardless of the type of item recognized in the document (i.e., no button will be replaced or added). In this case, link information may be presented to the user via, for example, a drop-down list or a pop-up text block or window.

[0072] The toolbar may identify a link for the postal address. As shown in FIG. 12, the toolbar may insert a link into the document. For example, the underlining of the postal address in FIG. 12 is intended to mean that the postal address has been replaced with a link whose anchor text matches the characters of the postal address. As further shown in FIG. 12, the toolbar may identify and provide a link to the postal address via a drop down list 1220. Drop down list 1220 may optionally include an element for removing all autolinks (i.e., turning off the autolink feature).

[0073] In one implementation, the user may select look for map button 1210 on the toolbar to visually distinguish in some manner (e.g., highlight) the postal address(es) recognized in the document. Each selection of the look for map button 1210 may cause a next postal address, if any, to be visually distinguished. As shown in FIG. 13, the 1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy address is visually distinguished. As also shown in FIG. 13, a pop-up text block or window 1310 may be presented to the user.

[0074] Assume that the user selects the 1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy address. The user may select the address by selecting (e.g., clicking) the link inserted into the document, the corresponding element in drop down list 1220, or pop-up text block or window 1310. As explained above, selection of an item may cause the toolbar to send a message identifying the item and the item type to a server. In this case, the toolbar may send a message to the server with the postal address “1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy, Mountain View, Calif. 94043” and identifying the item as a postal address. The server may redirect to a document on a map provider web site and may

optionally populate the appropriate fields in the document to obtain map information associated with the postal address. The server may cause the map information to be sent to the toolbar.

[0075] As shown in FIG. 14, the toolbar may present the user with a document with useful information associated with the postal address. In this case, the document corresponds to a document on a map provider’s web site that contains map information associated with the postal address.

Conclusion

[0076] Systems and methods consistent with the principles of the invention may provide useful information associated with an item in a document.

[0077] The foregoing description of preferred embodiments of the present invention provides illustration and description, but is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may be acquired from practice of the invention.

[0078] For example, while series of acts have been described with regard to FIGS. 6A-6C, the order of the acts may be modified in other implementations consistent with the principles of the invention. Further, non-dependent acts may be performed in parallel.

[0079] Also, exemplary user interfaces have been described with respect to FIGS. 5 and 7-14. In other implementations consistent with the principles of the invention, the user interfaces may include more, fewer, or different pieces of information.

[0080] It will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that aspects of the invention, as described above, may be implemented in many different forms of software, firmware, and hardware in the implementations illustrated in the figures. The actual software code or specialized control hardware used to implement aspects consistent with the principles of the invention is not limiting of the invention. Thus, the operation and behavior of the aspects were described without reference to the specific software code—it being understood that one of ordinary skill in the art would be able to design software and control hardware to implement the aspects based on the description herein.

[0081] No element, act, or instruction used in the present application should be construed as critical or essential to the invention unless explicitly described as such. Also, as used herein, the article “a” is intended to include one or more items. Where only one item is intended, the term “one” or similar language is used. Further, the phrase “based on” is intended to mean “based, at least in part, on” unless explicitly stated otherwise.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

recognizing an item in a first document currently displayed in a web browser window based on a pattern associated with the item but not the particular content of the item;

identifying a link for the item; and

providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a toolbar within the web browser window; and receiving a selection associated with the toolbar; and wherein recognizing an item comprises:

identifying the item within the first document in response to the selection associated with the toolbar.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

verifying recognition of the item by locating one or more keywords within a predetermined distance of the item in the first document.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the link references a server unaffiliated with the second document.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein providing a second document comprises:

receiving selection of the link,

sending a message to the server in response to the selection of the link, and

receiving, from the server, a redirection to the second document.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the message includes the item and identifies an item type associated with the item.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the server stores information that relates different types of items to documents that contain information associated with the items.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

replacing the item in the first document with the link.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the link as a toolbar button, an element in a pop-up text block or window, or an element in a drop-down list.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein recognizing an item comprises:

sending a portion of the first document to a server, and

receiving identification of the item from the server.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the portion of the first document includes the item and at least one of a predetermined number of words or terms to a left of the item or a predetermined number of words or terms to a right of the item.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the portion of the first document includes less than all of the first document.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein receiving identification of the item from the server comprises:

receiving identification of a start and end of the item within the portion of the first document.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the item corresponds to a tracking number and the second document includes tracking information associated with the tracking number.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the item corresponds to a document identification number and the second document includes information associated with a publisher of a third document corresponding to the document identification number, an author of the third document, or a seller of the third document.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the item corresponds to a vehicle identification number and the second document includes information associated with a vehicle corresponding to the vehicle identification number.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the item corresponds to a postal address and the second document includes map information associated with the postal address.

18. A system comprising:

means for recognizing an item, including a plurality of characters, in a first document currently displayed in a web browser window based on a pattern associated with the item but not the particular characters of the item;

means for identifying a link for the item; and

means for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

19. A device comprising:

a memory to store:

instructions for presenting a first document,

instructions for recognizing an item within the first document based on a pattern

associated with the item but not the exact content of the item,

instructions for identifying a link for the item, and

instructions for presenting a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected; and

a processor to execute the instructions in the memory.

20. A computer-readable medium that includes computer-executable instructions, comprising:

instructions for obtaining a first document;

instructions for recognizing an item within the first document based on a pattern associated with the item but not the exact content of the item;

instructions for identifying a link for the item; and

instructions for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

21. A method comprising:

recognizing an item in a first document;

verifying recognition of the item by locating one or more keywords within a predetermined distance of the item in the first document;

identifying a link for the item when recognition of the item has been verified; and

providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

22. A device comprising:

a memory to store instructions; and

a processor to execute the instructions to:

recognize an item in a first document currently displayed within a web browser window,

determine whether the item was properly recognized by locating one or more keywords within a predetermined distance of the item in the first document,

identify a link for the item when the item was properly recognized, and

present a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

23. A computer-readable medium that includes computer-executable instructions, comprising:

instructions for recognizing an item in a first document;

instructions for determining whether the item was properly recognized by locating one or more keywords within a predetermined distance of the item in the first document;

instructions for identifying a link for the item when the item was properly recognized; and

instructions for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

24. A method comprising:

recognizing an item in a first document currently displayed in a web browser window;

sending a portion of the first document to a server, the portion including less than all of the first document;

receiving identification of the item from the server;

identifying a link for the item; and

providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

providing a toolbar within the web browser window; and

receiving a selection associated with the toolbar; and

wherein recognizing an item comprises:

recognizing the item within the first document in response to the selection associated with the toolbar.

26. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

providing a toolbar within the web browser window; and

receiving a selection associated with the toolbar; and

wherein sending a portion of the first document comprises:

transmitting the portion of the first document to the server in response to the selection associated with the toolbar.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein the link references a server unaffiliated with the second document.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein providing a second document comprises:

receiving selection of the link,

sending a message to the unaffiliated server in response to the selection of the link, and

receiving, from the unaffiliated server, a redirection to the second document.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the message includes the item and identifies an item type associated with the item.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein the unaffiliated server stores information that relates different types of items to documents that contain information associated with the items.

31. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

replacing the item in the first document with the link.

32. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

presenting the link as a toolbar button, an element in a pop-up text block or window, or an element in a drop-down list.

33. The method of claim 24, wherein the portion of the first document includes the item and at least one of a predetermined number of words or terms to a left of the item or a predetermined number of words or terms to a right of the item.

34. The method of claim 24, wherein receiving identification of the item from the server comprises:

receiving identification of a start and end of the item within the portion of the first document.

35. The method of claim 24, wherein the item corresponds to a postal address and the second document includes map information associated with the postal address.

36. A device comprising:

a memory to store instructions; and

a processor to execute the instructions to:

recognize a sequence of characters in a first document, send a portion of the first document to a server, the portion including the sequence of characters and a predetermined number of words or terms next to the sequence of characters in the first document,

receive identification of the sequence of characters from the server,

identify a link for the sequence of characters, and

present a second document that includes information associated with the sequence of characters when the link for the sequence of characters is selected.

37. A computer-readable medium that includes computer-executable instructions, comprising:

instructions for recognizing an item in a first document;

instructions for transmitting a portion of the first document, the portion including less than all of the first document;

instructions for receiving identification of the item;

instructions for identifying a link for the item; and instructions for providing a second document that includes information associated with the item when the link for the item is selected.

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