

The Front Color indicates the background color that will be used for the container 100, whereas the Envelope Size is used by the default envelope container to represent the width and height dimensions.

5 The Data Location refers to whether data for the component object requires looking to a data field, fetching data using a URL, or an absolute offset. The data field may be a digital data field that contains digital data, such as digital images from, for instance, a GIF, a video sequence, an audio sequence, or other representations of images.

10 For each component object, there exists the data structure illustrated in FIG. 8, which data structure contains a Component ID that allows that component object to be uniquely identified, as well as Component Attributes that identify whether the component object appears as an image on the front and back of a container, or is invisible. If it appears on the front or back of a container, the size of the component object, its location, and the location of data are also specified. If it is an invisible attribute, the size and location data may not be necessary. Also a hidden component object can, for instance, trigger a return receipt without the knowledge of  
15 the recipient, such that a mouse over would cause a return receipt if the hidden component object were configured to respond to a mouse over by providing a return receipt when a mouse-over occurs.

Potentially associated with each component object identified by a data field of FIG. 8 are a plurality of sub-component objects. Each sub-component object associated with a component  
20 object contains data fields provided in FIG. 9.

Each sub-component object is initiated by a User Action, which User Action is specified by, but not limited to the following, the position and state of the mouse pointer, which state can be that it is not over the component object (no action), appears over the component object (mouse over), there is a single mouse click when it is over the component object, or there is a  
25 mouse double click when it is over the component object. Each User Action can cause a Sub-Component-Type to be displayed/initiated. A plurality of sub-components can be associated with a single component object, and be initiated by the same or different User Action.

Each sub-component object also has an ID, as well as an ID type that has associated with it a primary or a secondary sub-component object. The secondary sub-component object will  
30 only be initiated if the primary sub-component object is unavailable, as will be described in more detail hereinafter.

Having now described the preferred data format that is used to transmit the enhanced e-mail message according to the present invention, FIGS. 10 and 11 will be referred to in describing the creation and sending, and the receipt, respectively, of an enhanced e-mail message, so that  
35 a container such as the container 100 illustrated in FIG. 12 is displayed on the display 38 of a recipient computer 30 after having been sent from a sender computer 20.