

Detailed Description

While the present invention retains utility within a wide variety of networks and may be embodied in several different forms, it is advantageously employed in connection with the Internet. Though this is the form of the preferred embodiment and will be described as such, this embodiment should be considered illustrative and not restrictive.

Referring now to Figure 1, a remote computer 10 is shown having an electrical connection 12 to a network 14. The remote computer 10 can be a personal computer, such as an IBM compatible or a MAC, can be a work station, or any other such computer that is adapted to communicate over a network 14. The electrical connection 12 is used generically to indicate a physical connection to a client/server network. Though such a connection can take any of various forms and use any of numerous protocols, in the preferred embodiment communication via the electrical connection 12 uses Transfer Control Protocol/Internet Protocol ("TCP/IP"). TCP/IP is preferred as it is the communication protocol suite required to communicate over the Internet. Communication over the Internet is desirable because the Internet is a global interconnection of multiple content servers which are freely communicable to each other and accessible by an unlimited group of remote computers. For illustration purposes, the network 14 will be assumed to be the Internet, though other possibilities exist, such as electronic mail networks utilizing X.25 protocols.

As previously stated, the network 14 has multiple content servers, one of which is shown in Figure 1 as content server 16. The content server 16, in this example, is owned by a third-party vendor of software. The software can be any digitally stored information including both executable and non-executable digital information. Examples of the foregoing are executable software applications, digitally stored music, digitally stored reference materials, photographs, inter alia. Therefore, any reference to software or software applications contained herein shall be understood to encompass any form of digitally stored information whether or not listed as an example above.