

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
26 July 2001 (26.07.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/53958 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: G06F 15/00, 17/00

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(21) International Application Number: PCT/KR01/00072

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(22) International Filing Date: 17 January 2001 (17.01.2001)

(25) Filing Language: Korean

(26) Publication Language: English

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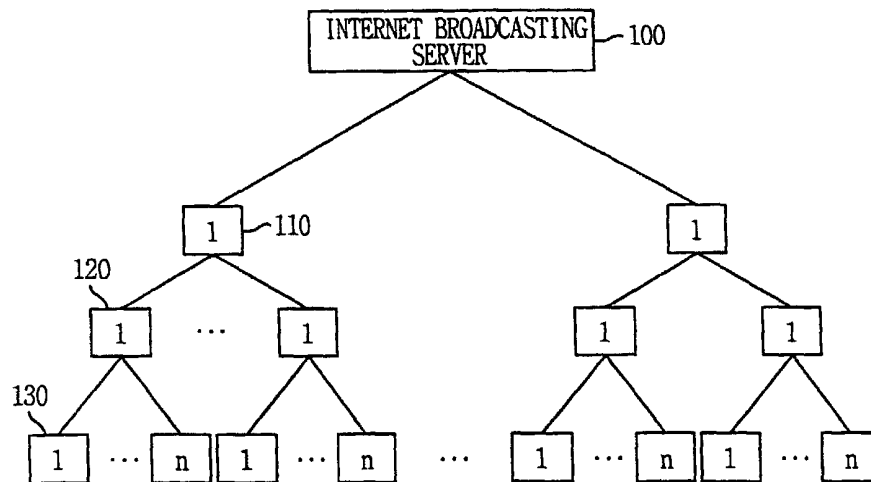
(30) Priority Data:
2000/1953 17 January 2000 (17.01.2000) KR
2000/3836 26 January 2000 (26.01.2000) KR

(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING INTERNET BROADCASTING DATA BASED ON HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE



(57) Abstract: A system and method for providing Internet broadcasting data based on hierarchical structure, which can reduce a bottleneck problem due to data congestion. The method for providing Internet broadcasting data includes the steps of: a) if a connection request signal is received from a first terminal, determining whether a number of terminals connected to a server is smaller than a threshold value; b) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is smaller than the threshold value, transmitting broadcasting data to the first terminal; and c) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is not smaller than the threshold value, leading the first terminal to try to connect a second terminal, wherein the second terminal is one of the terminals connected to the server.



WO 01/53958 A1



(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— *with international search report*

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING INTERNET BROADCASTING
DATA BASED ON HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE

Description

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Technical Field

The present invention relates to a system and method of providing Internet broadcasting data based on hierarchical structure; and, more particularly, to an internet broadcasting system and method capable of reducing a bottleneck problem due to data congestion.

Background Art

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Generally, in an Internet broadcasting, a main server, which provides Internet broadcasting data, transmits multimedia data to all terminals connected to the server itself. Many Internet users receive the broadcasting data, such as moving pictures and audio data, etc., by connecting to the Internet broadcasting server. That is, according to the current Internet broadcasting system, all of users may connect to the main server regardless of the number of users.

With speedy multimedia technology development, an amount of transmitting data increases, thereby happening a bottleneck problem and down of the server.

Especially, in case of the Internet broadcasting, an increasing of data capacity is necessary because quality of video and audio data affects competitiveness. To provide good quality of Internet broadcasting in the above-mentioned situation, efficiency and capacity of server should be increased.

Even though the server has good efficiency and large capacity, when many users are connected to the server, other users who want to connect to the server may not connect to

35

the server. Even if a user may connect to the server, data transmission rate slow down, so that the good quality of broadcasting cannot be provided.

Also, if the above-mentioned situation happens repeatedly, or many users of which number is larger than a threshold value are tried to connect to the server at the same time, the server is downed and the Internet broadcasting may not be provided until the server is repaired.

10 Generally, in an Internet, data transmission is carried out by using a transmission control protocol/Internet protocol (TCP/IP) or a user datagram protocol (UDP).

To perform an Internet broadcasting by using the TCP/IP or the UDP, the same data have to be transmitted to the terminal as many times as the number of the terminals.

An IP multicasting is used to solve the above-mentioned problem. An IP multicasting is an Internet standard, which is made for broadcasting multimedia data such as moving picture data and audio data, and thereby establishing a special Internet address domain, so called "class D". Also, among the address of the domains, if a terminal receives data, then the data is transmitted to all terminals having the same address.

However, if an Internet router to which a terminal is connected does not support the IP multicasting, it only can be used in a local area network (LAN) to which the terminal is connected. Particularly, the server and the terminal in an Internet have to pass multiple Internet routers to connect each other, so among the routers, if one router doesn't support the IP multicasting, the terminal can not receive the broadcasting data from the server.

Moreover, the IP multicasting supporting routers are not provided sufficiently, the Internet broadcasting using the IP multicasting is practically impossible. With this reason, the Internet broadcasting which uses the IP

multicasting is rare until now, and it is currently used in only an intranet system within an enterprise.

Currently, most Internet broadcasting servers use the TCP/IP or the UDP instead of the IP multicasting to thereby receive broadcasting data by directly connecting to a server and a terminal.

The above-mentioned Internet broadcasting method gives large communication load to the server and has difficulty in the number of the users connected to the server cannot be increased. Also, an access denial by the overload of the server, a data lost, a decreasing of communication speed and a down of a server may be brought about, thereby utilizing an expensive server equipment having a high capacity.

15 Disclosure of Invention

It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide an Internet broadcasting system and method capable of reducing a bottleneck problem caused by data congestion.

It is, therefore, another object of the present invention to provide an Internet broadcasting system and method capable of providing an Internet broadcasting without downing of a server by restricting the number of the terminals, regardless of the number of the users who connects to the server at the same time.

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for providing Internet broadcasting data, comprising the steps of: a) if a connection request signal is received from a first terminal, determining whether a number of terminals connected to a server is smaller than a threshold value; b) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is smaller than the threshold value, transmitting broadcasting data to the first terminal; and c) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is not smaller than the threshold value, leading

the first terminal to try to connect a second terminal, wherein the second terminal is one of the terminals connected to the server.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for providing Internet broadcasting data, comprising the steps of: a) transmitting a connection request signal to an Internet broadcasting server; b) determining whether the received signal from the Internet broadcasting server is broadcasting data or a re-connection leading signal; and c) if the signal received from the Internet broadcasting server is the broadcasting data, displaying the received broadcasting data.

In accordance with further another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an Internet broadcasting system, comprising: a determining means for determining a number of terminals connected to the server are larger than a threshold value when receiving a connection request signal from a first terminal; a transmission means for transmitting broadcasting data to the first terminal when the number of terminals connected to the server are smaller than the threshold value; and a control unit for leading the first terminal to a second terminal which is already connected to the server, when the number of the connected terminals are over the threshold value.

In accordance with still further another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an Internet broadcasting system comprising: a connection request means for requesting a connection to an Internet broadcasting server; a receiving means for transmitting a re-transmitting leading signal to the connection request means when a re-connection leading signal is received from the Internet broadcasting server and for transmitting a broadcasting data to be displayed when the broadcasting data is received from the Internet broadcasting server; a display means for displaying the broadcasting data received from the receiving

means; and a repeating means for transmitting the
broadcasting data to the first terminal by receiving the
broadcasting data from the broadcasting receiving means,
according to the repeating request signal of the first
5 terminal.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The above and other objects and features of the present
10 invention will become apparent from the following
description of the preferred embodiments given in
conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a diagram illustrating an Internet
broadcasting system based on hierarchical transmission in
15 accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing a terminal adapted to an
Internet broadcasting system in accordance with the present
invention;

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing an Internet broadcasting
20 method by using hierarchical transmission in accordance with
the present invention; and

Fig. 4 is a network diagram illustrating an Internet
broadcasting system by using distributed IP multicasting
method in accordance with the present invention.

25

Best Mode for Carrying out the Invention

Hereinafter, embodiments according to the present
invention will be described in detail referring to the
30 accompanying drawings.

In a first embodiment, it will be described an
Internet broadcasting system and method based on
hierarchical structure without regarding a protocol. In a
second embodiment, it will be described an Internet
35 broadcasting system and method which transmits a

broadcasting data by using an IP multicasting.

Embodiment 1

5 Fig. 1 is a diagram illustrating an Internet broadcasting system based on hierarchical transmission in accordance with the present invention. As shown in Fig. 1, the system includes an Internet broadcasting server 100, and terminals 110, 120, 130 that connect to the server 100 or
10 the terminal 110 connected to the server 100 to receive data.

For clear description, the terminal directly connected to the server will be called as a primary connection terminal, the terminal connected to the primary connection
15 terminal will be called as a secondary connection terminal and the terminal connected to the $N-1^{\text{th}}$ connection terminal will be called as N^{th} connection terminals. At this time, N is an optional integer which is equal to or larger than two (2).

20 Referring to Fig. 2, the terminal 110, 120 or 130 includes a broadcasting receiving unit 114 for receiving data transmitted from the Internet broadcasting server 100 or the terminals 110 and 120. A data processing and display unit 56 outputs and treats data received through a
25 broadcasting receiving unit 54. A broadcasting repeating unit 112 repeats a broadcasting data by connecting to the Internet broadcasting server 100 by using the TCP/IP or the UDP protocol to receive the broadcasting data, and transmits the received data to an adjacent terminals.

30 To carry out Internet broadcasting in the above-mentioned network, software is installed to the terminal 110 to form the broadcasting repeating unit 112, the broadcasting receiving unit 114 and a broadcasting data processing and display unit 116.

35 The broadcasting repeating unit 112 connects to the

Internet broadcasting server 100 by using the TCP/IP or the UDP, receives a broadcasting data from the Internet broadcasting server 100, then transmits the broadcasting data to the other terminals 120 that request connection to the terminal 110.

The broadcasting receiving unit 114 receives the broadcasting data transmitted from the Internet broadcasting server 100 or the terminal, then transmits it to the broadcasting data processing and display unit 116.

The broadcasting data processing and display unit 116 displays a moving picture on a monitor of the terminal or carries out an audio processing. It receives a broadcasting data from the broadcasting receiving unit 114, processes the received data, and then displays the received data to monitor or other devices.

Referring to the Internet broadcasting receiving or repeating process by using the secondary connection terminal 120, when the broadcasting receiving is started, the broadcasting receiving unit 114 receives a broadcasting data and transmits it to the data processing and display unit 116.

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing an Internet broadcasting method based on hierarchical transmission in accordance with the present invention.

First, the Internet broadcasting server provides multimedia data, and limits the number of the primary connection terminals as much as it can provide best quality of broadcasting. That is, the Internet broadcasting server maintains a broadcasting quality considering system efficiency and data capacitance, and establishes a threshold value that indicates the maximum number of connectable users to the server.

When the server receives a connection request signal from the terminal, at step S305, determining whether the number of terminals connected to the server are smaller than

the threshold value, at step S311, and if so, connection is admitted and the broadcasting data is transmitted.

At step S319, determining whether the transmission is completed, and if completed, the process ends, otherwise,
5 returns to the step S311.

At step S305, if the number of connected terminals is larger than the threshold value, the Internet broadcasting server prevents the terminal from connection to itself and leads the terminal to be connected to one of the primary
10 terminals 110. That is, at the step S305, one of the primary connection terminals, which are already connected to the server, is selected as a subordinate server and recorded into a database. The Internet broadcasting server stores information related to the terminals directly or indirectly
15 connected to itself, such as an address of the primary connection terminal, and the number and an address of the secondary terminals which are connected to the primary connection terminals.

At step S309, a re-connection leading signal having the address of the subordinate server is transmitted to the
20 connection request terminal to thereby induce re-connection to the subordinate server.

At the step S305, when the terminal trying the connection to the server receives a signal from the server,
25 the terminal determines whether the received signal is broadcasting data or a re-connection leading signal.

At step S317, if the received signal is the broadcasting data, the terminal displays the broadcasting data on a display unit, otherwise, at step S315, the
30 terminal transmits a connection request signal to the primary connection terminal based on the received address included in the re-connection leading signal.

When the number of the terminals trying to be connected to the server is larger than the threshold value, the server
35 leads the terminal, which tries to be connected to the

server, distributed to be connected to the primary connection terminals.

The primary connection terminals connected to the server, receives a broadcasting data from the server and displays it to the user, and applies connection of the terminals. In case the connection of the terminals are impossible, the primary connection terminals leads the terminals to be connected to one of the secondary terminal, which is already connected to the primary connection terminal.

At this time, the primary, the secondary and the following terminals have functions of receiving data by connecting to the server or the higher level terminals, and repeating the received data to the subordinate terminals. Also, each terminals limits the number of terminals connected to itself in a scope of without decreasing broadcasting quality by data receiving and repeating transmission.

The secondary connection terminal connected to the primary connection terminal receives broadcasting data from the server and displays it to a user, then permits connection request terminals, which the re-connection are led by the primary connection terminals, to be connected to itself.

With repeating of the above process, a connection from $N-2^{\text{th}}$ connection terminal is led and N^{th} connection terminal connected to a $N-1^{\text{th}}$ connection terminal receives the broadcasting data from the server and displays it to a user, and applies the connection request of the terminals led by the $N-1^{\text{th}}$ connection terminal. Also, in case that the connection to $N-1^{\text{th}}$ connection terminal is impossible, then induces the connection to one of $N-2^{\text{th}}$ connection terminals which is already connected.

If the broadcasting data cannot be received for a while just after or on the way of receiving the broadcasting data,

a repeating request signal is generated and transmitted to the broadcasting repeating unit 112 within the terminal. When the broadcasting repeating unit 112 receives the repeating request signal, it directly connects to the
5 Internet broadcasting server 100 instead of the primary connection terminal 110, and broadcasts the broadcasting data to the other terminals by receiving the broadcasting data based on TCP/IP or the UDP.

The broadcasting data transmitted from the repeating
10 unit 112 is transmitted not only to the receiving unit 114 equipped within the terminal, but also to a receiving unit of other terminals connected to the same local area network (LAN). Likewise, the broadcasting data may be transmitted to a terminal of other area, which is connected by using a
15 router m.

As described above, the Internet broadcasting system and method in accordance with the present invention make it possible to connect a predetermined number of terminals, and leads the terminals, which tries to connect to the server
20 when the predetermined number of the terminals are already connected to the server, to be connected to the subordinate terminal. Accordingly, lower level terminals can receive the broadcasting data with same speed, thereby being capable of providing a large capacity broadcasting without
25 increasing of capacity of a server and overload.

In the present invention, the server is set as a root and limits the number of terminals to be connected to the server itself. In case that many terminals of which number is larger than the predetermined number of requested
30 connection to the server, the server leads the terminal requesting the connection to be connected to one of the already connected terminals, such that the already connected terminals plays a role of the repeater and transmits the broadcasting data. Therefore, without increasing server
35 capacity, good quality of broadcasting may be provided to

the Internet broadcasting users.

Also, the limitation of the number of the terminals connected to the server or the terminal prevents bottleneck problem in data transmission or down of server.

5

Embodiment 2

Fig. 4 is a diagram illustrating an Internet broadcasting network by using distributed IP multicasting method in accordance with the present invention.

First, referring to Fig. 4, a distributed IP multicasting method for Internet broadcasting system in accordance with the present invention includes an Internet broadcasting server 10 for broadcasting multimedia data such as a video and an audio, and terminals 50 and 40 to 47 for repeating a received data to adjacent terminals by receiving broadcasting data and connecting to the Internet broadcasting server 10 through TCP/IP or UDP protocol to thereby display the data to a user, and multiple IP multicasting routers (router m) 20 to 30 which have an IP multicasting function to connect the Internet broadcasting server 10 and terminals 40 to 47 to the Internet.

In here, different from the router m, a general router (router n) 34 and 36 which have not had the IP multicasting function, and the IP multicasting data between two networks, which are connected by the router n is not transmitted.

An operation of the distributed IP multicasting method for Internet broadcasting system in accordance with the present invention will be described with another embodiment of the present invention and an Internet broadcasting method by using the distributed IP multicasting.

As described in Fig. 4, when an Internet communication region which can be connected by the IP multicasting routers 20 to 30 are divided to regions A, B and C, and different from the terminals 40, 41 in region A, the terminals in B

and C regions can not directly receive the IP multicasting data of the Internet broadcasting server 10. Accordingly, the terminals in B and C region can receive the broadcasting data by using TCP/IP or UDP protocol. At this time, each of
5 one terminal 43 and 47 in B and C regions connect to the server to receive data and transform the data to the IP multicasting data for transmitting the data to the other terminals with in same region, then other terminals in B and C regions receive the IP multicasting data.

10 In the above-referenced network, terminals for performing an Internet broadcasting by using the present invention is similar to the before mentioned terminal 110, as shown in Fig. 2.

The function performed in each of function block is
15 similar to that of shown in Fig. 2. The terminal includes a broadcasting repeating unit 112, a broadcasting receiving unit 114 and the broadcasting data processing and display unit 116 and the IP multicasting protocol is used. The functional block may be realized as software and the
20 functional block may be installed by receiving from the Internet broadcasting server with the broadcasting data or before receiving the broadcasting data.

A broadcasting transmission means 52 is programmed to have a broadcasting transmission function. It connects to
25 the Internet broadcasting server 10 by using TCP/IP or UDP and the broadcasting data is received for transforming it to the IP multicasting data, then transmit it to the other adjacent terminals.

The data treatment and display means 56 receives
30 broadcasting data from the broadcasting receiving means 54 and treatment the data for displaying it to a monitor and other devices.

The Internet broadcasting receiving and transmission process with the terminal 50 will be described.

35 When the terminal 50 receives a broadcasting data, the

broadcasting receiving means 54 receives the data by using the IP multicasting and transmits the data to the data treatment and display means 56.

5 If the IP multicasting data is not received for a predetermined period of time, the broadcasting transmission means 52 is directly connected to the Internet broadcasting server 10 for receiving the data by using TCP/IP or UDP and transmits the data to the adjacent terminal after transforming the data to the IP multicasting data.

10 The data, received from in the broadcasting transmission means 52 can reach to the other broadcasting-receiving unit of a terminal connected to a local area network (LAN). Also, the data can be transmitted to the other terminals in other regions by using the router m.

15 Referring to Fig. 1, a divided region A in A, B and C regions can receive an IP multicasting data from an Internet broadcasting server 10, but the regions B and C need optional broadcasting transmission function.

20 A terminal 43 in region B and a terminal 47 in region C carry out the broadcasting transmission function. They receive broadcasting data directly from the Internet broadcasting server 10 by using TCP/IP or UDP and transmit the data to the adjacent terminals by using the IP multicasting.

25 Therefore, in Fig. 1, among the eight terminals 40 to 47, if the two terminals 43 and 47 are connected to the internet broadcasting server 10, then all of the terminals 40 to 47 can receive an equal broadcasting, at the same time.

30 With the above-mentioned method, a region which is difficult in performing the IP multicasting, can directly connected to the internet broadcasting server 10 by using TCP/IP or UDP and the terminals 43 and 47 transform the data to the IP multicasting data to re-transmit it to the adjacent terminals.

35 The distributed IP multicasting method for internet

broadcasting system can reduce transmission load in server by directly transmit data to a smaller number of terminals and increase number of terminals which can receive a broadcasting with the IP multicasting.

5 Especially, the method is advantageous in an enterprise which using an intranet because it can decrease loads in network and server.

10 While the present invention has been described with respect to the particular embodiments, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

Claims

1. A method for providing Internet broadcasting data, comprising the steps of:

5 a) if a connection request signal is received from a first terminal, determining whether a number of terminals connected to a server is smaller than a threshold value;

b) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is smaller than the threshold value, transmitting
10 broadcasting data to the first terminal; and

c) if the number of the terminals connected to the server is not smaller than the threshold value, leading the first terminal to try to connect a second terminal, wherein the second terminal is one of the terminals connected to the
15 server.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step c) includes:

c1) among the terminals connected to the server,
20 selecting the second terminal as a subordinate server; and

c2) transmitting a re-connection leading message having an address of the subordinate server to the first terminal.

3. The method as recited in claim 2, further including
25 the step d) performing the step a) to c) in the subordinate server, when a connection request signal is received from the first terminal.

4. A method for providing Internet broadcasting data, comprising the steps of:
30

a) transmitting a connection request signal to an Internet broadcasting server;

b) determining whether the received signal from the Internet broadcasting server is broadcasting data or a re-connection leading signal; and
35

c) if the signal received from the Internet broadcasting server is the broadcasting data, displaying the received broadcasting data.

5 5. The method as recited in claim 4, further including the step of, if the signal received from the Internet broadcasting server is a re-connection leading signal, transmitting a connection request signal to the subordinate server, then repeating from the step b).

10

6. The method as recited in claim 4, further including the steps of:

d) at the server, when receiving the connection request signal from the first terminal, determining whether the number of terminals connected to the server are larger than the threshold value;

e) at the server, if the number of the terminals connected to the server are smaller than the threshold value, transmitting broadcasting data to the first terminal; and

20 f) if the number of the terminals connected to the server are larger than the threshold value, leading the terminal to connect to a second terminal which is already connected to the server.

25 7. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the step f) includes the steps of:

f1) among the terminals connected to the server, selecting the second terminal as a subordinate server; and

30 f2) transmitting a re-connection leading message having an address of the subordinate server to the first terminal.

8. An Internet broadcasting system, comprising:

a determining means for determining a number of terminals connected to the server are larger than a threshold value when receiving a connection request signal

from a first terminal;

a transmission means for transmitting broadcasting data to the first terminal when the number of terminals connected to the server are smaller than the threshold value; and

5 a control unit for leading the first terminal to a second terminal which is already connected to the server, when the number of the connected terminals are over the threshold value.

10 9. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the control unit includes:

a means for selecting the second terminal as a subordinate server, wherein the second terminal is one of terminals already connected to the server; and

15 a means for generating a re-connection leading message having an address of the selected subordinate server, and transmitting it to the first terminal.

20 10. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using a transmission control protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) protocol.

25 11. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using a user datagram protocol (UDP) protocol.

30 12. The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using an Internet protocol (IP) multicasting protocol.

13. An Internet broadcasting system comprising:

a connection request means for requesting a connection to an Internet broadcasting server;

35 a receiving means for transmitting a re-transmitting

leading signal to the connection request means when a re-connection leading signal is received from the Internet broadcasting server and for transmitting a broadcasting data to be displayed when the broadcasting data is received from
5 the Internet broadcasting server;

a display means for displaying the broadcasting data received from the receiving means; and

a repeating means for transmitting the broadcasting data to the first terminal by receiving the broadcasting
10 data from the broadcasting receiving means, according to the repeating request signal of the first terminal.

14. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the repeating means includes:

15 a determining means for determining if a number of connected terminals are over a threshold value;

a transmission means for transmitting the broadcasting data to the first terminal, if the number of connected terminals is smaller than the threshold value; and

20 a connection leading means for leading the first terminal to be connected to a second terminal, if the number of connected terminal is over the threshold value.

15. The system as recited in claim 14, wherein the
25 connecting leading means includes:

a selecting unit for selecting the second terminal which is one of the already connected terminals as a subordinate server; and

30 a transmission unit for generating a re-connection leading message having an address of the subordinate server, and transmitting it to the first terminal.

16. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the
35 transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using a transmission control protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP)

protocol.

17. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the
transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using
5 a user datagram protocol (UDP) protocol.

18. The system as recited in claim 13, wherein the
transmission means transmits the broadcasting data by using
an Internet protocol (IP) multicasting protocol.

10

FIG. 1

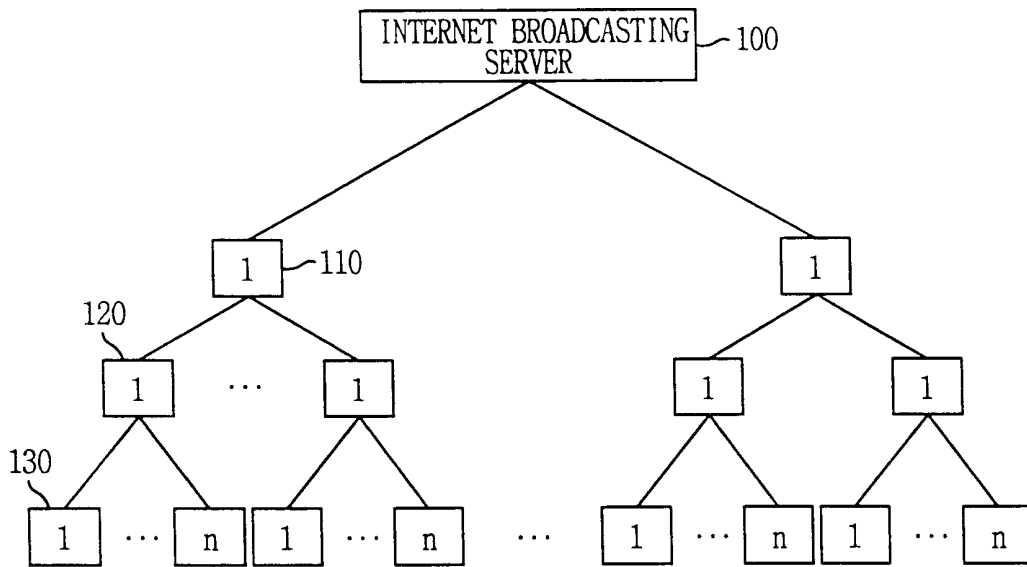


FIG. 2

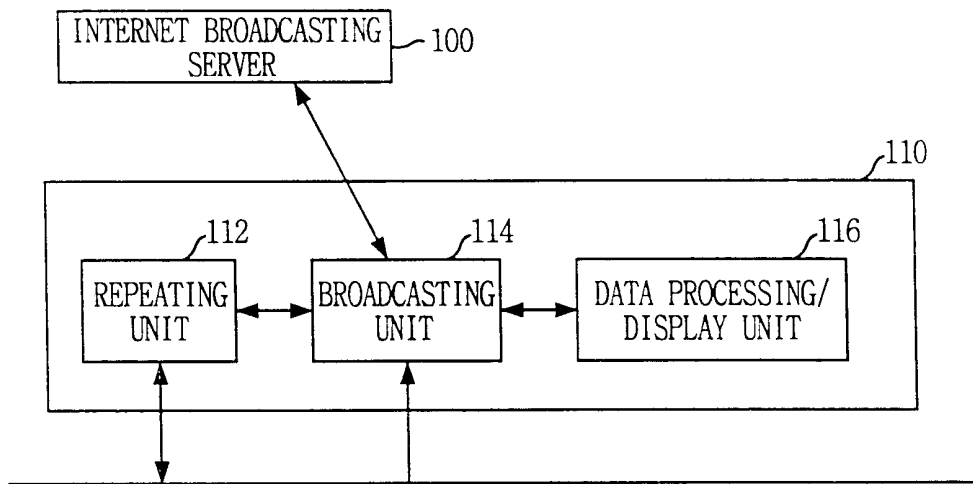


FIG. 3

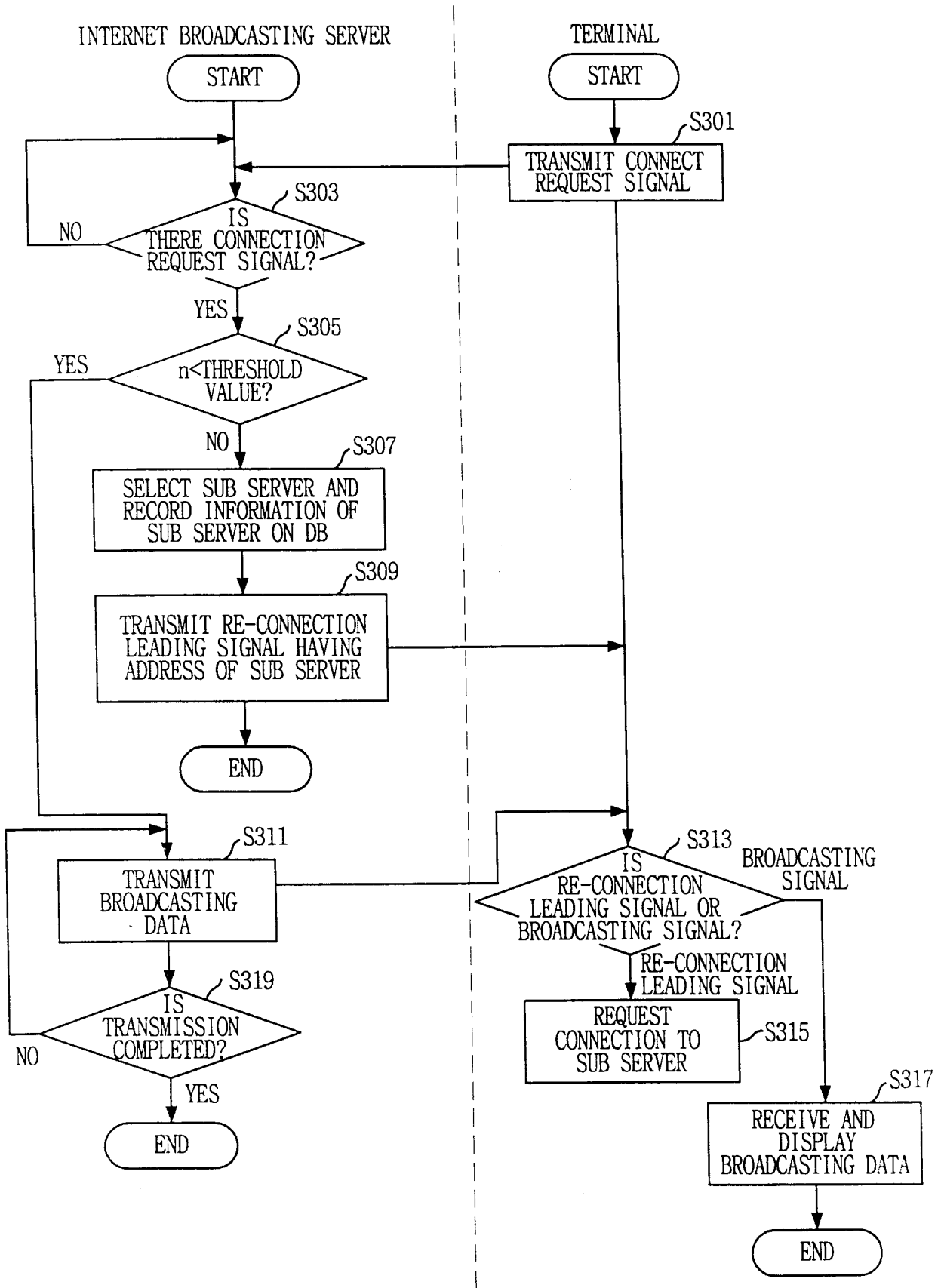
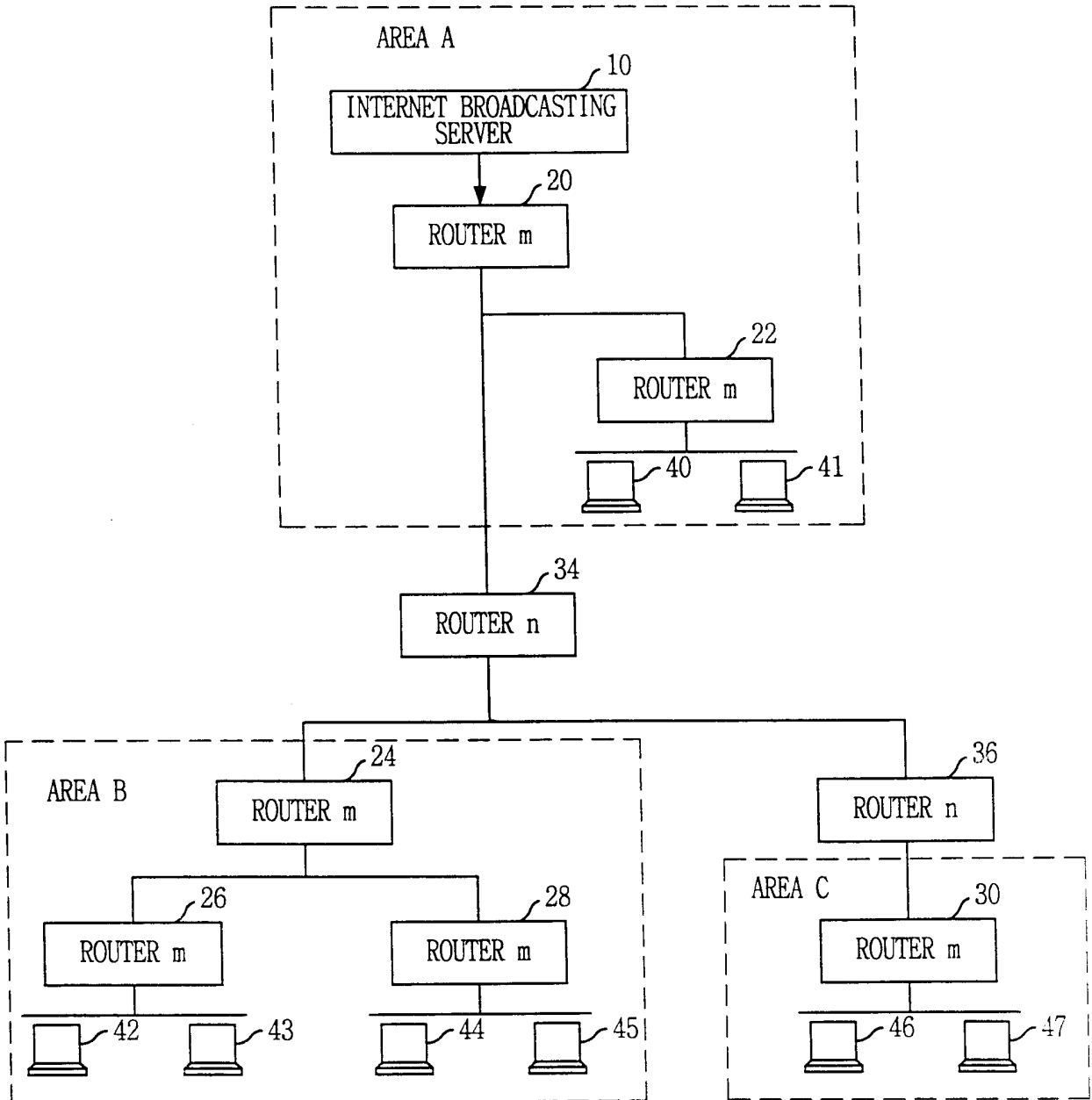


FIG. 4



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

international application No.

PCT/KR01/00072

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC7 G06F 15/00, G06F 17/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US-5983005 (Netcast Communications Corp.) November 9, 1999 * Abstract *	1 - 13
A	US-5991306 (Microsoft Corporation) November 23, 1999 * Whole document *	1 - 13
A	US-5774660 (Resonate, Inc.) June 30, 1998 * Whole document *	1 - 13

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

28 MARCH 2001 (28.03.2001)

Date of mailing of the international search report

29 MARCH 2001 (29.03.2001)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/KR

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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International application No.

PCT/KR01/00072

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US-5774660	June 30, 1998	None	