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(12) **United States Patent**  
**Colace et al.**

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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD ALLOWING ADVERTISERS TO MANAGE SEARCH LISTINGS IN A PAY FOR PLACEMENT SEARCH SYSTEM USING GROUPING**

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(73) Assignee: **Overture Services, Inc.**, Pasadena, CA (US)

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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**Related U.S. Application Data**

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/994,912, filed on Nov. 13, 2001, now Pat. No. 6,826,572.

(51) **Int. Cl.**  
**G06F 17/30** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... 707/10; 707/3; 705/1

(58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 707/10, 707/5, 3, 4; 705/1, 26, 27

See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system for advertisers to efficiently manage their search listings in placement database search system includes grouping means for managing multiple categories for the search listings and query means for searching search listings. The system further includes quick-fill means for modifying an attribute in plurality of search listings by specifying the modification at single location.

**14 Claims, 17 Drawing Sheets**

The screenshot shows the Overture DirectTraffic Center interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Main, Manage Bids, Reports, Manage Listings, Money Manager, Support Center, and Power Manager. Below this, there are search filters for 'All Listings' and 'Description' with search buttons. A table of search results is displayed with columns for Search Term, Current Term, Current Position, Current #1 Bid, Current #2 Bid, Current #3 Bid, Current Bid Total, and New Bid. The results include items like 'alex m. kimura', 'buddha essence temple', and 'goodyguys123'.

Search Term	Current Term	Current Position	Current #1 Bid	Current #2 Bid	Current #3 Bid	Current Bid Total	New Bid	Category
alex m. kimura	1204	1	\$0.05	-	-	\$0.05	\$0.05	-
buddha essence temple	1224	1	\$0.05	-	-	\$0.05	\$0.05	-
goodyguys123	1222	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	\$0.07	\$0.07	goodystuff
goodyguys124		1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	\$0.07	\$0.07	goodystuff

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5,794,210 A	8/1998	Goldhaber et al. ....	705/14	6,253,188 B1 *	6/2001	Witek et al. ....	705/14
5,826,241 A	10/1998	Stein et al. ....	705/26	6,269,361 B1	7/2001	Davis et al. ....	707/3
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5,862,223 A	1/1999	Walker et al. ....	705/50	2002/0004735 A1	1/2002	Gross .....	705/10
5,864,845 A	1/1999	Voorhees et al. ....	707/5	2002/0165849 A1 *	11/2002	Singh et al.	
5,864,846 A	1/1999	Voorhees et al. ....	705/44	2002/0169760 A1	11/2002	Cheung et al. ....	707/3
5,903,882 A	5/1999	Asay et al. ....	705/44	2003/0050863 A1	3/2003	Radwin .....	705/27
5,918,014 A	6/1999	Robinson .....	709/219	2003/0093385 A1	5/2003	Colace et al. ....	705/64
5,920,854 A	7/1999	Kirsch et al. ....	707/3				

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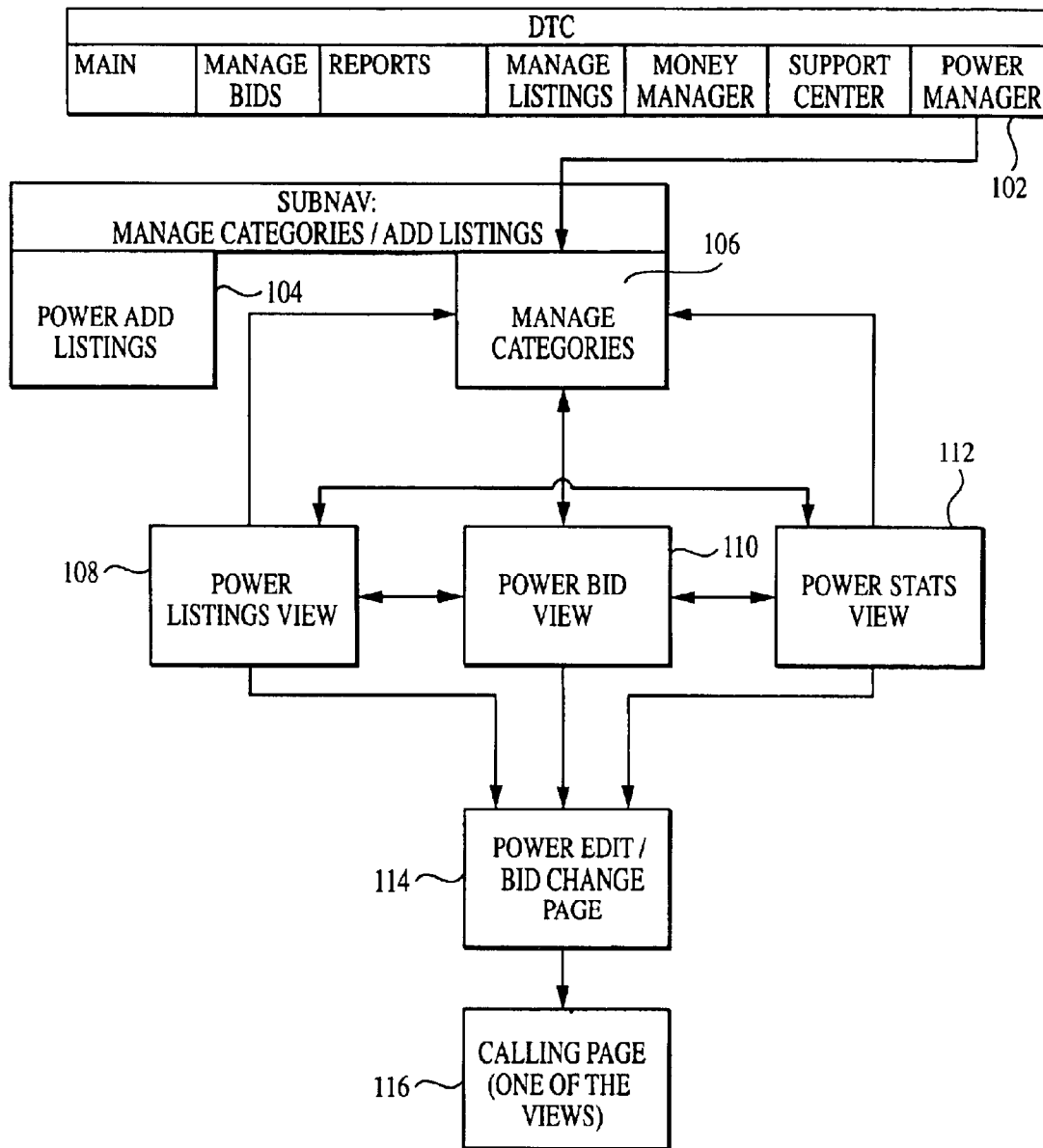


FIG. 1

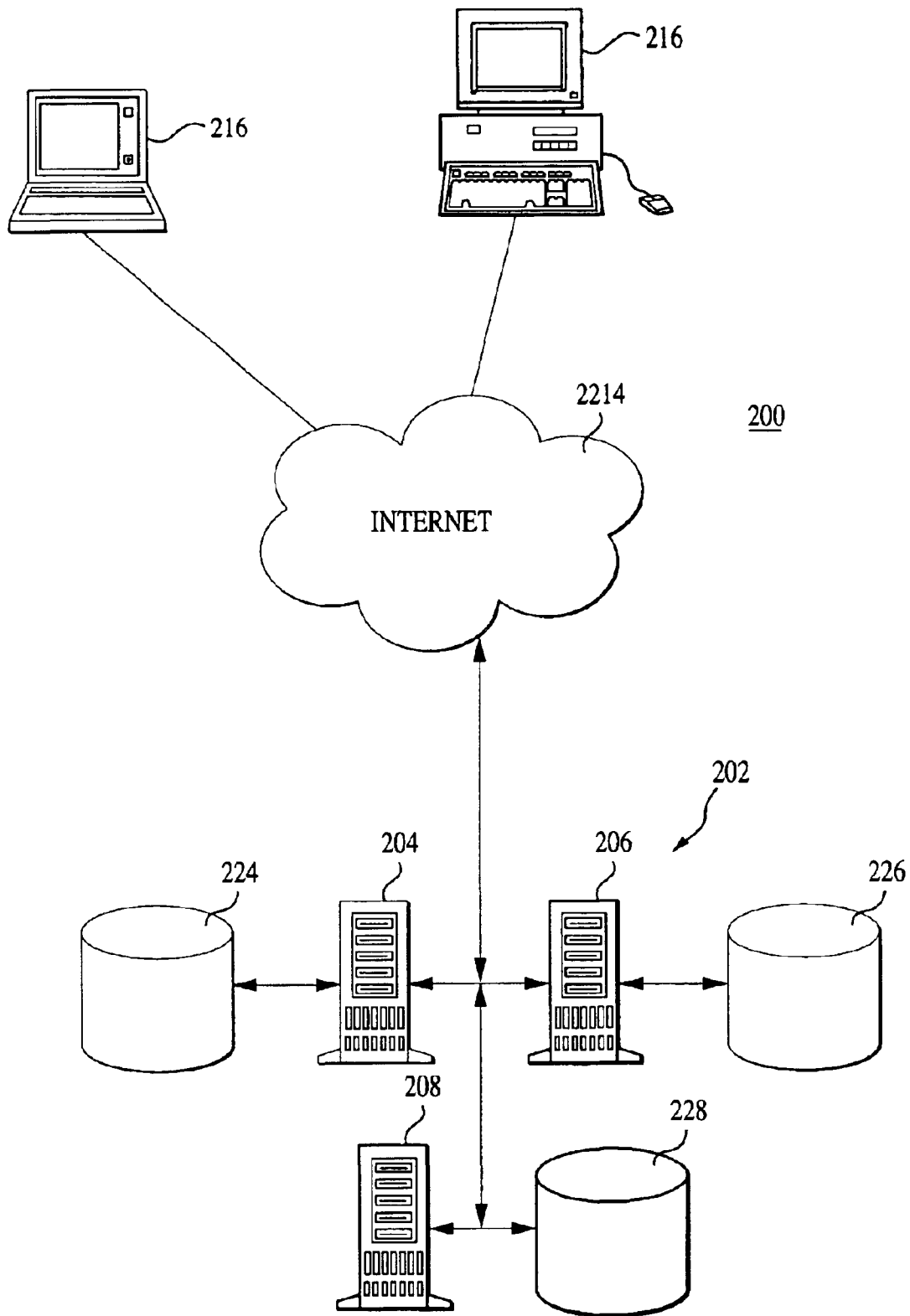


FIG. 2

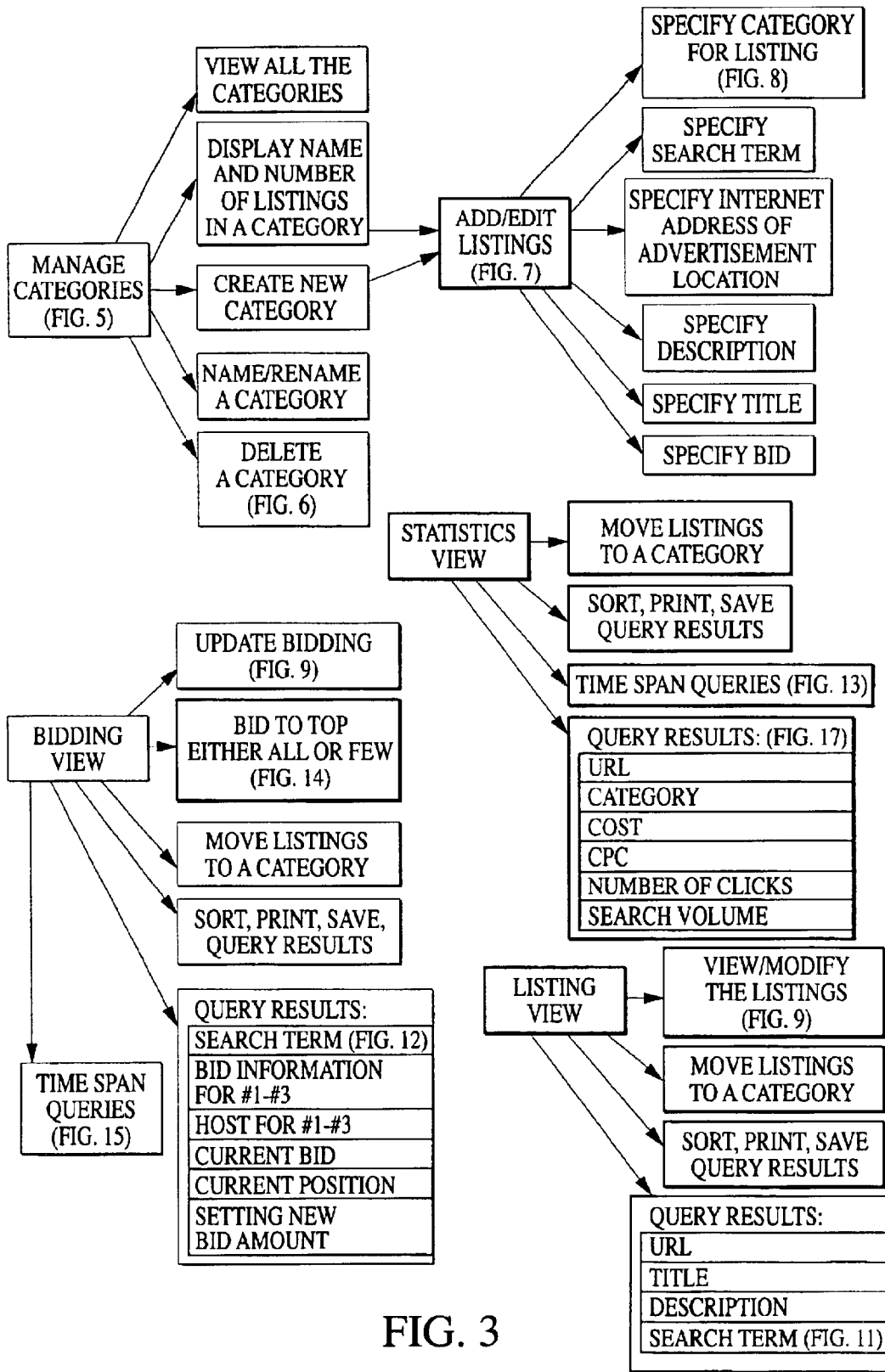


FIG. 3

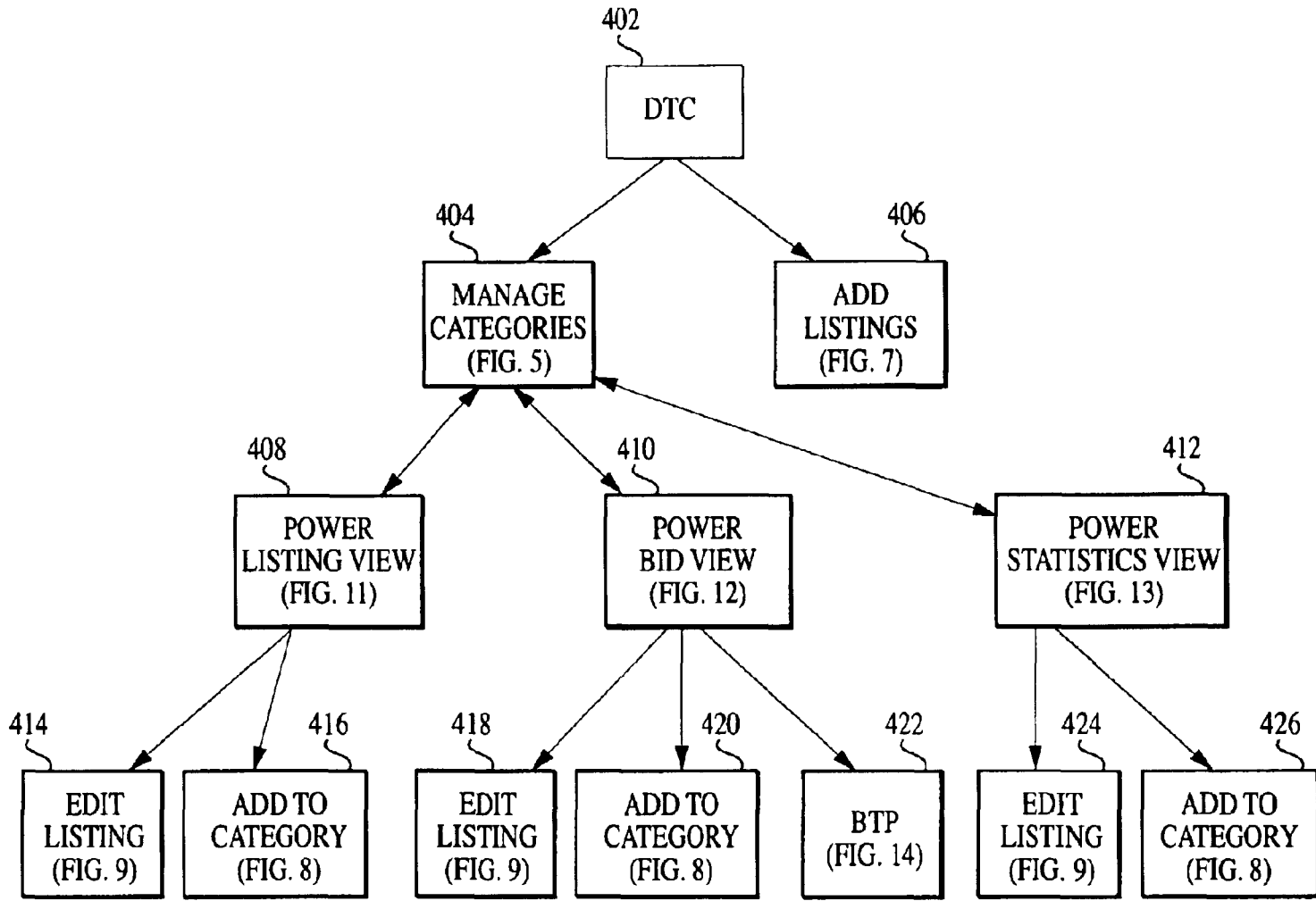


FIG. 4

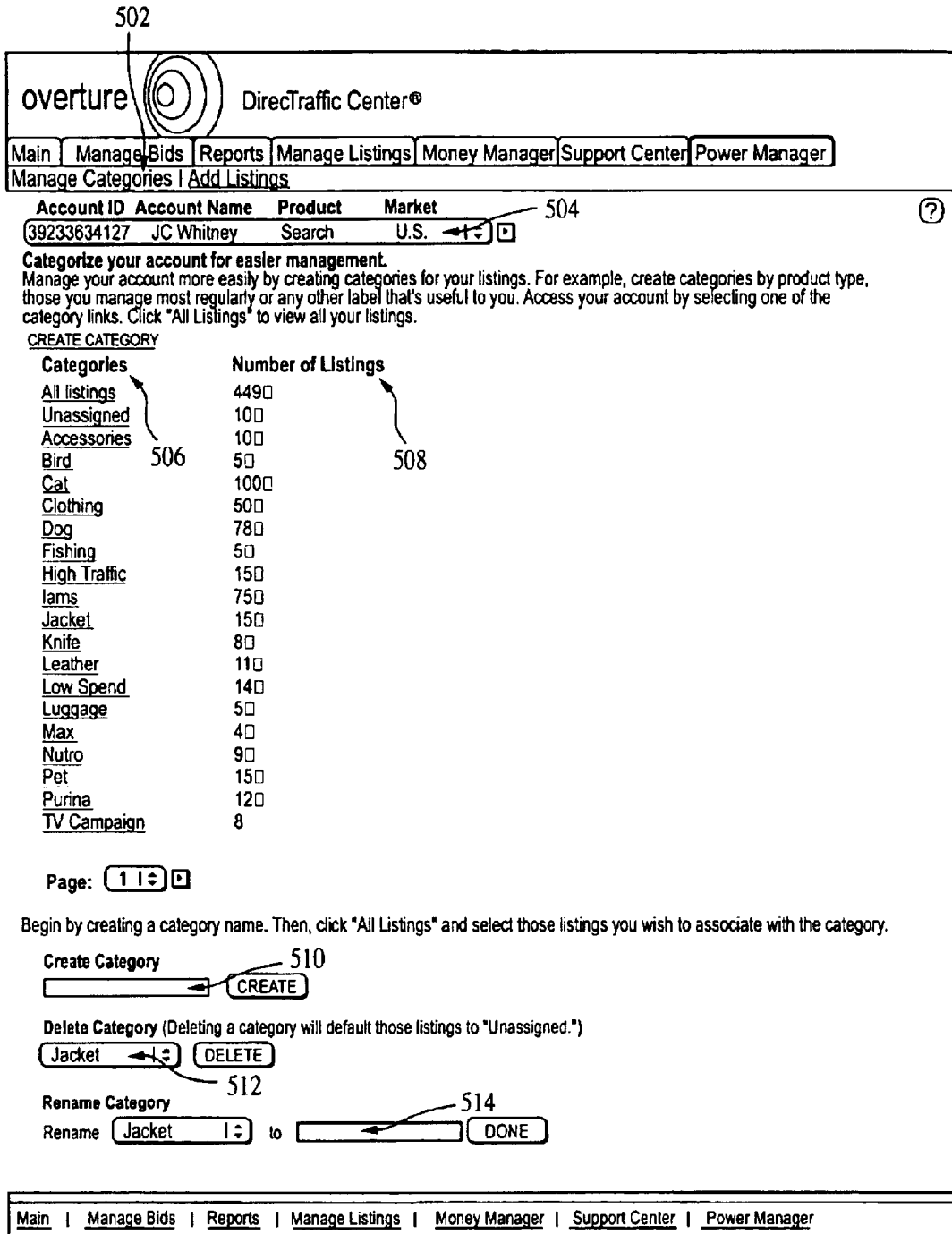


FIG. 5

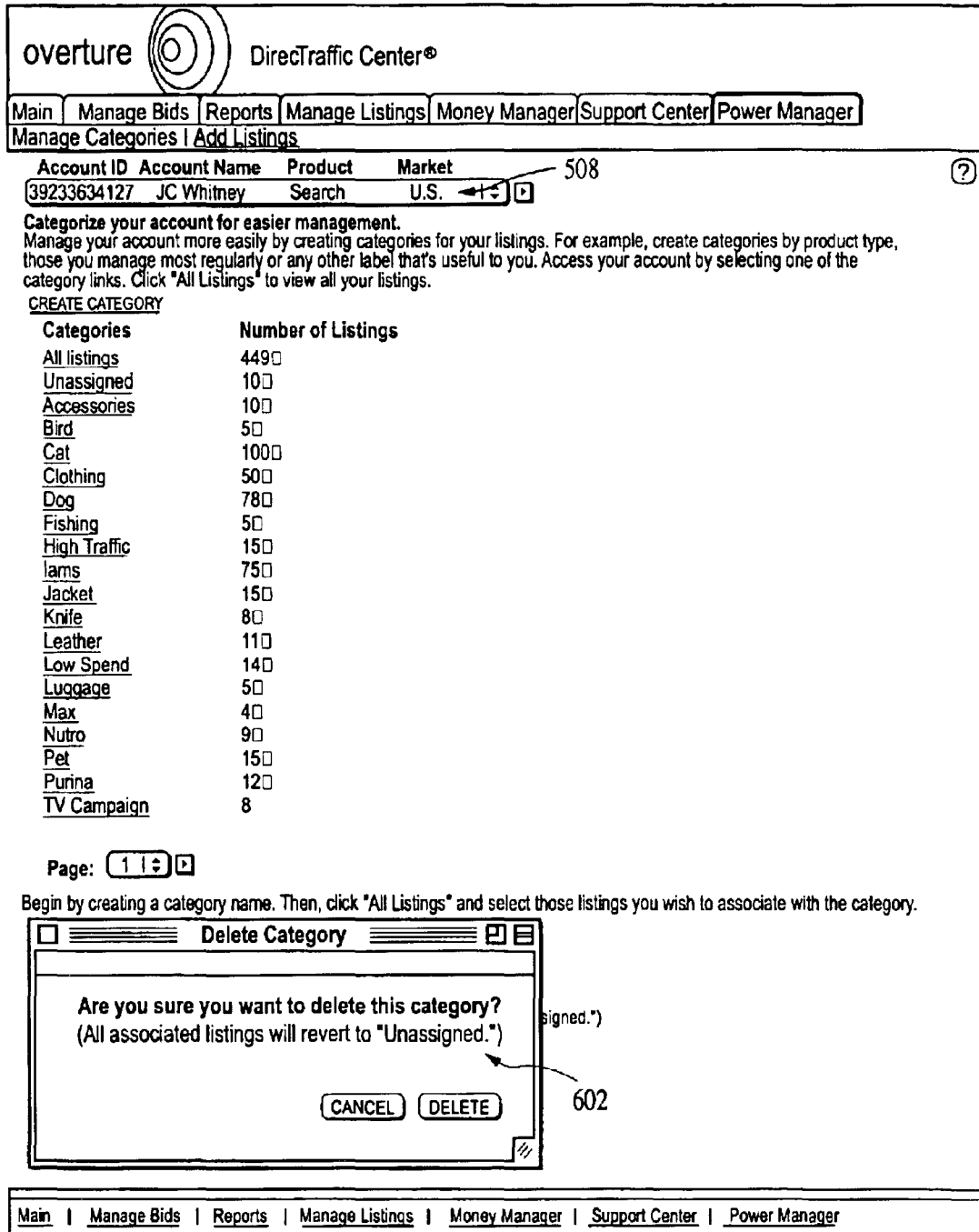


FIG. 6



overture 
DirecTraffic Center®

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings

**Add Listings** ?

- Please complete the fields below to create new search listings.
- Your new search listings will be submitted to Overture for editorial review, which normally takes 3-5 business days.

**Increase Click-Throughs: Include your search term in the title and description.**

Sites with Adult Content (e.g., X-rated) must check this box.

Note: Submit your new listings soon to avoid losing your work. If you stay on this page for 30 minutes, you will be automatically logged out.

1.  URL: (e.g. http://www.xyz.com)

Title: (e.g. Buy Sofas Online.)

Bid: (e.g. 0.29)

Search Term	Current Bid	Bid\$:
Suggestion Tool:	Tool:	(e.g. 0.29)
<input type="text" value="ST"/>	<input type="text" value="R"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>

Copy title, description, URL and bid from previous listing

2.  URL: (e.g. http://www.xyz.com)

Title: (e.g. Buy Sofas Online.)

Bid: (e.g. 0.29)

Search Term	Current Bid	Bid\$:
Suggestion Tool:	Tool:	(e.g. 0.29)
<input type="text" value="ST"/>	<input type="text" value="R"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>

Copy title, description, URL and bid from previous listing

3.  URL: (e.g. http://www.xyz.com)

Title: (e.g. Buy Sofas Online.)

Bid: (e.g. 0.29)

Search Term	Current Bid	Bid\$:
Suggestion Tool:	Tool:	(e.g. 0.29)
<input type="text" value="ST"/>	<input type="text" value="R"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>

Copy title, description, URL and bid from previous listing

4.  URL: (e.g. http://www.xyz.com)

Title: (e.g. Buy Sofas Online.)

Bid: (e.g. 0.29)

Search Term	Current Bid	Bid\$:
Suggestion Tool:	Tool:	(e.g. 0.29)
<input type="text" value="ST"/>	<input type="text" value="R"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

FIG. 7

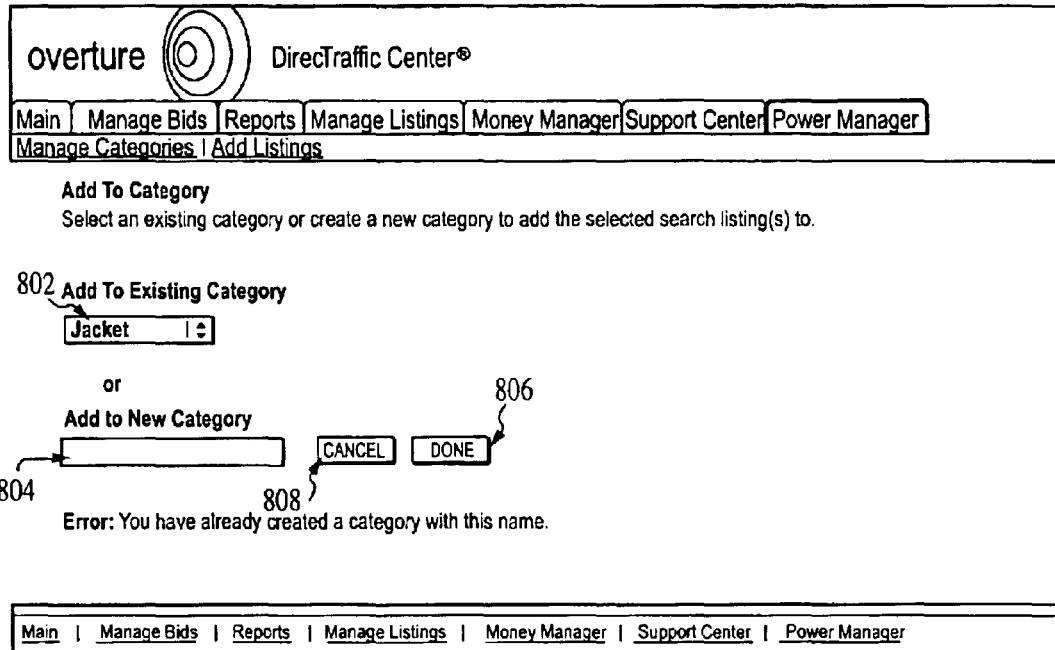



FIG. 8

**overture**  **DirecTraffic Center®**

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings

**Edit Listings** ?

Make changes to your listings individually, or use Quick Fill to change a field or multiple fields across all listings displayed. We recommend you use Quick Fill first and make changes to individual listings second.

Note: Submit your changes soon to avoid losing your work. If you stay on this page for 30 minutes, you will be automatically logged out.

**Quick Fill** 918 920 922

Use this to make global changes to your displayed listings. Fields left blank will not incur charges.

Category:

...

URL:


Title:

Description:

900	902	1.	Search Term: 10 disc cd changer Category: Electronics Current Bid: \$ .07 Current #1 Bid: \$ .12 Current #2 Bid: \$ .12 Current #3 Bid: \$ .10 Current Bid Tool: [B] New Bid: <input type="checkbox"/>	924	908 910 912 914 916	2.	Search Term: 10 disc changer Category: Electronics Current Bid: \$ .07 Current #1 Bid: \$ .12 Current #2 Bid: \$ .12 Current #3 Bid: \$ .10 Current Bid Tool: [B] New Bid: <input type="checkbox"/>	3.	Search Term: 1000w Category: Electronics Current Bid: \$ .07 Current #1 Bid: \$ .12 Current #2 Bid: \$ .12 Current #3 Bid: \$ .10 Current Bid Tool: [B] New Bid: <input type="checkbox"/>	4.	Search Term: 10 spoke racing rim Category: Electronics Current Bid: \$ .07 Current #1 Bid: \$ .12 Current #2 Bid: \$ .12 Current #3 Bid: \$ .10 Current Bid Tool: [B] New Bid: <input type="checkbox"/>	5.	Search Term: 12 volt air conditioner Category: Electronics Current Bid: \$ .07 Current #1 Bid: \$ .12 Current #2 Bid: \$ .12 Current #3 Bid: \$ .10 Current Bid Tool: [B] New Bid: <input type="checkbox"/>	DELETE THIS LISTING - [X]	[X]
-----	-----	----	---	-----	---------------------	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	---------------------------	-----

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

FIG. 9

overture  DirecTraffic Center®

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings

Aug 30 2001 15:28:34 PT

Account ID: 39233634127

This is your confirmation page. Please print this page for your records.

1002

Delete Listings

1004

Search Term	URL
leather bomber jacket	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html
leather coat	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html

Bid Changes

1006

Search Term	URL	Current Bid
all leather jacket	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html	\$0.02
biker jacket	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html	\$0.02
cutlery	http://www.shopross.com/catalog2998.html	\$0.05
discount leather jacket	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html	\$0.03
fillet knife	http://www.shopross.com/catalog2998.html	\$0.05

Modified Listings

Search Term	URL	Current Bid
fishing	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html	\$0.10
fishing knife	http://www.shopross.com/catalog3051.html	\$0.05
fishing links	http://www.shopross.com/catalog2998.html	\$0.01

OK

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

FIG. 10

overture
DirecTraffic Center®

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings

Your Account as of Aug 30 2001 15:28:34 PT

You have searched on All Listings where the Search Term contains X  
 Select one of the following search methods to change category or filter results.

1102

contains

is greater than or equal to

View and select listings to update titles, descriptions and URLs, and manage listings by category.

BID | LISTINGS | STATISTICS
1110
Items to display per page:

SELECT ALL ON PAGE	Search Term	URL	Title	Description	Category
<input type="checkbox"/>	all leather jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for All Leather Jackets	Shop right at Shop Ross, featuring products such as leather jackets, fishing and hunting equipment & more. We have over 4000 items in our catalog.	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	biker jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Biker Jackets	Shop right at Shop Ross, featuring products such as leather jackets, fishing and hunting equipment & more. We have over 4000 items in our catalog.	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	cutlery	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	discount leather jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Jackets and More	Shop right at Shop Ross, featuring products such as leather jackets, fishing and hunting equipment & more. We have over 4000 items in our catalog.	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	fillet knife	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing knife	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing links	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Fishing Links and More	Shop Ross for Fishing Links and More	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	knifs	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Cool Leather Jackets	Shop Ross for Cool Leather Jackets	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather bomber jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Bomber Jackets	Shop Ross for Leather Bomber Jackets	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather coat	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Coats and More	Shop Ross for Leather Coats and More	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather good	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Goods and More	Shop Ross for Leather Goods and More	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Cool Leather Jackets	Shop Ross for Cool Leather Jackets	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather motorcycle jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Biker Jackets	Shop Ross for Leather Biker Jackets	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leatherman	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	man leather jacket	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Mens Leather Jackets	Shop Ross for Mens Leather Jackets	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	man parka	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Mens Parkas	Shop Ross for Mens Parkas	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	motorcycle leather	VIEW URL	Shop Ross for Leather Biker Jackets	Shop Ross for Leather Biker Jackets	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	multi tool	VIEW URL	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	Fishing & Hunting Knives, Multitools	-

SELECT ALL ON PAGE

URL

Page:

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

FIG. 11

The screenshot shows the DirectTraffic Center interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with buttons for Main, Manage Bids, Reports, Manage Listings, Money Manager, Support Center, and Power Manager. Below this is a sub-menu with Manage Categories and Add Listings. The user name 'sphilips' is displayed in the top right corner. A message states 'You have searched on All Listings' and provides search filters. A dropdown menu for 'alllistings' is open, showing options for URL, Search Term, Description, and Title. Below the filters, a table of bid listings is shown with columns for Bid ID, Search Term, Current Term, Current Position, Current #1 Bid, Current #2 Bid, Current #3 Bid, Current Bid Tool, New Bid, and Category. The table contains five rows of data. Reference numerals 1202, 1204, 1208, 1210, 1212, 1214, 1216, 1218, and 1220 are used to identify specific elements in the interface.

overture DirectTraffic Center® User Name sphilips

Main Manage Bids Reports Manage Listings Money Manager Support Center Power Manager

Manage Categories Add Listings Log Out

You have searched on All Listings

Select one of the following search methods to change category or filter results.

alllistings URL contains SEARCH

alllistings Description is greater than or equal to SEARCH

Important: Click the "Update" button before sorting or changing bid pages, or your changes will be lost.

1204

BID LISTINGS STATISTICS

ADD TO CATEGORY EDIT LISTING BID TO TOP UPDATE


SELECT ALL ON PAGE	Search Term	Current Term	Current Position	Current #1 Bid	Current #2 Bid	Current #3 Bid	Current Bid Tool	New Bid	Category
<input type="checkbox"/>	alex m. kimura	\$0.05	1	\$0.05	-	-	[B]	\$0.05	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	buddha essence temple	1224 \$0.05	1	\$0.05	-	-	[B]	\$0.05	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguy123	1222 \$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	[B]	\$0.07	goofystuff
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguy124	\$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	[B]	\$0.07	goofystuff
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguy125	\$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	[B]	\$0.07	goofystuff

Items to display per page: 20

1208 1210 1212 1214 1216 1218 1220

1204

FIG. 12

overture  DirecTraffic Center® User Name sphilips

[Main](#) | [Manage Bids](#) | [Reports](#) | [Manage Listings](#) | [Money Manager](#) | [Support Center](#) | [Power Manager](#)  
[Manage Categories](#) | [Add Listings](#)  Log Out

You have searched on All Listings

Select one of the following search methods to change category or filter results.

contains

is greater than or equal to

See how your listings are performing by search volume, total clicks or coste-per-click.

|


|

For the time frame:  1302 1304 1306 1308 1310 1312

Items to display per page:

		Total clicks	Total Cost	PPC	Category
1	<input type="checkbox"/> alex m. kimura	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	-
2	<input type="checkbox"/> buddha essence temple	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	-
3	<input type="checkbox"/> goofyguys123	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	goofystuff
4	<input type="checkbox"/> goofyguys124	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	goofystuff
5	<input type="checkbox"/> goofyguys125	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	goofystuff

FIG. 13

overture 		DirectTraffic Center®				
<a href="#">Main</a>	<a href="#">Manage Bids</a>	<a href="#">Reports</a>	<a href="#">Manage Listings</a>	<a href="#">Money Manager</a>	<a href="#">Support Center</a>	<a href="#">Power Manager</a>
<a href="#">Manage Categories</a>		<a href="#">Add Listings</a>				

You chose to bid your selected listings to top.  
 A total of 2 listings will be bid to top.

**Increase click-throughs with Bid to Top.**

You have chosen to bid the listings you selected to the top of the search results. The higher your position in the search results, the more clicks your listings are likely to receive. Bid to Top allows you to move search listings to the top position quickly and easily. Choose one of the following options:

**Bid to Top unlimited:** We'll increase your bids so that your site on selected listings is at the top of every search term you selected. If your bids are currently below \$0.05, this procedure will raise all bids to the \$0.05 minimum. You will not be able to lower them later.

**Bid to Top with a cap of: \$**

We'll move all of your selected listings to the number-one position OR to your specified maximum bid amount (whichever costs less). You can only have one cap for all of your bids. For example: If you want to Bid to Top with a cap of \$0.60, we will bid your search listings one cent higher than the current top bid to move your listings to the number-one position. If, however, there are any search listings where the top bid is greater than \$0.60, we will only increase your bid to your cap amount of \$0.60.

- Make sure there's enough money in your account to cover the increased traffic. By using Bid to Top, you will probably get more click-throughs to your site, and your funds will be exhausted more quickly.
- There is a \$0.05 minimum bid requirement. If any of your search listings were created before March 1, 2001 and are below the \$0.05 minimum, any bid change, such as using Bid to Top, will cause those listings to be subject to the \$0.05 minimum.
- We cannot guarantee how long your listings will remain in the top position. As always, you could be outbid by another advertiser at any time.
- We perform the Bid to Top service upon request only. This service does not keep your listings at the top on an ongoing basis. If you wish to move your listings to the top again in the future, you must submit another Bid to Top request.
- Bid to Top requests are processed immediately on a first-come, first-served basis. We will send you a confirmation e-mail once your request has been processed.

[Request more information.](#)

<a href="#">Main</a>	<a href="#">Manage Bids</a>	<a href="#">Reports</a>	<a href="#">Manage Listings</a>	<a href="#">Money Manager</a>	<a href="#">Support Center</a>	<a href="#">Power Manager</a>
----------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------

FIG. 14





overture 
DiracTraffic Center®
User Name sfphilips

Main | Manage Bids | Reports | Manage Listings | Money Manager | Support Center | Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings  Log Out

You have searched on All Listings

Select one of the following search methods to change category or filter results.

alllistings | URL | contains |  |

alllistings | Last Seven Days PPC | is greater than or equal to |  |

**Important:** Click the "Update" button before sorting or changing filters. will be lost.


Items to display per page:

BID | LISTINGS | STATISTICS

ADD TO CATEGORY | EDIT LISTING | BID TO TOP | UPDATE

SELECT ALL ON PAGE	Search Term	Current Term	Current Position	Current #1 Bid	Current #2 Bid	Current #3 Bid	Current Bid Tool	New Bid	Category
<input type="checkbox"/>	alex m. kimura	\$0.05	1	\$0.05	-	-	B	\$0.05	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	buddha essence temple	\$0.05	1	\$0.05	-	-	B	\$0.05	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguys123	\$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	B	\$0.07	goofystuff
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguys124	\$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	B	\$0.07	goofystuff
<input type="checkbox"/>	goofyguys125	\$0.07	1	\$0.07	\$0.06	-	B	\$0.07	goofystuff

FIG. 16


DiracTraffic Center®

Main
Manage Bids
Reports
Manage Listings
Money Manager
Support Center
Power Manager

Manage Categories | Add Listings

Your Account as of Aug 30 2001 15:28:34 PT (?)

You have searched on All Listings where the Search Term contains X  
 Select one of the following search methods to change category or filter results.

All Listings

Search Term

contains

SEARCH

All Listings

Bid

is greater than or equal to

SEARCH

See how your listings are performing by search volume, total clicks or cost-per-click.

**BID** | **LISTINGS** | **STATISTICS**    For the time frame: **Last seven days**    Items to display per page: **200**

**ADD TO CATEGORY** | **EDIT LISTING**

SELECT ALL ON PAGE	Search Term	URL	Total Clicks	Total Cost	CPC	Category
<input type="checkbox"/>	all leather jacket	VIEW URL	12	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	biker jacket	VIEW URL	31	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	cutlery	VIEW URL	42	\$ .75	\$ .14	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	discount leather jacket	VIEW URL	12	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	fillet knife	VIEW URL	12	\$ .75	\$ .14	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing	VIEW URL	3	\$ .75	\$ .14	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing knife	VIEW URL	1	\$ .75	\$ .14	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	fishing links	VIEW URL	23	\$ .75	\$ .14	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	knife	VIEW URL	12	\$ .75	\$ .14	knife
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather	VIEW URL	1	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather bomber jacket	VIEW URL	3	\$ .75	\$ .14	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather coat	VIEW URL	4	\$ .75	\$ .14	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather good	VIEW URL	14	\$ .75	\$ .14	leather
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather jacket	VIEW URL	5	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leather motorcycle jacket	VIEW URL	1	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	leatherman	VIEW URL	2	\$ .75	\$ .14	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	man leather jacket	VIEW URL	1	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	man parka	VIEW URL	2	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	motorcycle leather	VIEW URL	3	\$ .75	\$ .14	jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	multitool	VIEW URL	1	\$ .75	\$ .14	-

SELECT ALL ON PAGE
 Search Term
URL
URL
Total Clicks
Total Cost
CPC
Category

**ADD TO CATEGORY** | **EDIT LISTING**

Page: **1**

Main
Manage Bids
Reports
Manage Listings
Money Manager
Support Center

FIG. 17

**SYSTEM AND METHOD ALLOWING  
ADVERTISERS TO MANAGE SEARCH  
LISTINGS IN A PAY FOR PLACEMENT  
SEARCH SYSTEM USING GROUPING**

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 09/994,912, filed Nov. 13, 2001 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,826,572, pending, which application is incorporated herein in its entirety by this reference.

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REFERENCE TO CD ROM APPENDIX

A compact disc appendix is included containing computer program code listings pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.52(e) and is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. The total number of compact discs is 1 including 30,071 files and 96,227,410 bytes. The files included on the compact disc are listed in a file entitled "dir\_s" on the compact disc. Because of the large number of files contained on the compact disc, the required listing of file names, dates of creation and sizes in bytes is included in the file dir\_s on the compact disk and incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND

The Internet provides many databases of information accessible for searching and receiving information. Pay for placement database search systems have been developed in which advertisers bid on the placement of their listings in search results returned to a searcher in response to a world wide web query from a searcher. Each advertiser's listing includes a search term and a bid amount. In some embodiments, each advertiser's listing includes a title, descriptive text and a clickable hyperlink or uniform resource locator (URL). The database of search listings stores many such listings, each associated with an advertiser. Upon receipt of the query, the database is searched and listings having a search term matching the query are formatted for display to the searcher as search results.

The advertisers adjust their bids or bid amounts to control the position at which their search listings are presented in the search results. The pay for placement system places search listings having higher-valued bids higher or closer to the top of the search listings. Other rules may be applied as well when positioning search listings. For example, a more senior listing will be positioned or ranked higher than a junior listing for the same search term and same bid. Higher-ranked listings are seen by more searchers and are more likely to be clicked, producing traffic of potential customers to an advertiser's web site.

The searcher is presented with search listings according to the bid amounts. The search listings may extend over several screens or pages when formatted for viewing. As a result, higher positioned search listings are much more likely to be seen by the searcher. Moreover, some pay for placement systems have affiliate agreements whereby some of their highest-bidder search listings are presented to searchers

using other general purpose search engines. Because of these affiliate agreements and similar arrangements, an advertiser's web site, if bid highly enough, may be seen by as many as seventy-five percent of Internet users.

5 An advertiser wishing to attract searchers to his web site as potential customers for the advertiser's goods and services thus has an incentive to position his search listing relatively high in the search results. An advertiser may enter bids on many search listings. For search listings which are 10 closely related to the content of the advertiser's web site, the advertiser might place relatively large bids. For less closely related search listings, the advertiser might place smaller bids. A number of strategies have been developed by advertisers to increase traffic to advertiser web sites in this 15 manner.

Similarly, pay for placement search systems have developed tools to help the advertisers manage their bids and attract traffic. Overture Services, Inc., operating a system at www.overture.com, has presented advertisers with a standard bidding page accessible over the world wide web. 20

Currently available web sites allow an advertiser to add search listings to the system. However, the conventional system neither allows grouping the search listings in the categories nor allows for mass update of the search listings 25 by single operation.

Accordingly, there is a need for an improved system and method for managing listings in a pay for placement system.

BRIEF SUMMARY

30 By way of introduction only, the present embodiments provide a method and system for a pay for placement database search system. The method and system include grouping and querying, one or more search listings associated with an advertiser, providing the advertisers an ability 35 to simultaneously modify plurality of search listings. The advertisers also possess means to search the categories and gather statistical data for entire category.

40 The foregoing discussion of the preferred embodiments has been provided only by way of introduction. Nothing in this section should be taken as a limitation of the claims, which define the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

45 FIG. 1 illustrates a navigation map in the search listing management system in a pay for placement search system;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a pay for placement database search system;

50 FIG. 3 is a flow diagram that illustrates the functionalities of various interfaces in the search listing management system;

FIG. 4 is a state diagram showing operations performed in the Manage Category choice and in the List View, the Bid View and the Statistics View;

55 FIG. 5 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Manage-Categories Interface Page' this interface demonstrates the functionality that is used to create, name, and delete a category.

60 FIG. 6 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Popup Interface Page' that is displayed as a confirmation page prior to deleting a category;

FIG. 7 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Add Listing Interface Page', which illustrates how the listings are added to the system;

65 FIG. 8 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Add-to-category Interface Page' representing how a listing is added to a category;

FIG. 9 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Edit-listings Interface Page', which demonstrate a way to modify certain attributes of a listing;

FIG. 10 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Edit-Listings-receipt Interface Page', pointing to receipt displayed in response to a list modification;

FIG. 11 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Listings wide Search', which is a typical Query page in the Listing View;

FIG. 12 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Query Criteria Selection Interface Page', which is a typical Query page in the Bidding View;

FIG. 13 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Bidding Time span Selection Query Interface Page', which is a typical Query page in the Statistics View;

FIG. 14 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Bid-to-top select Interface Page' wherein the advertiser is able to bid all or some of the listings to the top;

FIG. 15 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Bid Statistics Timeframe Query Interface Page', which is a typical Query page in the Bidding View;

FIG. 16 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Numeric Comparison Operation Criteria for Bidding Interface Page', which displays the numeric comparison operators for Bidding Queries; and

FIG. 17 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Statistics Wide Search Interface Page' Bidding Interface Page', which displays a typical Query in the Statistics View.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the drawing, FIG. 1 illustrates the navigation map of a search listing management system which is referred to herein as "Power Manager." Power Manager may be implemented in a pay for placement database search system as described below in conjunction with FIG. 2. In the Power Manager tab 102, the advertiser can either choose to add search listings 104 or to Manage Categories 106. From Manage categories, the advertiser can go to Bid View 110. From Bid View, the advertiser can go to both Listings View 108 and Stat View 112, which provides statistics about search listings. While in one view, the advertiser can navigate to any of the other two views. All three views have ability to edit categories and add listing 114. All three Views have ability to take the advertiser back to Manage Categories page.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a pay-for-placement search system 200. FIG. 2 is an example of a distributed system 200 configured as client/server architecture used in one embodiment of the present invention. A client is a member of a class or group that uses the services of another class or group to which it is not related. A server is typically a remote computer system that is accessible over a communications medium such as the Internet. The client process may be active in a second computer system, and communicate with the server process over a communications medium that allows multiple clients to take advantage of the information-gathering capabilities of the server. Thus, the server essentially acts as an information provider for a computer network.

The block diagram of FIG. 2 therefore shows a distributed system 200 including a plurality of advertiser web servers 204 and associated database 224, an account management server 206 and associated database 226, and a search engine web server 208 and associated database 228, and a plurality

of client computers 216 such as a searcher computer and an advertiser computer, all of which are connected to a network such as the Internet 214. The network 214 will be hereinafter generally referred to as the Internet. Although the system and method of the present invention is specifically useful for the Internet, it should be understood that the client computers 216, advertiser web servers 204, account management server 206, and search engine web server 208 may be connected together through one of a number of different types of networks. Such networks may include local area networks (LANs), other wide area networks (WANs), and regional networks accessed over telephone lines, such as commercial information services. The client and server processes may even comprise different programs executing simultaneously on a single computer. Advertiser web server 204, account management server 206, and search engine web server 208 and their associated storage device comprise a pay-for-placement database search system 202 as described herein.

The client computers 216 can be conventional personal computers (PCs), workstations, or computer systems of any other size. Each client 216 typically includes one or more processors, memories, input/output devices, and a network interface, such as a conventional modem or network interface card. The advertiser web servers 204, account management server 206, and the search engine web server 208 can be similarly configured. However, advertiser web servers 204, account management server 206, and search engine web server 208 may each include many computers connected by a separate private network.

The client computers 216 can execute web browser programs, such as the NAVIGATOR, EXPLORER, or MOSAIC browser programs, to locate the web pages or records stored on advertiser server 204. The browser programs allow the users to enter addresses of specific web pages to be retrieved. These addresses are referred to as Uniform Resource Locators, or URLs. In addition, once a page has been retrieved, the browser programs can provide access to other pages or records when the user "clicks" on hyperlinks to other web pages. Such hyperlinks are located within the web pages 30 and provide an automated way for the user to enter the URL of another page and to retrieve that page. The pages can be data records including as content plain textual information, or more complex digitally encoded multimedia content, such as software programs, graphics, audio signals, videos, and so forth.

In one embodiment, client computers 216 communicate through the network with various network information providers, including account management server 206, search engine server 208, and advertiser servers 204 using the functionality provided by a HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP), although other communications protocols, such as FTP, SNMP, TELNET, and a number of other protocols known in the art, may be used. Preferably, search engine server 208, account management server 206, and advertiser servers 204 are located on the World Wide Web.

As discussed above, at least two types of server are contemplated in the illustrated embodiment. The first server contemplated is an account management server 206 comprising a computer storage medium 220 and a processing system. A database is stored on the storage medium 220 of the account management server 206. The database contains advertiser account information. It will be appreciated from the description below that the system and method described herein may be implemented in software that is stored as executable instructions on a computer storage medium, such as memories or mass storage devices, on the account man-

agement server **206**. Conventional browser programs, running on client computers **216**, may be used to access advertiser account information stored on account management server **206**. Preferably, access to the account management server **206** is accomplished through a firewall, not shown, which protects the account management and search result placement programs and the account information from external tampering. Additional security may be provided via enhancements to the standard communications protocols such as Secure HTTP or the Secure Sockets Layer.

The second server type contemplated is a search engine web server **208**. A search engine program permits network users, upon navigating to the search engine web server URL or sites on other web servers capable of submitting queries to the search engine web server **208** through their browser program, to type keyword queries to identify pages of interest among the millions of pages available on the World Wide Web. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the search engine web server **208** generates a search result list that includes, at least in part, relevant entries obtained from and formatted by the results of the bidding process conducted by the account management server **206**. The search engine web server **208** generates a list of hypertext links to documents that contain information relevant to search terms entered by the user at the client computer **216**. The search engine web server transmits this list, in the form of a web page, to the network user, where it is displayed on the browser running on the client computer **216**. One embodiment of the search engine web server may be found by navigating to the web page at URL <http://www.overture.com/>.

Search engine web server **208** is connected to the Internet **214**. In one embodiment, search engine web server **208** includes a search database including search listing records used to generate search results in response to user queries. In addition, search engine web server **208** may also be connected to the account management server **206**. Account management server **206** may also be connected to the Internet **214**. The search engine web server **208** and the account management server **206** address the different information needs of the users located at client computers **216**.

For example, one class of users located at client computers **216** may be network information providers such as advertising web site promoters or advertisers having advertiser web pages located on advertiser web servers **204**. These advertising web site promoters or advertisers may wish to access account information residing in storage on account management server **206**. An advertising web site promoter may, through the account residing on the account management server **206**, participate in a competitive bidding process with other advertisers. An advertiser may bid on any number of search terms relevant to the content of the advertiser's web site. In one embodiment, the relevance of a bid search term to an advertiser's web site is determined through a manual editorial process prior to insertion of the search listing containing the search term and advertiser web site URL into the database. In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the relevance of a bid search term in a search listing to the corresponding web site may be evaluated using a computer program executing at the processor of account management server **206**, where the computer program will evaluate the search term and corresponding web site according to a set of predefined editorial rules.

The higher bids receive more advantageous placement on the search result list page generated by the search engine **208** when a search using the search term bid on by the advertiser

is executed. In one embodiment, the amount bid by an advertiser comprises a money amount that is deducted from the account of the advertiser for each time the advertiser's web site is accessed via a hyperlink on the search result list page. Alternatively, the amount bid may comprise any economic value given by the advertiser. A searcher clicks on the hyperlink with a computer input device to initiate a retrieval request to retrieve the information associated with the advertiser's hyperlink. Preferably, each access or click on a search result list hyperlink will be redirected to the search engine web server **208** to associate the "click" with the account identifier for an advertiser. This redirect action, which is not apparent to the searcher, will access account identification information coded into the search result page before accessing the advertiser's URL using the search result list hyperlink clicked on by the searcher. The account identification information is recorded in the advertiser's account along with information from the retrieval request as a retrieval request event. Since the information obtained through this mechanism conclusively matches an account identifier with a URL in a manner not possible using conventional server system logs known in the art, accurate account debit records will be maintained. The advertiser's web site description and hyperlink on the search result list page is accompanied by an indication that the advertiser's listing is a paid listing. Each paid listing displays a cost to advertiser, which is an amount corresponding to a price-per-click paid by the advertiser for each referral to the advertiser's site through the search result list.

A second class of users at client computers **216** may comprise searchers seeking specific information on the web. The searchers may access, through their browsers, a search engine web page residing on web server **208**. The search engine web page includes a query box in which a searcher may type a search term comprising one or more keywords. Alternatively, the searcher may query the search engine web server **208** through a query box hyperlinked to the search engine web server **208** and located on a web page stored at a remote web server. When the searcher has finished entering the search term, the searcher may transmit the query to the search engine web server **208** by clicking on a provided hyperlink. The search engine web server **208** will then generate a search result list page and transmit this page to the searcher at the client computer **216**.

The searcher may click on the hypertext links associated with each listing on the search results page to access the corresponding web pages. The hypertext links may access web pages anywhere on the Internet **214**, and include paid listings to advertiser web pages located on advertiser web servers **204**. In one embodiment, the search result list also includes non-paid listings that are not placed as a result of advertiser bids and are generated by a conventional World Wide Web search engine, such as the INKTOMI, LYCOS, or YAHOO! search engines. The non-paid hypertext links may also include links manually indexed into the database by an editorial team. Most preferably, the non-paid listings follow the paid advertiser listings on the search results page.

In another embodiment, the users at client computers **216** may access the web site of other web service providers affiliated with the operator of the pay for placement search system **200**. Under affiliate agreements, search queries entered by the users at the client computers **216** using web pages of the affiliated web service providers are also passed to the search engine web server **208**. The search engine web server **208** produces pay for placement search results as described herein. Some of the pay for placement search results are passed back to the user at the client computer and

combined with other search results to form query results. Under an affiliate agreement, the pay for placement search results may be positioned in any suitable location in the query results. If the user clicks on one of the pay for placement search results, economic value is generated for the pay for placement search system 200 or for the affiliated web service provider, or both.

Preferably, from the perspective of the operator of the pay for placement search system 200, under the affiliate agreement the pay for placement search results are positioned or ranked near or at the top of the query results sent to the user. Search listings treated this way are referred to as premium listings. In one example, the premium listings are the top three search listings for a search term and are passed to the affiliated web service provider and displayed in the top three positions of the query results. A premium listing has an increased likelihood of being clicked by the user. In this manner, an advertiser's premium search listing will be seen by a larger number of searchers using the World Wide Web, increasing the traffic to the advertiser's web site. This increases the incentive for the advertiser to submit bids to position the advertiser's search listings as premium search listings, with a rank or position which will ensure display near the top of the query results.

FIG. 3 is a key map diagram that illustrates the functionalities of various interfaces in the Power manager. These functionalities are discussed in detail in following FIG. 5–FIG. 17, and references are provided to the figures which represent the marked feature of the interface in more detail, for example 'Delete Category' functionality has a label FIG. 6, since that functionality is shown in detail in FIG. 6. The purpose of this FIG. 3 is to give at a glance an overview of functionalities of the Power Manager.

FIG. 4 is a state diagram showing operations performed in the Manage Category choice and in the List View, the Bid View and the Statistics View. At various points in this description, an attempt is made to point the reader to the location identifier of the interface in FIG. 4.

FIG. 4 illustrates a method to allow advertisers to manage search listings by grouping in a pay for placement database search system, along with operating states in a system in accordance with FIG. 2. At block 402, the advertiser logs in to the account on the account management system. The advertiser then makes a selection in regards to the next activity, one of which can be Add Listings activity. By following links from block 402 to block 406, the advertiser is placed in a position to add new listings to the system. The search listings entered by the advertiser will be stored in an Editorial Processing System (EPS) for review by editors. After review, the edited search listings are added to the search listing database with an 'all search listings' category and an 'unassigned listing category'. The Add Listings functionality is described in detail below in conjunction with FIG. 7.

The advertiser can also select 'Manage Categories' option from the account management system by following links from block 402 to block 404. This places the advertiser in a position to manage the categories of search listings in the search database. This interface gives the advertiser the ability to switch between his various accounts using a dropdown menu. This interface enumerates the name of the category and the number of listings in both unassigned and user defined categories. The advertiser can create, name, rename and delete a category from this interface. These functionalities are described below in greater detail in conjunction with FIG. 5.

Alternatively, by following a link from block 404 to block 408, the advertiser is placed in a position to enter the Listing View. In the Listing View, by following a link from block 408 to block 416, the advertiser can select a set of listings for adding the listings to a category. This functionality is described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. 8. By following a link from block 408 to block 414, the advertiser can search and edit the listings. These functionalities are described in greater detail in conjunction with FIG. 9. The Listing View is displayed in greater detail in FIG. 11.

The advertiser may also follow a link from block 404 to block 410. In this case, the advertiser is placed in a position to enter the Bid View. In the Bid View, by following a link from block 410 to block 420, the advertiser can select a set of listings for adding the listings to a category. This functionality is described in greater detail in conjunction with FIG. 8. By following a link from block 410 to block 418, the advertiser can search and edit his listings. The Bid View is displayed in detail in FIG. 12. Furthermore, while in the Bid View, the advertiser can also bid a set of listings to top. This functionality is described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. 14.

Alternatively, the advertiser may follow a link from block 404 to block 412. In this case, the advertiser is placed in a position to enter the Statistics View. In the Statistics View, by following a link from block 412 to block 426 the advertiser can select a set of listings for adding the listings to a category. This functionality is described in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. 8. By following a link from block 412 to block 424, the advertiser can search and edit the listings. The Bid View is displayed in detail in FIG. 12.

FIGS. 5–17 are screen shots illustrating operation of a user interface to implement advertiser control of search listings in a pay for placement or other database search system such as the system 200 of FIG. 2. The embodiments of FIGS. 5–17 are illustrative only and many variations of the presentation of the functionality described herein may be substituted. However, components such as the account management server 206 of the search system 200 of FIG. 2 preferably implement a user interface such as the illustrated user interface to allow advertiser control of advertiser search listings. The illustrated functionality may be implemented in one or more software code routines or applications operating on a processing device associated with a database and server system or other device.

FIG. 5 is a screen shot of one embodiment of a 'Manage-Categories Interface Page' wherein the heading 502 'manage categories' is selected because the user is at the junction specified in part 404. Under this interface page, an advertiser can switch between his various accounts using a dropdown menu 504, which displays the details of each account of the advertiser such as Account ID, Account Name, Product, and Market. This interface page enumerates the name of the category at heading 506 and, number of listings in both unassigned and user defined categories at heading 508. The advertiser can create a new category by entering the name of the category in input text box 510, and further rename the category by entering the new name at the input text box 514. The advertiser may select to delete a category by selecting a category from a drop down menu 512. Selecting "delete" from the drop down menu 512 directs the advertiser's browser to a pop up interface page, an example of which is shown in FIG. 6. Before the category gets deleted, the advertiser is required to confirm the delete action by clicking 'DELETE' button at 602 in FIG. 6.

In FIG. 7 the user is at the junction specified in part 406. The FIG. 7 is a representation of the add listings interface

used in a preferred embodiment of the present invention, which enables the advertiser to add search listings to the system. The add listings interface includes a text box **702**, an input text box **704**, an input text box **706**, a suggestion tool **708**, a get current bid tool **710**, a bid amount text box **712** a continue button **716** and a continue button **718**. In the illustrated embodiment, the advertiser is required to provide several parameters for this listing. The search terms parameter denotes the words of the listing that are compared with a received query from a searcher. For instance, in FIG. 7, the advertiser is attempting to enter a listing for a sofa. The advertiser will input word 'sofa' in the search term text box **702**. Then the advertiser will enter the URL for an advertiser web site where the sofa advertisement or other information is located in the input text box **704**. Then the advertiser will enter an appropriate title for this listing in the input text box **706**. In the current example, an appropriate title would be 'Buying sofas online'. Then the advertiser will input a detailed description of this item or other information in the input text box **714**. The advertiser will also enter the bid amount in the bid amount input box **712**. In one session, the advertiser will be able to add multiple search listings, and submit the added listings to the system.

The interface also makes available the search term suggestion tool **708** that suggests a search term and get current bid tool **710** that identifies the top forty bids for the search term. As the name suggests, this interface is used to add listings to the interface. Once entered, a listing resides in a category in the system. The search listings entered by the advertiser will be stored in an Editorial Processing System (EPS) and the search listings will be reviewed by editors affiliated with the pay for placement database. After editorial review, the listing is added to the database of search listings and categorized in the 'all search listings' category and an 'unassigned listing category'. For the ease of use, the interface allows the advertiser to copy the title, description, URL and bid from a previous listing by clicking on 'continue adding listings with this information button' **716**. Otherwise, the advertiser may choose to continue adding listings using a blank form by clicking on continue button **718**.

The ability to group listings facilitates the calculation of the performance metrics for a user defined category, wherein the advertiser can learn more about past performance of a category. The grouping ability further aids in predicting click traffic for a user defined category in the future, for example if market demand of certain kind of medications is increased then the manufacturer of the pharmaceuticals may want to raise his bid to bid to the top for all the medications in certain category. The top position is the most preferred position because the higher the position of the listing in the search results, the more clicks the listing is likely to receive and thereby boost the sale of the medication.

Since all the listings reside in a category, after adding a new listing, the next step is to add the listing to a category. While at position **416** in FIG. 4, the advertiser can move the newly added listing from the unassigned category, to an existing category or alternatively, create a new category and move the listing to that new category. FIG. 8 displays one embodiment of an interface by which the advertiser has a choice to add the listing to an existing category by selecting an existing category from the drop down menu **802**. The interface of FIG. 8 also includes a text box **804**, a done button **806** and a cancel button **808**. The option of creating a new category is exercised by entering the name of the category in the 'Add to new category' text box **804**, and then clicking on the done button **806**. Any time prior to clicking on **806**, the advertiser may abort by clicking on the cancel button **808**.

The 'Edit Listings' at positions **414**, **418**, **424** in FIG. 4 illustrates a user's ability to modify listings. In FIG. 9, the quick fill box **900** located at the top portion of this interface allows the advertiser to modify an attribute of multiple listings by specifying the value of the attribute at a single location. The advertiser selects a category for the quick-fill operation from a list of user defined categories in the drop down menu **902**. The quick-fill functionality allows all the listings in that category to be modified with respect to a URL by providing an intended URL in text box **918**. All the search listings in the selected user defined category will contain the modified URL when the advertiser clicks on 'Quick Fill All' button **924**. The 'Title' text box **920** and the 'Description' **922** text box can similarly be filled or populated for the selected user defined category.

Alternatively, the advertiser may choose to modify the attributes of each listing individually by providing separate input for each category, by selecting a category from a drop down menu of categories **904**. This interface provides the current bid for position for the top three positions, including bid **908**, bid **910** and bid **912**, along with current bid tool **914** to help the advertiser determine a new bid amount and enter the bid at bid entry box **916**. After providing all the information the advertiser can submit the input by clicking the 'SUBMIT CHANGES' button **926**.

After submitting changes, a confirmation is provided to the user. FIG. 10 shows the edit receipt confirmation interface with 'Search Term' **1002**, URL **1004** and 'Current Bid' **1006**, after the modifications are submitted.

In FIG. 11, the user is at the junction specified in position **408** of FIG. 4. FIG. 11 shows a listings wide search page. The search page allows an advertiser to enter elements of a search query to search and organize the advertiser's search listings, including searching by category. The search page includes a drop down box **1102**, a drop down box **1104**, a text input box **1106**, a drop down menu **1110**, a numeric operator comparison drop down menu **1112**, a input box **1114**. In FIG. 11, the interface displays a typical listings query page wherein drop down box **1102** enables the advertiser to select either all listings or the listings in the user defined category or the listings in the unassigned category. Next, a user selects from the search term drop down box **1104**. The list of choices under this menu is illustrated at drop down menu **1202**, FIG. 12. This drop down menu **1202** includes: Search Term, URL, Description or title which may be used as search criteria.

The text input box **1106** allows the advertiser to enter a text string to be compared using the search criteria previously entered at drop down menu **1104**. The advertiser can also run a bid based query by selecting a time span at drop down menu **1110**. A list of choices which may be provided under Bid query drop down menu **1110** is illustrated at drop down menu **1502** in FIG. 15. There, the possible search items include number of clicks, total amount spent, and price per click for various time spans. In numeric operator comparison drop down menu **1112**, the advertiser selects a filter from the list of choices under this menu. One example of the possible list of choices is shown at **1602**, FIG. 16, and includes entries 'is greater than or equal to' and 'is less than or equal to'. Next, the advertiser enters a numeric value in the input box **1114** to be compared with the numeric value of input in the drop down menu **1110**. The search query is submitted by clicking a search button. After processing, the query results are displayed to the advertiser in tabular form including the Search Term, URL, Title, Description and name of the category for each search listing. The advertiser can click on the View URL icon to go to the advertiser's page that is advertised by the listing.



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In FIG. 12, the user is at the junction specified as position 410 in FIG. 4. FIG. 12 shows one embodiment of a screen shot of a Query Criteria Selection Interface page. The page of FIG. 12 includes a drop down menu 1202, a select all listings link 1204, a current bid selector 1208, a current position selector 1210, a current first bid 1212, a current second bid 1214, a current third bid 1216, a current bid tool 1218, a text box 1220, alphabetical sort controller 1222, and bid search controller 1224. In the screen shot of FIG. 12, the interface displays a typical Bid Query Criteria selection page. The BID option is selected which denotes that the advertiser is exploring the edit listing option under the Bid View as illustrated at position 418 in FIG. 4. The advertiser can select at drop down menu 1202, one of the following search criteria: Search Term, URL, Description or Title. This interface provides a current bid selector 1208 for each listing as well as a current position selector 1210 for the listing. The interface also provides the position for top three bids, including first bid 1212, second bid 1214 and third bid 1216, along with a current bid tool 1218 to help the advertiser determine a new bid amount and enter at text box 1220. The advertiser further can select all the listings at once by clicking on the downward pointing arrow at the select all listings link 1204. Selecting all listings allows the user to perform one operation on all the selected listings via using the quick fill operation described herein. The advertiser can sort the query results alphabetically by clicking on either upward or downward pointing arrows of the alphabetical sort controller 1222 located under the title Search Term. The advertiser can also sort the query results in ascending or descending order by clicking on either upward or downward pointing arrow of the bid search controller 1224 located under the title Current Bid.

The bid view of FIG. 12 also enables the advertisers to run a query by selecting one of the following search criteria from a drop down menu 1502 of FIG. 15: number of clicks, Total amount spent, and price per click for various time spans. In the bid view, the queries can be searched using the numeric comparison operators such as 'less than or equal to' or 'greater than or equal to' from the drop down selection menu 1602 in FIG. 16.

In FIG. 14, the user is at the junction specified as position 422 in FIG. 4. The advertiser can select certain search listings to control the position at which one or more search listings are displayed. This is provided by the bid to top functionality, which in the illustrated embodiment allows the advertiser to select the first, second or third ranked positions for a search listing. The top position is generally the most preferred position or ranking because higher ranked search listings will be seen by more users and will therefore generate more clicks. The bid to top functionality allows an advertiser to quickly and easily move search listings to top positions.

In a first option, the advertiser can select "bid to top unlimited." In this option, the advertiser specified a desired rank for one or more search listings. The system will always try to position the selected search listing at the desired rank specified by the advertiser. This is done without regard to the amount of the bid required to achieve the specified rank. In the second option, the advertiser can select the "bid to top with cap" option. Under this option, the advertiser specifies both desired rank and a bid cap for one or more search. The system tries to position the search listings at the desired rank without exceeding the bid cap. Rules and exceptions are implemented to address tie conditions and other situations. A more detailed explanation of the bid to top functionality may be found in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/993,

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926, entitled POSITION BIDDING IN A PAY FOR PLACEMENT SEARCH SYSTEM, filed on Nov. 13, 2001 and commonly assigned to the assignee of the present application, which application is incorporated herein in its entirety by this reference.

FIG. 13 is a screen shot showing one embodiment of a statistics view query page. This page allows an advertiser to review statistics related to the advertiser's search listings. The query page includes a statistics view 1302, a drop down menu 1304, headings 1306, 1308, 1310 and a category indication 1312. In the query page of FIG. 13, the user is at the junction specified as position 412 in FIG. 14. The Statistics View 1302 aids the advertiser in reviewing several features of a search listing. These are illustrated in the embodiment of FIG. 13 at total cost heading 1308, total clicks heading 1306 and price per click heading 1310 for a listing, along with the listing's category indication 1312. The statistics may be shown for specified time frame specified by selection in a drop down menu 1304 as shown in FIG. 13. In the presently preferred embodiment, a time frame can be either previous day, month to date or last month. Other time frames or search parameters may be substituted as well.

FIG. 17 displays a typical query results for a statistics query that can help the advertiser to have at a glance a view of which of the categories are most frequently clicked on and how much was the price per click etc. Such information can be used by the advertiser to tailor future use of the pay for placement search system.

In one embodiment, the search and query views provide a particular convenience feature for the advertiser. In this embodiment, these views provide a user interface which includes a display area configured to display a plurality of advertiser search listings. For each advertiser search listing, a common hyperlink is displayed with the advertiser search listing. The user interface further includes apparatus such as program code for displaying a URL associated with a particular advertiser search listing upon a mouseover of the common hyperlink displayed with the particular advertiser search listing. A mouseover is movement of the cursor or mouse over or in the vicinity of the link.

For example, in the screen shot of FIG. 11, each search listing is arranged down the screen page. Each search listing includes a hyperlink with the text "view URL." In the illustrated embodiment, this hyperlink is common to all search listings but other types of hyperlinks which vary or convey other information could be substituted. When an operator's cursor or mouse is brought in the vicinity, a pop up display appears next to the cursor and shows in a box text defining the URL associated with that particular search listing. Clicking on the hyperlink directs the user's browser to that URL. In the preferred embodiment, a new window is opened at the specified URL.

This provides a very convenient way for an advertiser editing his listings to identify dead or incorrect links. Many URLs are too long to conveniently display on the search listing page. By substituting the common hyperlink, the URL information is readily available but without cluttering the display screen. The ability to click through the link to the associated URL provides convenience and time savings to the advertiser managing his search listings.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the present invention provides method and apparatus for assisting advertisers to efficiently manage search listings via grouping in a pay for placement database search system. Advertisers, including advertisers who maintain large numbers of listings

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in a pay for placement or other database search system can group their listings in categories to assist in managing information about these listings, including bid amounts. The system includes searching and sorting tools to further simplify the manipulation of the search listings.

While a particular embodiment of the present invention has been shown and described, modifications may be made. It is therefore intended in the appended claims to cover such changes and modifications, which follow in the true spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for managing advertiser search listings in a pay for placement database search system, each search listing including at least one search term and a network location, the method comprising:

storing a database of search listings, at least some of the search listings being associated with respective advertisers, the search listings being searchable in response to a query received from a searcher;

grouping advertiser search listings into advertiser defined categories, the advertiser defined categories being independent of search listing search terms;

receiving advertiser category data defining an advertiser category; and

creating an advertiser category in response to the advertiser category data.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

naming the category in response to the advertiser category data.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising:

renaming the category in response to the advertiser category data.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising: receiving advertiser category data defining an advertiser category; and adding a listing to a category defined by the advertiser category data.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

receiving advertiser category data defining one or more advertiser categories; and

moving an advertiser search listing between an advertiser category and another category in response to the advertiser category data.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein moving the advertiser search listing comprises:

moving the search listing between the advertiser category and one of an unassigned category and another advertiser category.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

modifying an attribute of a plurality of advertiser search listings grouped in a common advertiser defined category in response to a modification specified by the advertiser at a single location.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein modifying an attribute comprises at least one of:

modifying a Uniform Resource Locator (URL),

modifying a Title, and

modifying a category

for the plurality of advertiser search listings in a specified common advertiser defined category in response to the modification specified by the advertiser.

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9. The method of claim 1 further comprising: receiving a search query from a searcher;

searching search listings of the database in response to one or more search criteria specified by the searcher in the search query; and

placing the matching search listings in a search result list page in response to bid amounts specified by the respective advertisers; and

providing the search result list page including the matching search listings to the searcher.

10. A database management method for an advertiser to manage advertiser search listings on a pay for placement database search system, the method comprising:

storing a plurality of search listings in a database, each search listing being associated with a respective advertiser and having at least one associated search term;

receiving a category indication for one or more search listings from the respective advertiser associated with the one or more search listings;

using the category indication to temporarily associate the one or more search listings for common processing by the pay for placement database search system; and

subsequently, operating commonly on the one or more associated search listings in response to database management operations of the respective advertiser.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the category indication comprises a category name.

12. A search listing management method for a pay for placement database system, the method comprising:

storing in a database search listings associated with advertisers, each search listing including a searchable search term;

processing search queries to the database;

providing information about processed search queries grouped in accordance with advertiser defined search listing categories which are independent of search listing search terms, including

receiving time windowing information from the advertiser; and

providing information about access to search listings of the advertiser during a time window defined by the time windowing information.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein providing information comprises:

providing statistical information about one or more of accessed search terms of the advertiser;

accessed uniform resource locators of the advertiser; and

categories of search listings of the advertiser.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein providing information composes:

providing statistical information about one or more of cost per click information for search listings of the advertiser; and

total click information for the search listings of the advertiser.