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(54) **DISCIPLINING INTERACTION AMONG USERS OF A SOCIAL NETWORK**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of managing interactions in a social network is provided. The method segregates user accounts into first and second profiles, and then conditions the visibility of the content of the second profile through a disciplining modality. The discipling modality limits the form of the accessible content of the first profile, thereby incentivizing users to engage in meaningful transactions to access the locked content of the second profile. The present invention provides a transactional modality facilitating transactional approaches by users in their attempt to access the second profile. The number accepted transactional approaches are counted so that upon surpassing a predetermined number of acceptances, the method selectively enables access to the content of the second profile.

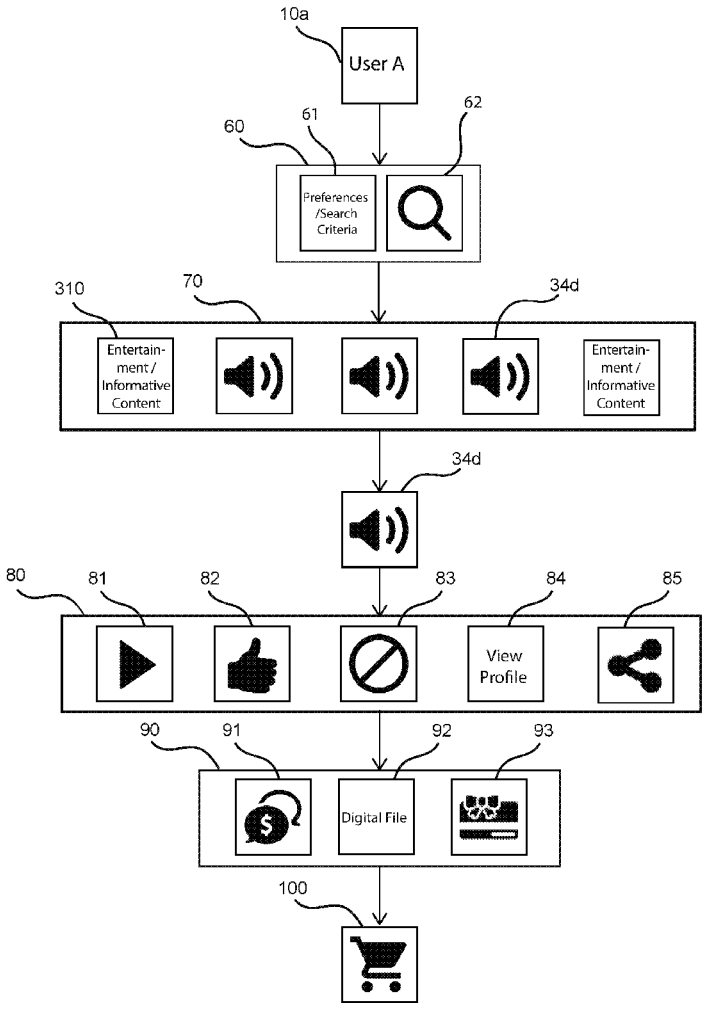


FIGURE 1

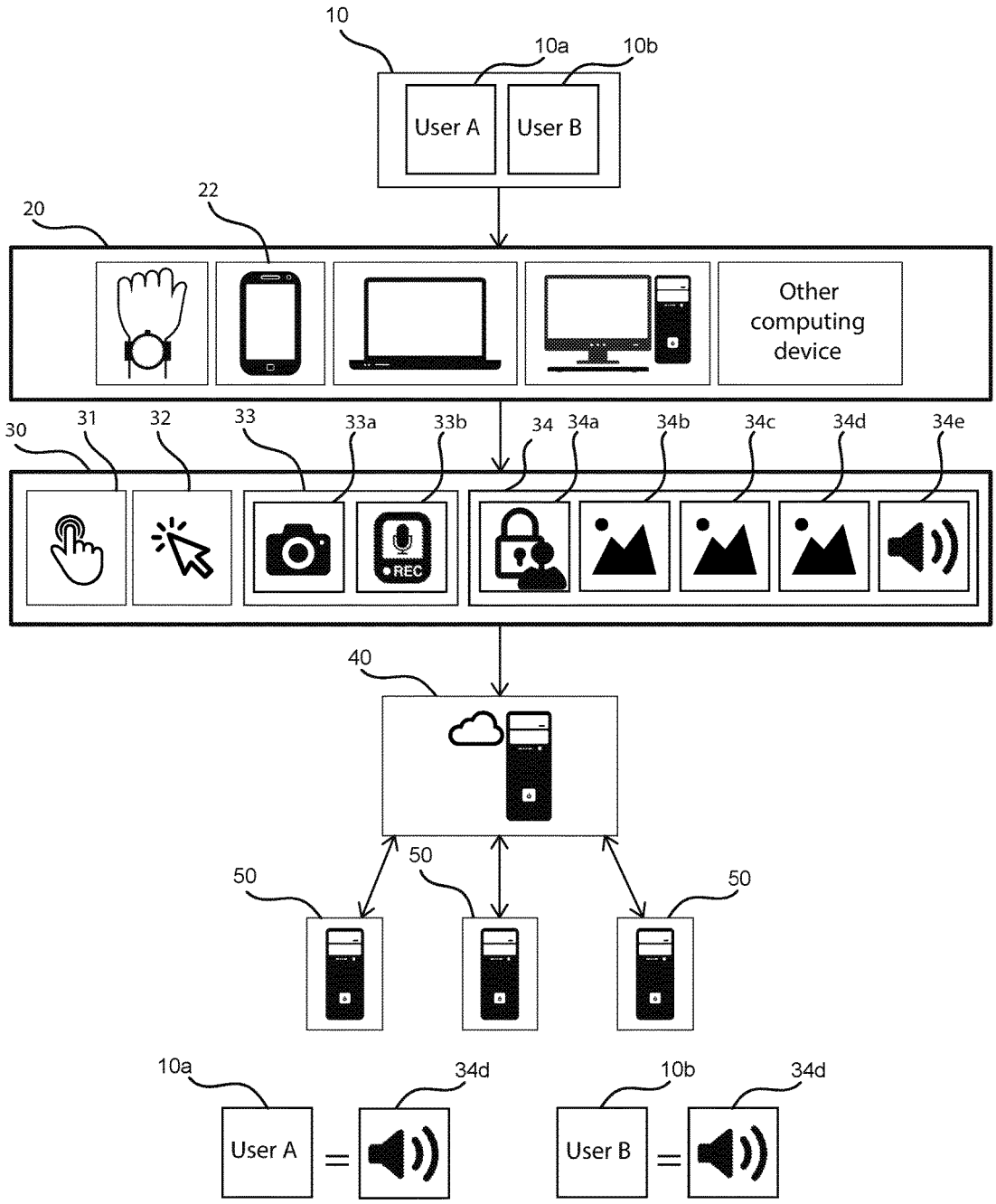

10
10a
10b
User A
User B
20
22
Other computing device
30
31
32
33
33a
33b
34
34a
34b
34c
34d
34e
REC
40
50
50
50
10a
34d
User A
10b
34d
User B

FIGURE 2

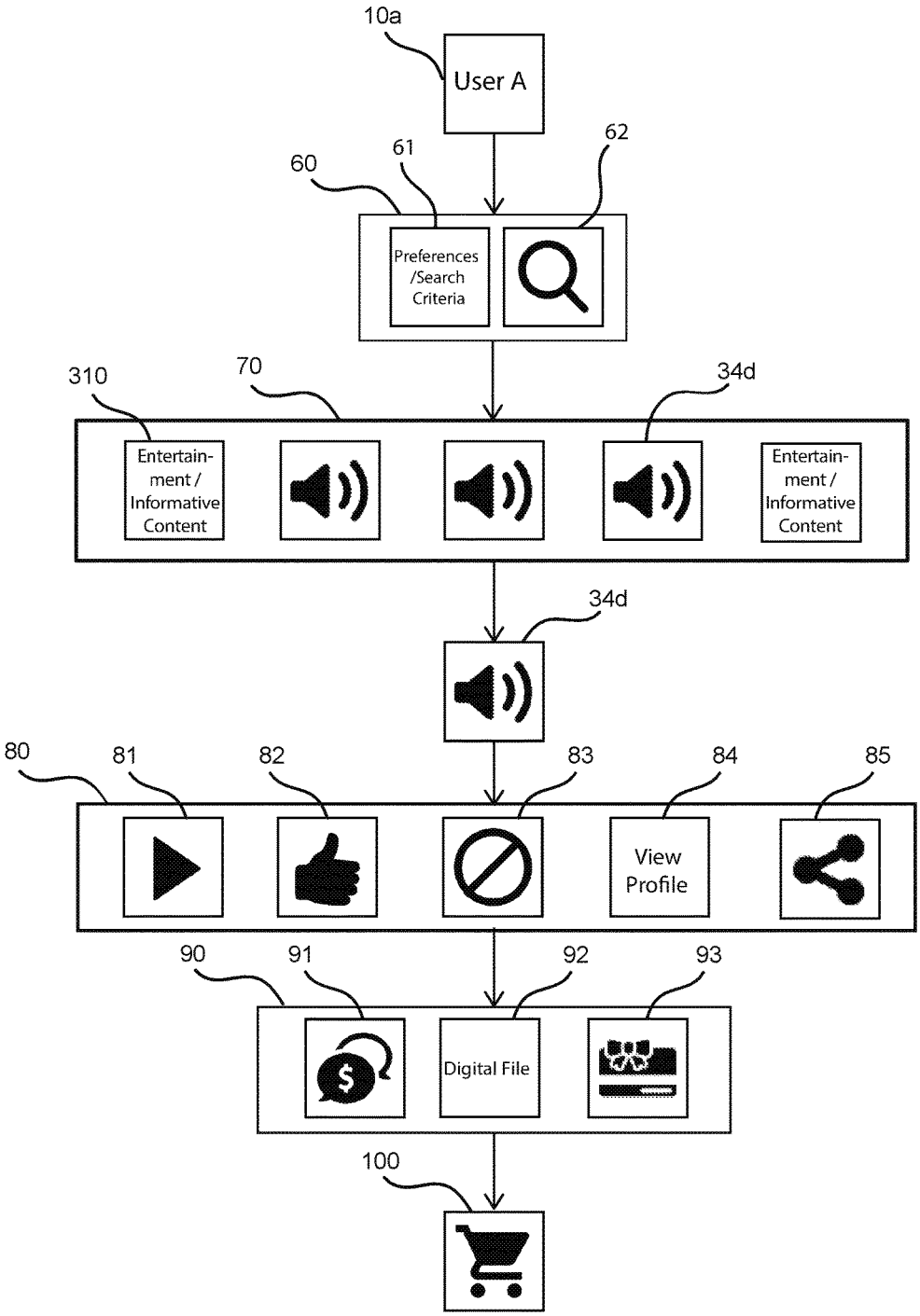

10a
User A
60
61
62
Preferences /Search Criteria
310
70
34d
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
34d
80
81
82
83
84
85
View Profile
90
91
92
93
Digital File
100

FIGURE 3

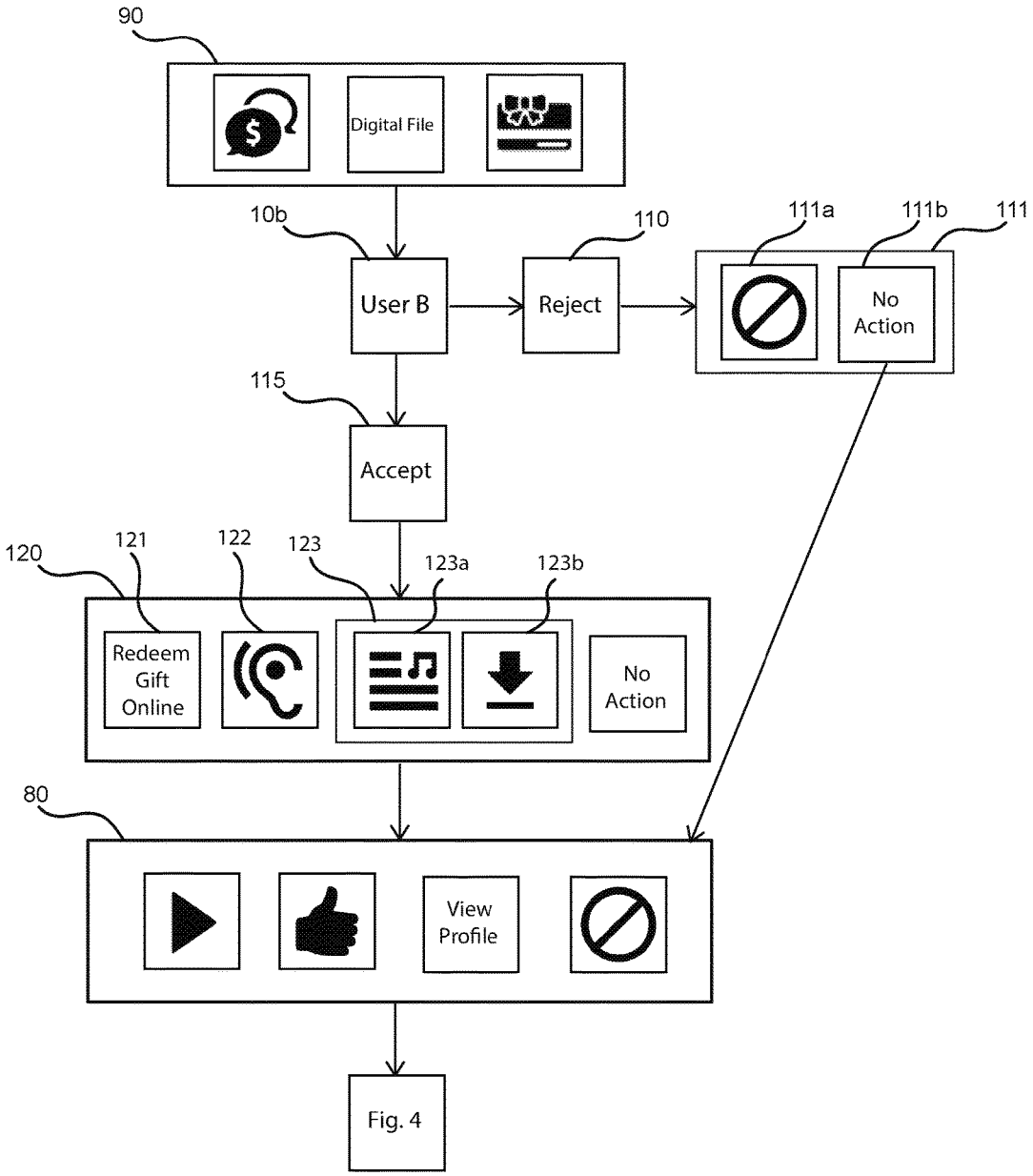

90
Digital File
10b
User B
110
Reject
111a
111b
111
No Action
115
Accept
120
121
122
123
123a
123b
Redeem Gift Online
No Action
80
View Profile
Fig. 4

FIGURE 4

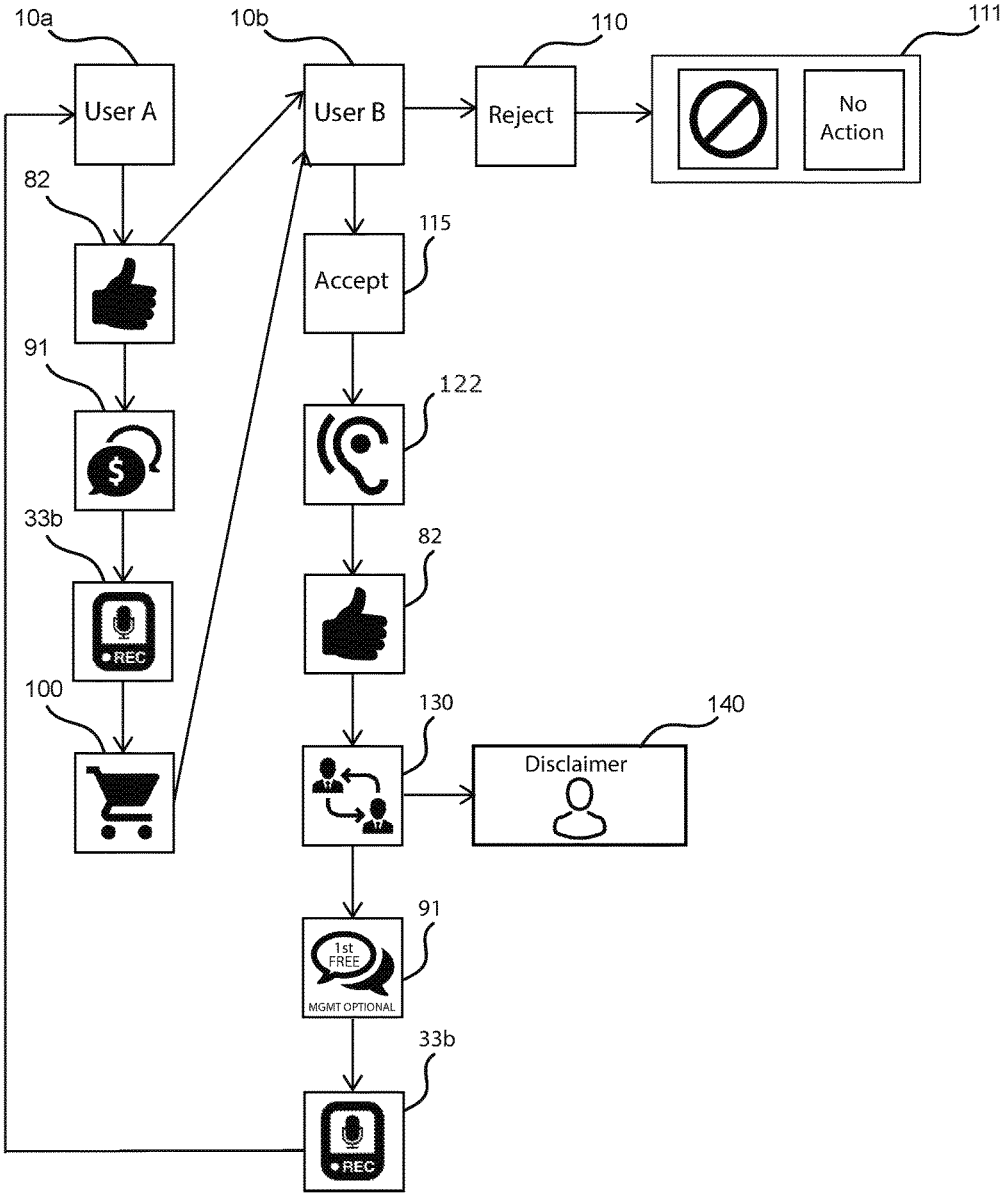

10a
User A
10b
User B
110
Reject
111
No Action
82
115
Accept
91
122
33b
82
REC
100
130
140
Disclaimer
91
1st FREE
MGMT OPTIONAL
33b
REC

FIGURE 5

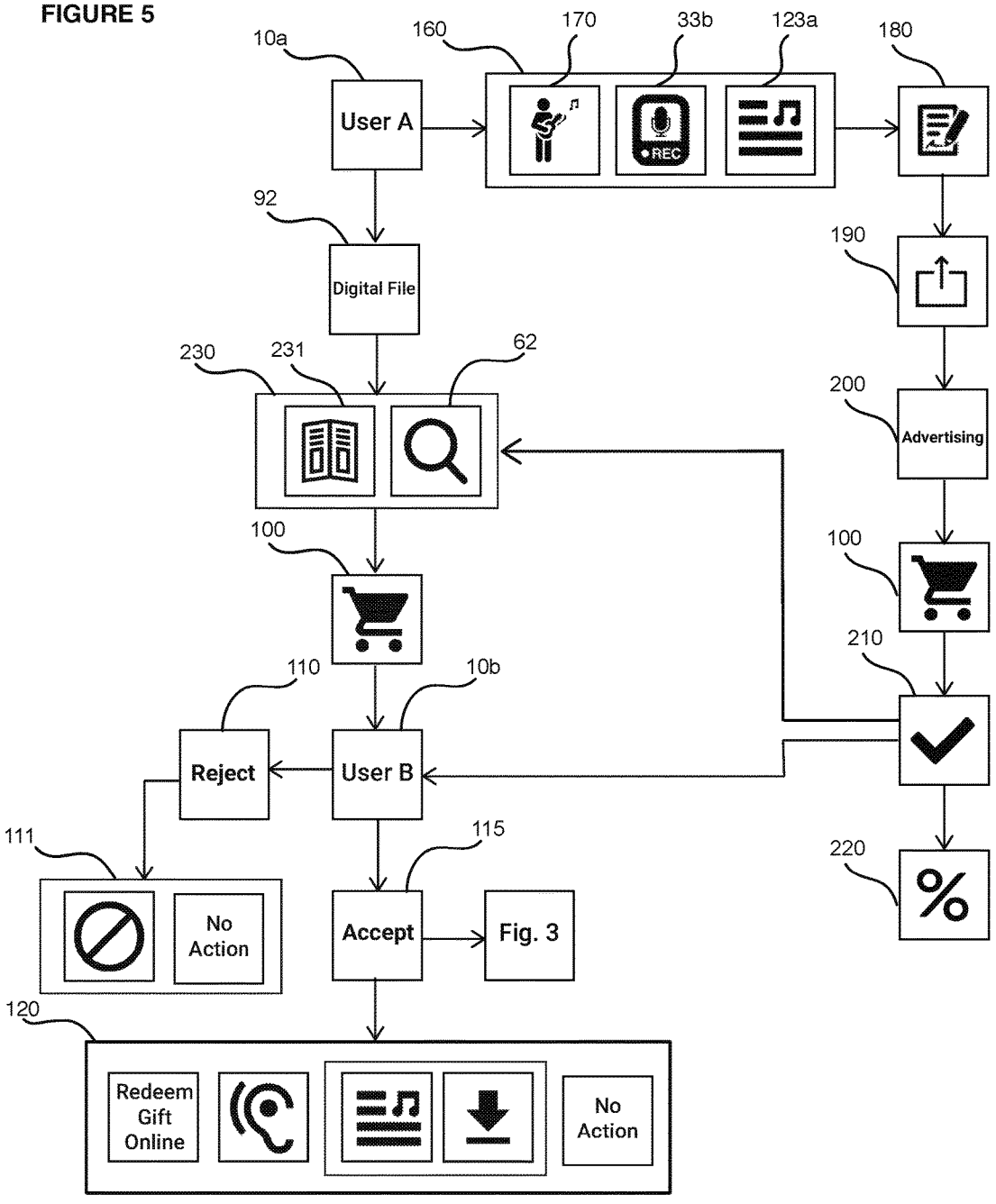

10a
User A
160
170
33b
123a
REC
180
92
Digital File
190
230
231
62
200
Advertising
100
100
210
110
10b
Reject
User B
111
115
No Action
Accept
Fig. 3
220
120
Redeem Gift Online
No Action

FIGURE 6

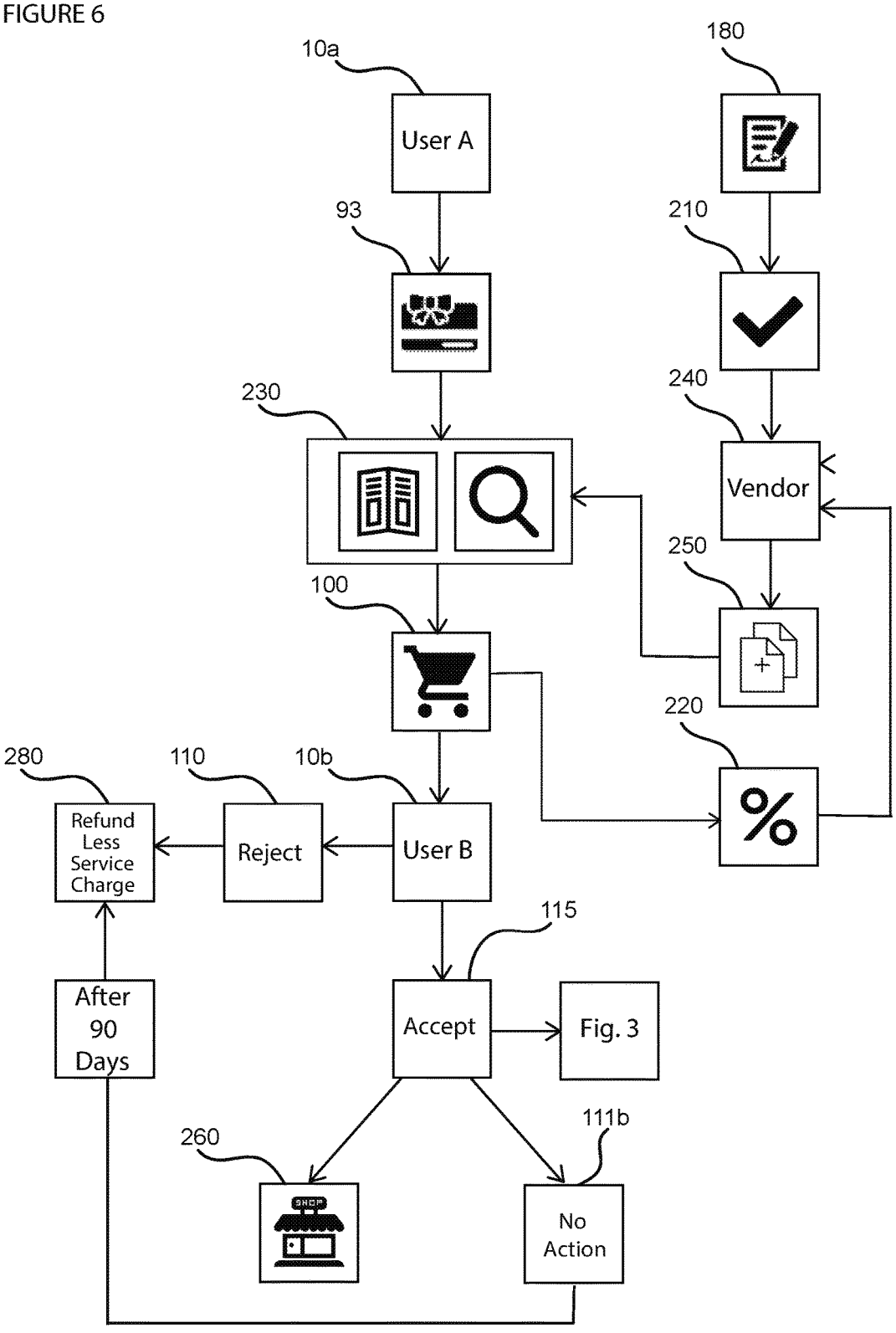

10a
User A
180
93
210
230
240
Vendor
250
100
220
280
110
10b
Refund Less Service Charge
Reject
User B
115
After 90 Days
Accept
Fig. 3
260
111b
No Action

FIGURE 7

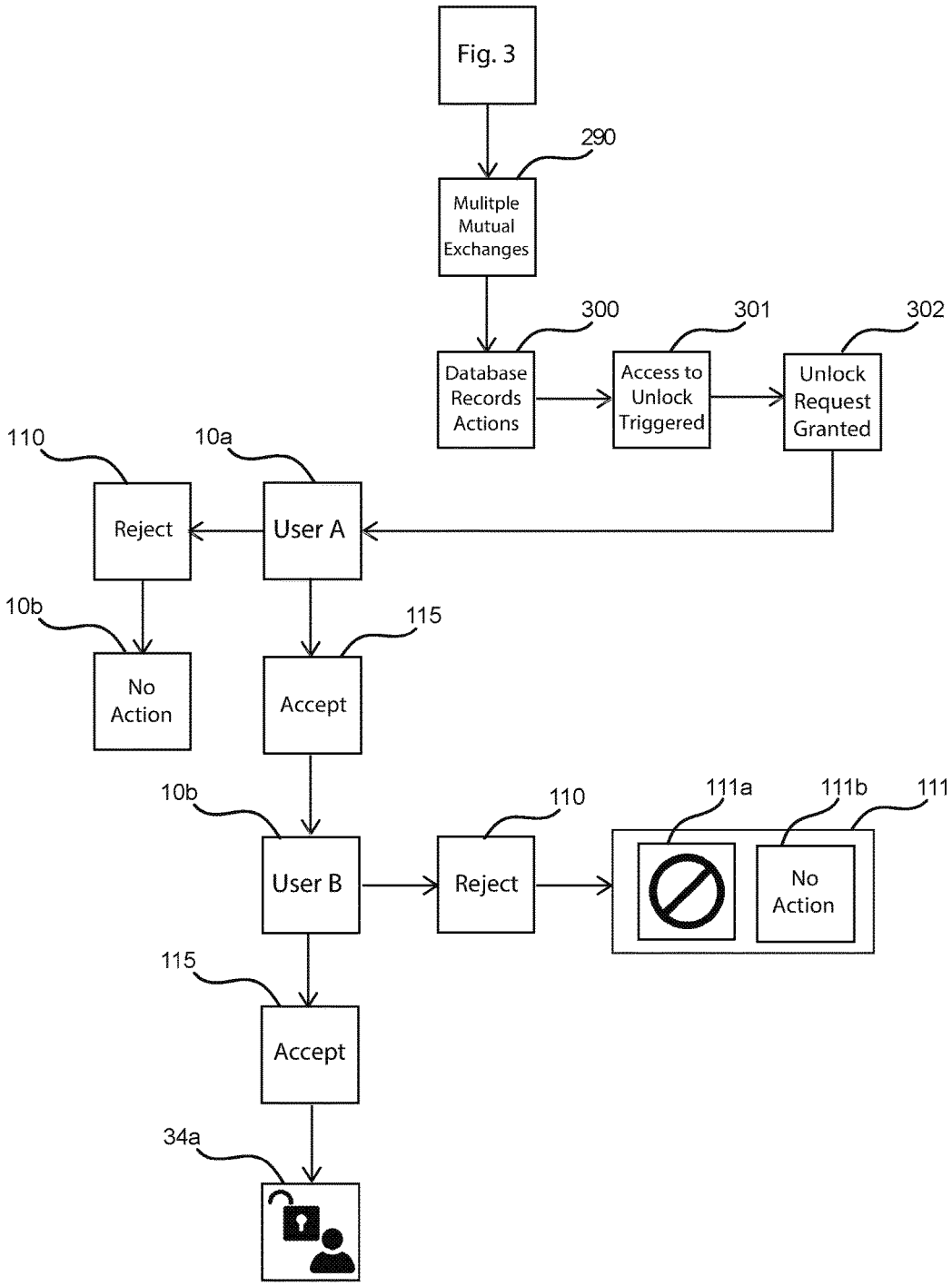
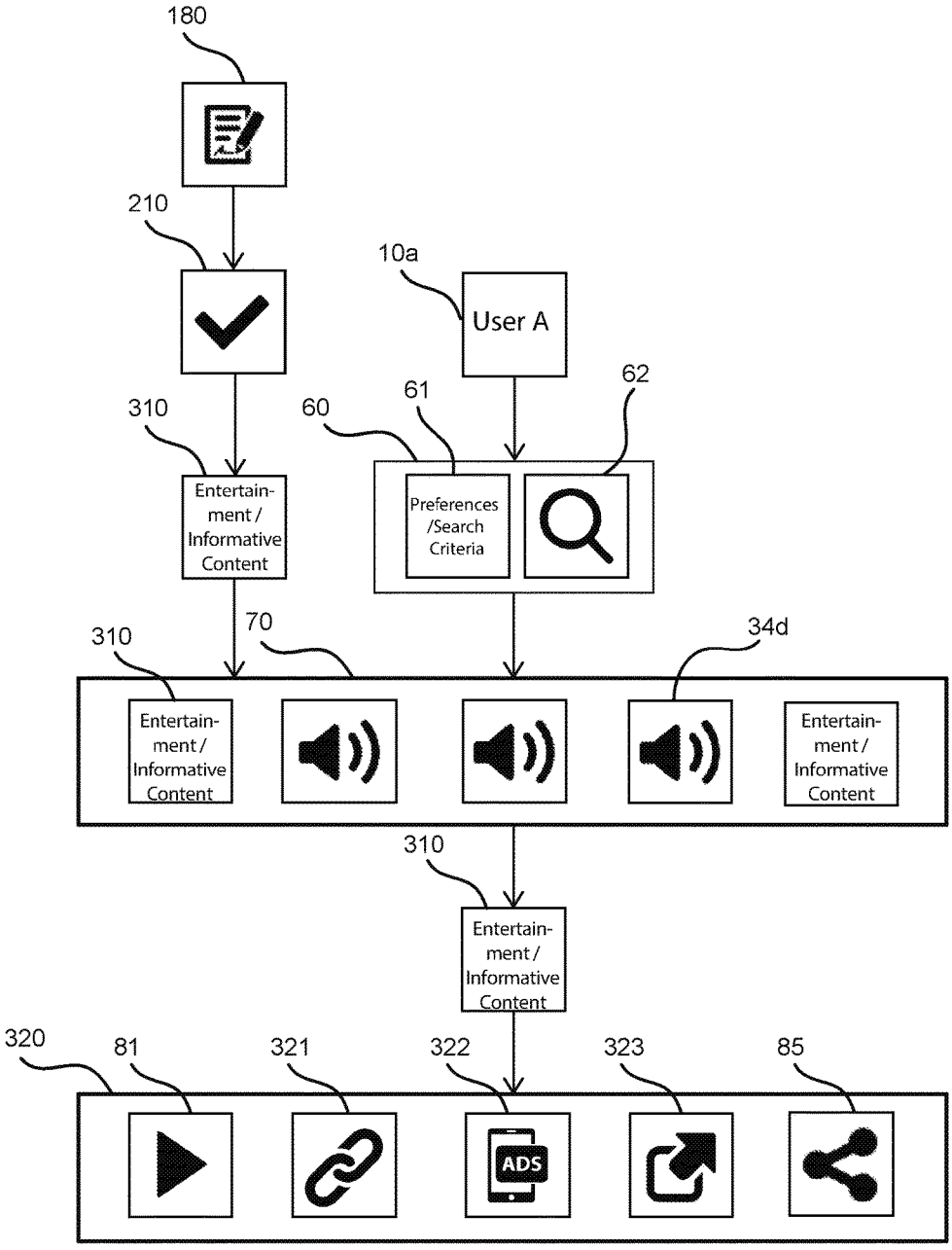

Fig. 3
290
Mulitple Mutual Exchanges
300
301
302
Database Records Actions
Access to Unlock Triggered
Unlock Request Granted
110
10a
Reject
User A
10b
115
No Action
Accept
10b
110
111a
111b
111
User B
Reject
No Action
115
Accept
34a

FIGURE 8


180
210
10a
User A
62
61
60
310
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
Preferences /Search Criteria
70
34d
310
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
310
Entertain-ment / Informative Content
320
81
321
322
323
85
ADS

DISCIPLINING INTERACTION AMONG USERS OF A SOCIAL NETWORK

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority of U.S. provisional application No. 62/466,678, filed 3 Mar. 2017, the contents of which are herein incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to social networking and, more particularly, to a method of disciplining interactions among users of a social network environment by, in certain embodiments, providing steps for moving from first tier interactions to second tier interactions, thereby controlling the user-generated content that is accessible and as a corollary controlling the user-generated content delivered.

[0003] Conventional approaches to facilitating sharing of user-generated content include various information sharing technologies or communication platforms such as social networking websites. Such websites may include, be linked with, or provide a platform for applications enabling users to view "profile" pages created or customized by other users where visibility and interaction with such profiles by other users is governed by a set of rules.

[0004] The conventional set of rules, however, make worthwhile interaction difficult in the instant-gratification and superficial world of the present day. Most often communicators offer graphical information without audio presentation or without a disciplined transactional approach for controlling the interactions of users trying to connect. For each user, as a result of the flood of attention-grabbing content, the process becomes very distracting. And when wading through this deluge, human nature draws people to superficial attractions, thereby users miss the best choice in this flood of subpar choices. Users get fatigued and make the interaction a task instead of just passive enjoyment of collecting information and entertainment. Furthermore, other platforms do not blend advertising, entertainment and other information outside of the intent of communication.

[0005] As can be seen, there is a need for a method of disciplining interactions among users of a social network environment by, in certain embodiments, providing steps for moving from first tier interactions to second tier interactions, thereby controlling the user-generated content that is accessible and as a corollary controlling the user-generated content delivered.

[0006] The present invention provides tiered profiles, having at least a first (insensitive, instantly accessible) tier and a second (sensitive, locked) tier. The present invention uses a disciplining algorithm that limits the amount and form of the user-generated content associated with the first tier and counts meaningful first-tier transactions between users, wherein after a predetermined threshold of meaningful first-tier transactions have been met, prior to visibility and interaction with the second-tier user-generated content, which is subsequently unlocked and enabled. First-tier communicators receive notice when the present invention unlocks the communicating user's sensitive user-generated content associated with the second tier. The present application also has a method for the user to bypass the algorithm by allowing a user to disengage the algorithm manually. Thereby, from the get-go the present invention eliminates the boredom of reviewing a deluge of general-consumption content that burdens conventional social networking systems, and then upon unlocking second-tier profiles the present invention delivers continuous user-generated content of matched second-tier users.

[0007] The present invention may control first-tier user interactions by charging a fee, deterring users from continuous spamming other users, increasing the quality of the data available before visibility and interaction with the second tier is unlocked, and thereby saving users the precious value of time.

[0008] The present invention may also discipline or limit the form and amount of first-tier interactions in order to further control the delivery of content as well as establish more meaningful second-tier matches; for example, the present invention may limit delivery of first-tier interactions to audio files message and certain characteristic visual or entertainment-related content. The audio may have relational information, such as life-long traits and self esteem indicators, that facilitates second-tier matching, while the visual or graphical content may provide meaningful gestures or entertaining informative content based on authors' and consumers' areas of interest and preferences. The present invention further facilitates match-making by enabling certain first-tier content to exchange electronic gifts, such as digital art or digital certificates redeemable in the form of physical gifts. The users are stimulated and, when the counted meaningful transactions meet or exceed a predetermined threshold, the users become second-tier matches capable of potentially unlimited interactions and access to user-generated content. Or users can choose to bypass the algorithm and open everyone to second-tier access.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] In one aspect of the present invention, a method of managing interactions between users of an online social network includes segregating a profile of each user into a first content and a second content; locking the second content from the remaining users until a predetermined threshold is met; obtaining a first set of rules that define the predetermined threshold as a function of transactional approaches and acceptance of said transactional approaches; providing a transactional modality for generating a plurality of transactional approaches of said user from one or more of the remaining users; and generating a determination that the predetermined threshold has been met by evaluating the plurality of transactional approaches against the first set of rules.

[0010] In another aspect of the present invention, the method of managing interactions between users of an online social network includes segregating a profile of each user into a first content and a second content; locking the second content from the remaining users until a predetermined threshold is met; obtaining a first set of rules that define the predetermined threshold as a function of transactional approaches and acceptance of said transactional approaches, wherein the first set of rules imposes a fee for each generated transactional approach; providing a transactional modality for generating a plurality of transactional approaches of said user from one or more of the remaining users; and generating a determination that the predetermined threshold has been met by evaluating the plurality of transactional approaches against the first set of rules, wherein the first

content comprising an audio introduction limited to relational information or life-long traits of said user, and wherein the form of the transactional approaches comprises electronic gifts.

[0011] These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the following drawings, description and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. **1** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, illustrating computing devices, site access and data distribution;

[0013] FIG. **2** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, illustrating user interaction with searching, voice evaluation, entertainment and gifting;

[0014] FIG. **3** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, illustrating the process of gifting and user acceptance or rejection;

[0015] FIG. **4** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, may be a continuation from FIG. **3**, illustrating the method of managing private messages with restrictions regarding the matching process;

[0016] FIG. **5** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, illustrating publishing process and distribution process for published and unpublished digital art for e-gifting, as well as acceptance or rejection thereof;

[0017] FIG. **6** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, illustrating distribution and processing of user gifting tangible items to another user showing acceptance or rejection;

[0018] FIG. **7** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a continuation from FIG. **3**, illustrating the process and interaction with the database with users communicating in efforts to unlock one another's locked second-tier user-generated content, as well as acceptance or rejection by another user; and

[0019] FIG. **8** is a schematic view of an exemplary embodiment of a completed loop of the present invention, illustrating the process of submitting recorded and printed content for viewing and listening by users.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0020] The following detailed description is of the best currently contemplated modes of carrying out exemplary embodiments of the invention. The description is not to be taken in a limiting sense, but is made merely for the purpose of illustrating the general principles of the invention, since the scope of the invention is best defined by the appended claims.

[0021] Broadly, an embodiment of the present invention provides an entertaining collaboration between users in a social network, wherein each user account is segregated between first and second profiles. Visibility of the content of the second profile is controlled by an algorithm that monitors specific, measured interactions between the user of the first profile and other users. The form of the first content is limited to audio introductions and characteristic visual content. The present invention provides a transactional modality facilitating transactional approaches by the other user, such transactional approaches are also limited in form. The accepted transactional approaches are counted so that upon surpassing a predetermined number of acceptances enables the other user access to the second content of the second profile.

[0022] Referring to FIGS. **1** through **8**, the present invention may include at least one computer with a user interface. The computer may include at least one processing unit and a form of memory including, but not limited to, a desktop, laptop, and smart device, such as, a tablet and smart phone. The computer includes a program product including a machine-readable program code for causing, when executed, the computer to perform steps. The program product may include software which may either be loaded onto the computer or accessed by the computer. The loaded software may include an application on a smart device. The software may be accessed by the computer using a web browser. The computer may access the software via the web browser using the internet, extranet, intranet, host server, internet cloud and the like.

[0023] The system and method embodied in the present invention makes communicating for the purpose of connecting easier through the application of a disciplining algorithm adapted to discipline a user to initially listen to a person's voice and view system-limited, first-tier, user-generated content from another unmatched user. The system also facilitates the matching of users by allowing the gifting of digital art and original, creative works. Most communication platform applications focus on the superficial aspects and provide too much information and choices. The system of the present invention requires a threshold of meaningful transactions to be met as a condition for second-tiered communication of sensitive user-generated content between User A and User B. In simple terms, User A is disciplined to evaluate the voice and other audio output of User B as well as other relevant characteristics of meaningful content of User B, wherein meaningful content is adapted to trigger psychological rationalization. The system allows for User B to e-gift User A to meet said threshold, influencing courting decisions as well as to stimulate a less obvious interest in tastes.

[0024] Referring to FIG. **1**, Users A and B **10***a* and **10***b* may interact with the present invention using one or more computing devices (mobile phone, computer etc.). Users **10** activate to open computing devices **20**, **22** and access input/output peripherals **30**-**33***b*, such as cameras or microphones, to upload visual and audio output **34**-**34***e* of defined content (i.e., feet, hand, legs) such as voice recording **34***d* to a server **40**.

[0025] Referring to FIG. **2**, once a user **10** completes upload of all media, they can utilize preference/search modalities **60**, **61**, **62** and output modalities **70** to search, browse, listen to voice recordings **34***d* and user-generated content of other users **10**. Utilizing networking modalities **80**, User A has the option to like **82** the profile **84** and voice of User B, block **83**, view **81** or share **85** their profile. Viewing User B's profile, through the transaction modality **90**, User A can send, for a fee **91**, transactional output **92**, such as a private recorded message or if management has set an option to send a message free (see FIG. **4**), digital file, music, book, movie (See FIG. **5**) or an electronic gift **93** to be redeemed at a physical location **260**.

[0026] Referring to FIGS. **3** and **4**, illustrating the process of gifting and user acceptance or rejection through the transaction modality **90**. In the instant example, if User A

engages a transaction **10** with User B, User A may be charged a fee **91**. The system has an option to allow a free message once users are matched. User B may trigger a rejection **110**, whereby no actions **111**, **111***a*, or **111***b* are initiated, or acceptance **115**. Upon acceptance **115**, User B may utilize the visibility modality **120** to apply gift redemption functionality **121**, output functionality **122**, **123**, and **123***a*, download functionality **123***b*, or no action to receive a private recorded message or digital gift **93** so that User B can listen, download music or redeem online if another form of digital art. User B can listen to User A's voice recording **34***d*, like them, view their profile or block them. User B can also engage in one-on-one chat **130** conditioned on a disclaimer **140** in accordance with the present invention as herein disclosed.

[0027] Referring to FIG. **5**, illustrating publishing and distribution process for for e-gifting, through a recordation modality **160**, which includes digital music publishing **170**. The recordation modality **160** may be coupled with contract authorization **180**, uploading capability **190**, and advertising functionality **200** before becoming a transaction **100** adapted for a review modality **210** regarding meeting predetermined criteria **220**. The present invention may also include document attachment functionality **230** for attaching relevant, searchable published content **231**. Digital art will be available for purchase for users to browse and gift to users to gain their romantic interest.

[0028] Referring to FIG. **6**, third-party vendors **240** making their product available for gifting, or merging **250** with user-generated gifts, will register and accept commission structure (**280**) so as to upload products and their descriptions, whereby Users may be linked to the vendor's platform **260** upon acceptance.

[0029] Referring to FIG. **7**, illustrating the process and interaction with the database **300** with users communicating in efforts to unlock one another's locked second-tier user-generated content, as well as acceptance or rejection by another user. Specifically, once User A and User B have exchanged the minimum amount **290** of transactions **100** (messages, gifts and/or songs, for example) with one another, the discipling algorithm **300** is configured to grant access/visibility **301** to tier-two content will receive a notification that their locked tier-two content, such as profile photo **34***a* can now be unlocked through a granted request **302**.

[0030] Referring to FIG. **8**, illustrating the process of submitting recorded and printed content for viewing and listening by users once tier-two content **310** has been unlocked. Users can also use this application for entertainment with recorded or printed tier-two content **310**, serving as points of interest for fostering a meaningful matched set of interactions. A matched modality **320** may be provided by the present invention to link **321** Users A and B tier-two content **310**, share **85**, jointly upload **323** and/or bundled with advertisements **322**. The system can be turned on or off depending on if management wants to offer a free message or not. User B can send a private message for a fee **191**. If User A and User B like each other and they have not sent a private message the present invention may be adapted to notified them that they are a match. A user may also instantly allow access. If accepted, the photo **34***a* will be unlocked to that user only. This system and method can also be used for gaming of any sort or to measure trust.

How the Invention Works:

[0031] Systems and methods embodied in the present invention provide for communicating and making a personal or business connection through software adapted to calculate requisite triggers and tasks and provide the user with the useful user experience and deliver qualified connections. The system presents audio files with content that is intended to be used for attracting a connection. The software collects and serves recorded content to and from participating users. All users record their preferences. A database retrievably stores preferences and serves potential connections based on similar preferences and requested connection preferences. The system serves connection results both aurally and visually. The audio and visual experience blends interesting content and advertising into the stream of audio introductions. Through the use of mouse, keyboard, or mobile device action the user may listen, skip, or view deeper information on the audio presenter. The user may also click on graphics above the play button for other information from advertiser, entertainment, or general information. The user may like or be liked by another user. The user may send a gift of digital content or a tangible item. The user's content is divided into two categories, instant accessible and accessible after a transaction or a number of transactions. The user may bypass the system algorithm and unlock the content on a user by user basis or to all. Once the system's prescribed transaction count has been achieved, or the user initiates an unlock for the user or all users, the restricted content is unlocked by the system. The user may choose to unlock their content to the prospective connection. The user has control of the access to their content on a user-by-user basis only after a selected number of transactions have been accepted. The computer acts as a central processing hub for this activity, taking input from keyboard, audio device, camera, etc. and storing in a database. The user may freely communicate with any user where transaction counts have been achieved between the two users. Once User A and User B have exchanged a certain number of messages, gifts and/or songs with one another, the database counts the actions. The count triggers a change in status of open or close of the access lock to the profile photo **34***a*.

[0032] A method of using the present invention may include the following. Users **10** would use the present invention to find a connection. Users **10** would focus on the voice and preferences that appeal to the listening user. Interactions would include further private messages and or gifting. Users have the opportunity to form an opinion from gestures and perceived personality without initial superficial attraction. Users can also use this application for entertainment with recorded or printed content serving as points of interest.

[0033] Additionally, the present invention could be used as a motivational instrument and or in the workforce, for polling, reviewing or anywhere when team selection, compatibility or information is needed. It could also be applied to education and deliver a new method of learning for the easily distracted student. It could be used as an advertising tool on other websites and mobile environments. For example, the present invention could be adapted to produce educational tool like an audio flash card, advertisement tool on any sidebar, political presentation and polling device, audio greeting card (get well soon, etc.)

[0034] The computer-based data processing system and method described above is for purposes of example only,

and may be implemented in any type of computer system or programming or processing environment, or in a computer program, alone or in conjunction with hardware. The present invention may also be implemented in software stored on a computer-readable medium and executed as a computer program on a general purpose or special purpose computer. For clarity, only those aspects of the system germane to the invention are described, and product details well known in the art are omitted. For the same reason, the computer hardware is not described in further detail. It should thus be understood that the invention is not limited to any specific computer language, program, or computer. It is further contemplated that the present invention may be run on a stand-alone computer system, or may be run from a server computer system that can be accessed by a plurality of client computer systems interconnected over an intranet network, or that is accessible to clients over the Internet. In addition, many embodiments of the present invention have application to a wide range of industries. To the extent the present application discloses a system, the method implemented by that system, as well as software stored on a computer-readable medium and executed as a computer program to perform the method on a general purpose or special purpose computer, are within the scope of the present invention. Further, to the extent the present application discloses a method, a system of apparatuses configured to implement the method are within the scope of the present invention

[0035] It should be understood, of course, that the foregoing relates to exemplary embodiments of the invention and that modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing interactions between users of an online social network, comprising:

segregating a profile of each user into a first content and a second content;

locking the second content from the remaining users until a predetermined threshold is met;

obtaining a first set of rules that define the predetermined threshold as a function of transactional approaches and acceptance of said transactional approaches;

providing a transactional modality for generating a plurality of transactional approaches of said user from one or more of the remaining users; and

generating a determination that the predetermined threshold has been met by evaluating the plurality of transactional approaches against the first set of rules.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the first set of rules imposes a fee for each generated transactional approach.

3. The method of claim **1**, wherein the first content comprising an audio introduction.

4. The method of claim **1**, wherein audio output of the first content is limited to an audio introduction.

5. The method of claim **3**, wherein the audio introduction is limited to relational information or life-long traits of said user.

6. The method of claim **4**, wherein the audio introduction is limited to relational information or life-long traits of said user.

7. The method of claim **3**, wherein the first content further compromises visual output limited to gestures of said user.

8. The method of claim **7**, wherein the first content further compromises a recording of said user providing preferences.

9. The method of claim **1**, wherein the form of the transactional approaches comprises electronic gifts.

10. The method of claim **1**, wherein the form of the transactional approaches is limited to direct messaging and electronic gifts.

11. A method of managing interactions between users of an online social network, comprising:

segregating a profile of each user into a first content and a second content;

locking the second content from the remaining users until a predetermined threshold is met;

obtaining a first set of rules that define the predetermined threshold as a function of transactional approaches and acceptance of said transactional approaches, wherein the first set of rules imposes a fee for each generated transactional approach;

providing a transactional modality for generating a plurality of transactional approaches of said user from one or more of the remaining users; and

generating a determination that the predetermined threshold has been met by evaluating the plurality of transactional approaches against the first set of rules,

wherein the first content comprising an audio introduction limited to relational information or life-long traits of said user, and

wherein the form of the transactional approaches comprises electronic gifts.

* * * * *