Abstract

PROGRAM SERVER FOR INTERACTIVE TELEVISION SYSTEM

The invention relates to a system for transmitting stored programs, such as movies and musical works, to customers via a distribution network (112, 115,114, 116), such as a cable television system. The programs are stored in compressed form in a program library (102), such as a tape cartridge library. On receipt of a request (on 103) for a program, a request processor (101) sends control messages causing a data block comprising the requested program to be read from the program library (102) at high speed and stored in a large dynamic random access memory (DRAM) (111) in a server (100). The server then sends the program from DRAM over the distribution system (112,115,114,116) to a customer as a series of digital packets. Each instance of sending a program is managed by a separate command word. The customer can request such operations as "fast forward" by sending control messages that change pointers in the command word. Command words can be grouped to send multiple audio and/or video overlays simultaneously and linked to send program sequences. The request processor (101), server (100), program library (102) and interfaces to distribution networks can be at different locations.

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