PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 6 :
G06F 15/163

A1

(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/22543

(43) International Publication Date: 20 April 2000 (20.04.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/SG98/00080

(22) International Filing Date: 9 October 1998 (09.10.98)

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(81) Designated States: AU, CA, CN, DE, FI, GB, ID, JP, KR, SE, SG, US.

Published
With international search report.

This Sheet Has Been Replaced

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR INTERROGATING THE INTERNET

(57) Abstract

A method and system for identifying an electronic mail server (8) to which a remote user belongs includes providing a remote access mail client (1) associated with an access database (2) containing records of servers supporting a specified electronic mail protocol or protocols, requiring the user at a remote computer (6) with a browser (7) to input his electronic mail address and log–in password, parsing the mail address to obtain a presumed domain name of the user's server, interrogating the access database (2) to determine whether it contains a record of a server corresponding to the presumed domain name; and retrieving the record of any corresponding server thus identified as the server to which the user may belong. If the database (2) contains no record of a corresponding server, the domain name is assumed to be the server and is checked for the user's mail, after which the MX record and IP address are requested from the DNS database (3) and are checked, the full list of host names for the presumed domain name is requested by DNS zone transfer and any host supporting the specified protocol(s) are checked and, if necessary, the NIC–allocated IP address block of the presumed domain name is finally obtained from the WHOIS server (4) and is scanned. A search engine (5) associated with the specified protocol or protocols performs the searching under the direction of the mail client (1) and database (2).

