METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PROTECTING CONTROLS IN GRAPHIC USER INTERFACES OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS

ABSTRACT

A graphical user interface (GUI) of a computer system displays one or more control areas (32) responsive to user input. The control (38) is protected from such input by a transparent overlay (34) which conveys this protected status to the user. An authorized user may remove the cover (34) by activating a grip surface proximal to the control area (32) with the pointing device and then moving the pointing device to expose the underlying control (38). In this manner inadvertent interaction with the control area (32) is avoided. In an alternate embodiment wherein the user has not yet been authorized, an authorization icon (42) such as a padlock is displayed proximal to the control area (32). Upon the user's activation of this protection icon (42), an authentication box (44) appears for the user to enter the user name and password, whereupon the protective shield or cover (34) is automatically removed from the underlying control area (32) with animation and sound as desired.

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