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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): HEWLETT-PACKARD COMPANY [US/US]; 3000 Hanover Street, Palo Alto, CA 94304 (US).			
(72) Inventors; and			
(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): LOW, Colin [GB/GB]; 19 Parklands, Wootton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire GL12 7LT (GB). SEABORNE, Andrew, Franklin [GB/GB]; 1 Shipley Road, Bristol BS9 3HR (GB).			
(74) Agent: YENNADHIOU, Peter; Hewlett-Packard Limited, Intellectual Property Section, Building 2, Filton Road, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS12 6QZ (GB).			

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(54) Title: **METHOD OF ACCESSING A TARGET ENTITY OVER A COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK**

(57) Abstract

A method of accessing a target entity over a communications network employs a distributed database system similar to the DNS of the Internet; indeed the DNS may be used as the required distributed database. The distributed database stores records each associated with a corresponding domain name and holding communication data for use in accessing a target entity. Each of these domain names is related to a respective number string from which it can be derived by a process including parsing at least a substantial portion of the number string into at least a part of said domain name. Upon the input of a number string indicative of a target entity, the related domain name is formed by parsing the number (step 120) and the domain name is then used to retrieve the corresponding communication data from the DNS-type distributed database system (step 121). This data is then used in accessing the target entity. In one embodiment, the communications network is a telephone network and the target entity is a called party; in this case, the number string comprises a dialed number and the retrieved communication data is a URI indicative of the location on the Internet of a current telephone number for the target party, the URI once retrieved being used to access the current telephone number over the Internet (step 123) for use in setting up a call to the target party.

