980229-6

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International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 6 : H04L 9/00 — A1

(11) International Publication Number: WO 97/12460

(43) International Publication Date: 3 April 1997 (03.04.97)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US96/14159

(22) International Filing Date: 23 August 1996 (23.08.96)

(30) Priority Data:
08/528,841 — 15 September 1995 (15.09.95) — US

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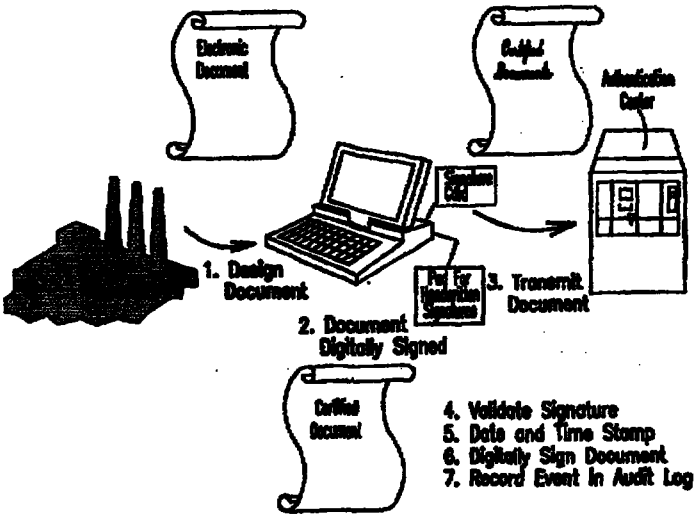
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(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, ARIPO patent (KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published
With international search report.
Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: DOCUMENT AUTHENTICATION SYSTEM AND METHOD



(57) Abstract

Methods and apparatus are provided that implement digital signing(2 and 3) and/or encryption for the electronic transmission, (3) storage, and retrieval of authenticated documents and that enable the establishment of the identity of the originator of an electronic document and of the integrity of the information contained in such a document (1). Together these provide irrevocable proof of authenticity of the document. The methods and apparatus make it possible to provide "paper-less" commercial transactions, such as real-estate transactions and the financial transactions secured by real estate. A Certification Authority provides tools for initializing and managing the cryptographic material required to sign and seal electronic documents. An Authentication Center provides "third party" verification that a document is executed and transmitted by the document's originator. The methods and apparatus eliminate the need for "hard copies" of original documents as well as hard-copy storage. Retrieval of an authenticated document from the Authentication Center may be done by any number of authorized parties at any time by on-line capability.