ARRANGEMENT FOR BILLING INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Abstract

Only one or only a few channels are sent at a time from curbside circuitry located in a curbside box (15), via a link (22) such as either a coaxial or a fiber cable, into a customer's home TV set (14) or personal computer. However, many more than a few channels are delivered to the curbside box from a central office (36) or a central bank (37) of paid video-movies to be selected by the customers. The curbside box serves a multitude of homes, a separate (narrow-band) cable (22) running to each home from the (same) curbside switch. Each channel can be a free radio or free TV channel, a stored or an on-line newspaper pay channel, or a pay TV channel, or a pay-per-view channel. Requests from each TV set in each home (e.g., initiated by means of a hand-held remote control infra-red sending device (11)) can be sent to the curbside circuitry from the home along a link (23) such as a wire or along the same curbside-to-home cable itself. Storage of billing information with respect to each customer is accomplished by means of a billing recorder (19) located in the curbside box. A relatively short link (50) connects this billing recorder to a junction (25) in the link that carries the request signals to the curbside box. The billing recorder has registers that record the history of each customer's requests for access to each channel. The billing recorder is provided with circuitry responsive to remote billing interrogation signals sent by one or more remote billing centers (51, 52). In response to these remote billing interrogation signals, the billing recorder sends the records of the customers to the remote billing center.

Fig. 1