



US007818680B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Moody et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,818,680 B2**

(45) **Date of Patent:** **Oct. 19, 2010**

(54) **METHOD FOR DELETING RELATED MESSAGES**

6,185,551 B1 2/2001 Birrell et al. 707/3
6,282,565 B1 8/2001 Shaw et al. 709/206

(75) Inventors: **Paul B. Moody**, Hyde Park, VT (US);
Daniel M. Gruen, Newton, MA (US);
Steven L. Rohall, Winchester, MA (US);
Bernard J. Kerr, Boston, MA (US)

(Continued)

(73) Assignee: **International Business Machines Corporation**, Armonk, NY (US)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 1053 days.

Venolia, G.; Neustaedter, C., "Understanding sequence and reply relationships within email conversations: a mixed-model visualization." Proceedings of the conference on Human factors in computing systems, pp. 361-368, Apr. 5-10, 2003, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA.*

(21) Appl. No.: **10/745,488**

(Continued)

(22) Filed: **Dec. 29, 2003**

Primary Examiner—Ba Huynh
Assistant Examiner—Eric Wiener

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2005/0144561 A1 Jun. 30, 2005

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06F 3/00 (2006.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **715/752**; 715/739; 715/753;
715/758; 715/845; 707/661

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 715/712,
715/739, 752, 776, 810, 821, 822, 840, 855,
715/923, 753, 758; 709/206; 707/664-671,
707/999.203, 999.205, 999.206

A method is provided which utilizes a threading service to offer enhanced features for a document management system including an email system. Various enhanced email features may be provided through one or more of the following components: a delete module, a reply module, a profile module, and a search module. The delete module enables a user to delete a selected message, a set of related messages, or the whole set except for the selected message. The reply module enables a user to send a reply message to all addresses associated and involved with an entire set of related messages. The profile module enables a dynamic interest profile to contain all relevant information from an outgoing message and a set of messages related to the outgoing message. The search module enables search results to include documents which match the user's query as well as documents related to the documents which match the user's query.

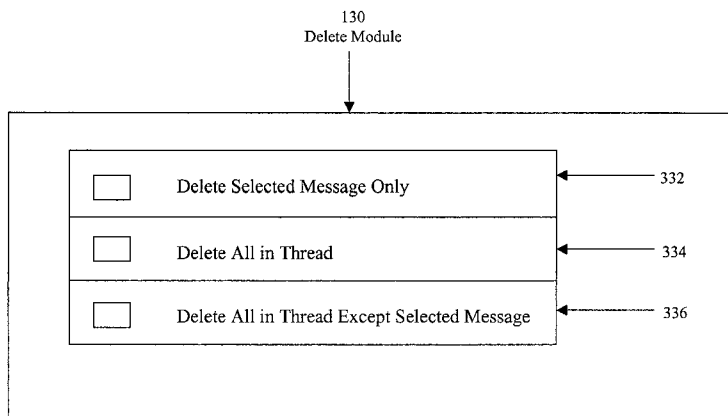
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,079,700 A * 1/1992 Kozoll et al. 715/531
5,107,419 A * 4/1992 MacPhail 707/9
5,140,521 A * 8/1992 Kozol et al. 715/531
5,632,018 A * 5/1997 Otorii 709/200
5,893,070 A * 4/1999 Garber et al. 705/2
5,905,863 A * 5/1999 Knowles et al. 709/206
5,928,333 A * 7/1999 Landfield et al. 709/245
5,930,471 A * 7/1999 Milewski et al. 395/200.04
6,134,582 A * 10/2000 Kennedy 709/206

20 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

6,330,589 B1 * 12/2001 Kennedy 709/206
 6,381,594 B1 4/2002 Eichstaedt et al. 707/3
 6,421,669 B1 7/2002 Gilmour et al. 707/9
 6,442,592 B1 8/2002 Alumbaugh et al. 709/206
 6,457,004 B1 * 9/2002 Nishioka et al. 707/5
 6,483,905 B1 * 11/2002 Kikinis 379/93.24
 6,496,853 B1 * 12/2002 Klein 709/206
 6,519,571 B1 2/2003 Guheen et al. 705/14
 6,539,375 B2 3/2003 Kawasaki 707/5
 6,592,627 B1 7/2003 Agrawal et al. 715/513
 6,615,241 B1 * 9/2003 Miller et al. 709/206
 6,631,398 B1 * 10/2003 Klein 709/206
 6,704,772 B1 * 3/2004 Ahmed et al. 709/207
 6,769,012 B1 7/2004 Liu et al. 709/204
 6,775,243 B1 * 8/2004 Valentine et al. 370/255
 6,822,754 B1 * 11/2004 Shiohara 358/1.15
 6,823,368 B1 11/2004 Ullmann et al. 709/206
 6,832,224 B2 12/2004 Gilmour 707/100
 6,963,904 B2 * 11/2005 Yong 709/207
 6,973,167 B2 * 12/2005 Kikinis 379/67.1
 6,993,563 B2 1/2006 Lytle et al. 709/206
 7,035,903 B1 4/2006 Baldonado 709/206
 7,039,671 B2 5/2006 Cullen 709/201
 7,043,698 B2 5/2006 Newbold 715/789
 7,093,229 B2 * 8/2006 Pang et al. 716/21
 7,120,865 B1 * 10/2006 Horvitz et al. 715/210
 7,158,971 B1 1/2007 Bascom 707/10
 7,246,121 B2 7/2007 Adar et al. 707/9
 7,389,292 B2 * 6/2008 Prakash 707/8
 7,409,641 B2 8/2008 Moody et al. 715/752
 7,412,437 B2 8/2008 Moody et al. 707/3
 7,657,839 B2 2/2010 Moody et al. 715/752
 2001/0030960 A1 * 10/2001 Nakada et al. 370/389

2002/0023136 A1 * 2/2002 Silver et al. 709/206
 2002/0026487 A1 * 2/2002 Ogilvie et al. 709/206
 2002/0035607 A1 3/2002 Checkoway et al. 709/206
 2002/0065891 A1 5/2002 Malik 709/206
 2002/0169839 A1 11/2002 Goldberg 709/206
 2002/0169840 A1 * 11/2002 Sheldon et al. 709/206
 2002/0188689 A1 * 12/2002 Michael 709/206
 2003/0020749 A1 1/2003 Abu-Hakima et al. 345/752
 2003/0105827 A1 6/2003 Tan et al. 709/206
 2003/0120737 A1 6/2003 Lytle et al. 709/206
 2003/0135567 A1 7/2003 Reilly 709/206
 2003/0163537 A1 8/2003 Rohall et al. 709/206
 2003/0233419 A1 * 12/2003 Beringer 709/206
 2003/0236797 A1 * 12/2003 Nita 707/200
 2004/0060425 A1 * 4/2004 Puryear 84/626
 2004/0119740 A1 6/2004 Chang et al. 345/751
 2004/0133645 A1 7/2004 Massanelli et al. 709/206
 2004/0176072 A1 * 9/2004 Gellens 455/412.1
 2005/0138552 A1 * 6/2005 Venolia 715/526

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Bergman, Ruth; Griss, Martin; Staelin, Carl, "A Personal Email Assistant," Software Technology Laboratory, HP Laboratories Palo Alto, Aug. 22, 2002.*
 Bellotti, Victoria; Ducheneaut, Nicholas; Howard, Mark; Smith, Ian, "Taking Email to Task: The Design and Evaluation of a Task Management Centered Email Tool," Proceedings of the conference on Human factors in computing systems, pp. 345-352, Apr. 5-10, 2003, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA.*
 Whittaker, Steve; Sidner, Candace "Email overload: exploring personal information management of email," CHI96, Apr. 13-18, 1996.*
 Venolia, Gina Danielle; Dabbish, Laura; Cadiz, JJ; Gupta, Anoop, "Supporting Email Workflow," Techinal Report, Dec. 2001.*

* cited by examiner

FIG. 1

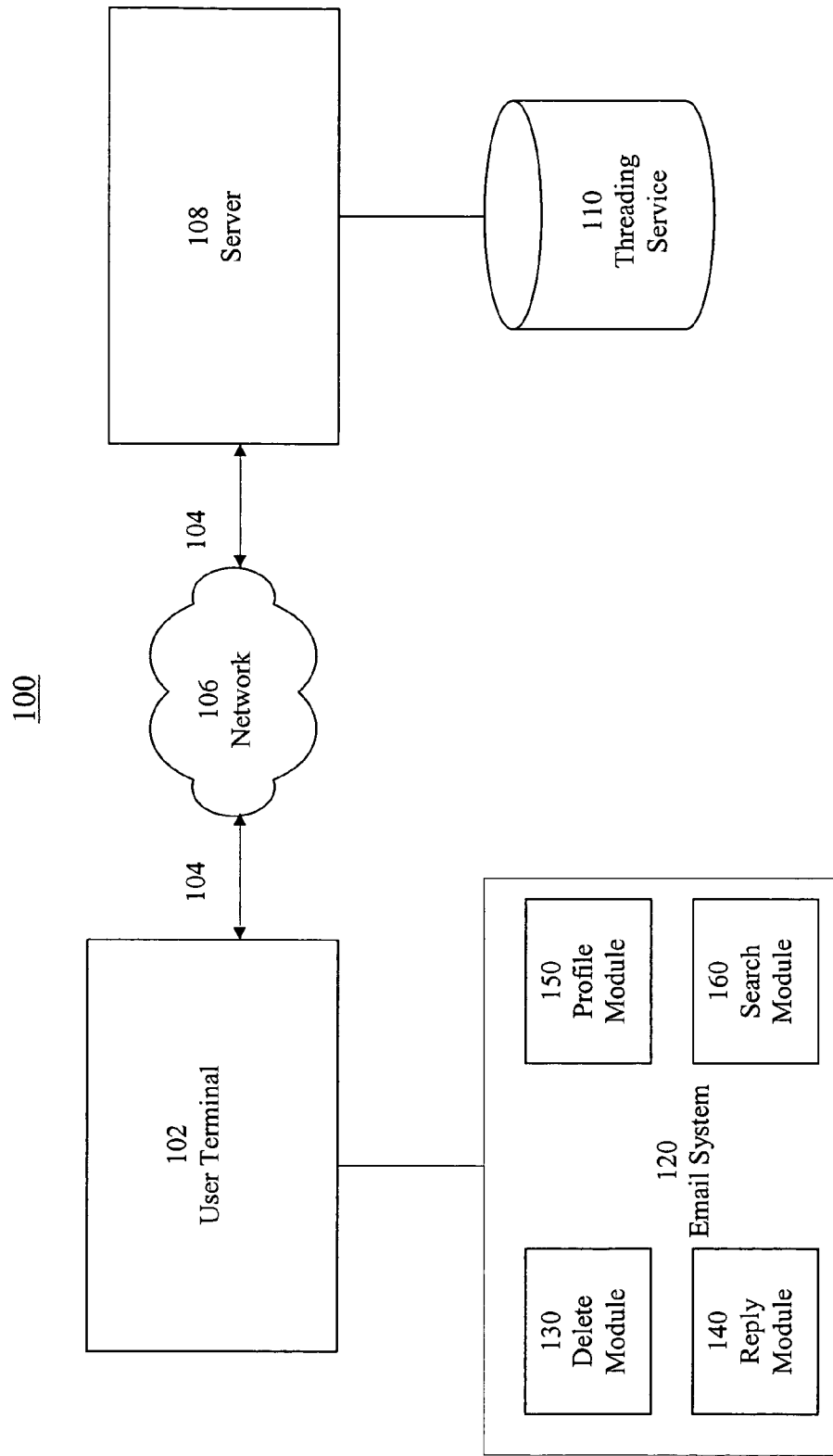


FIG. 2

200

222

226

224

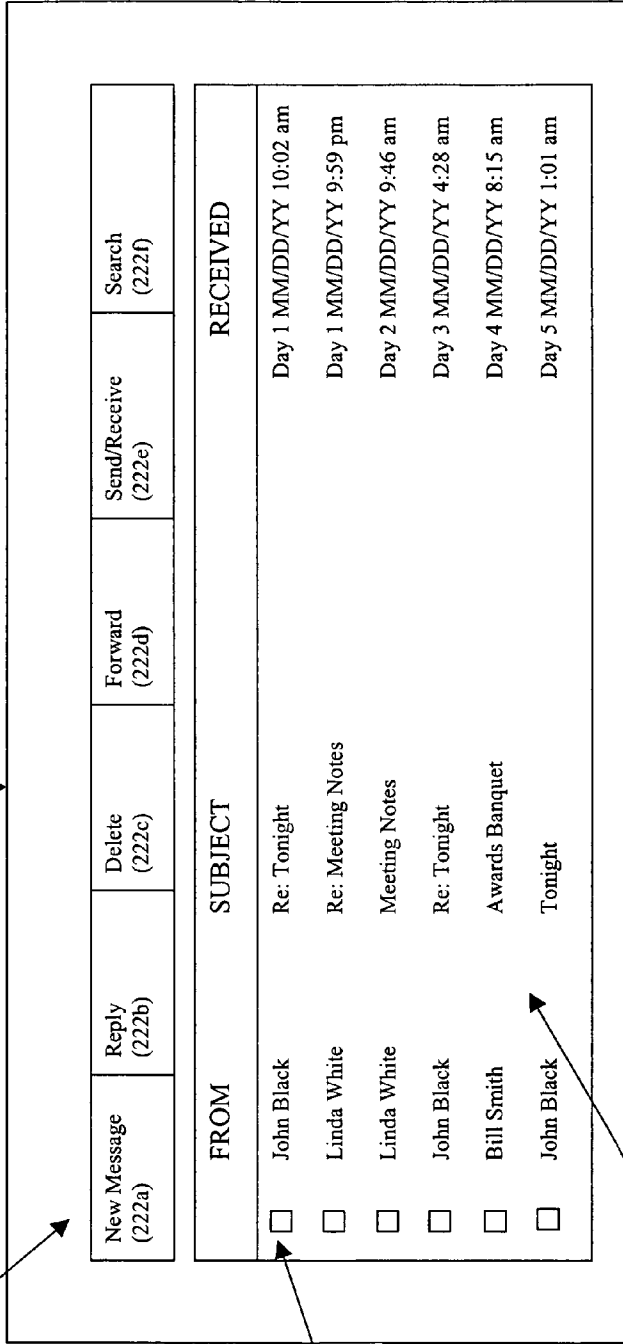


FIG. 3

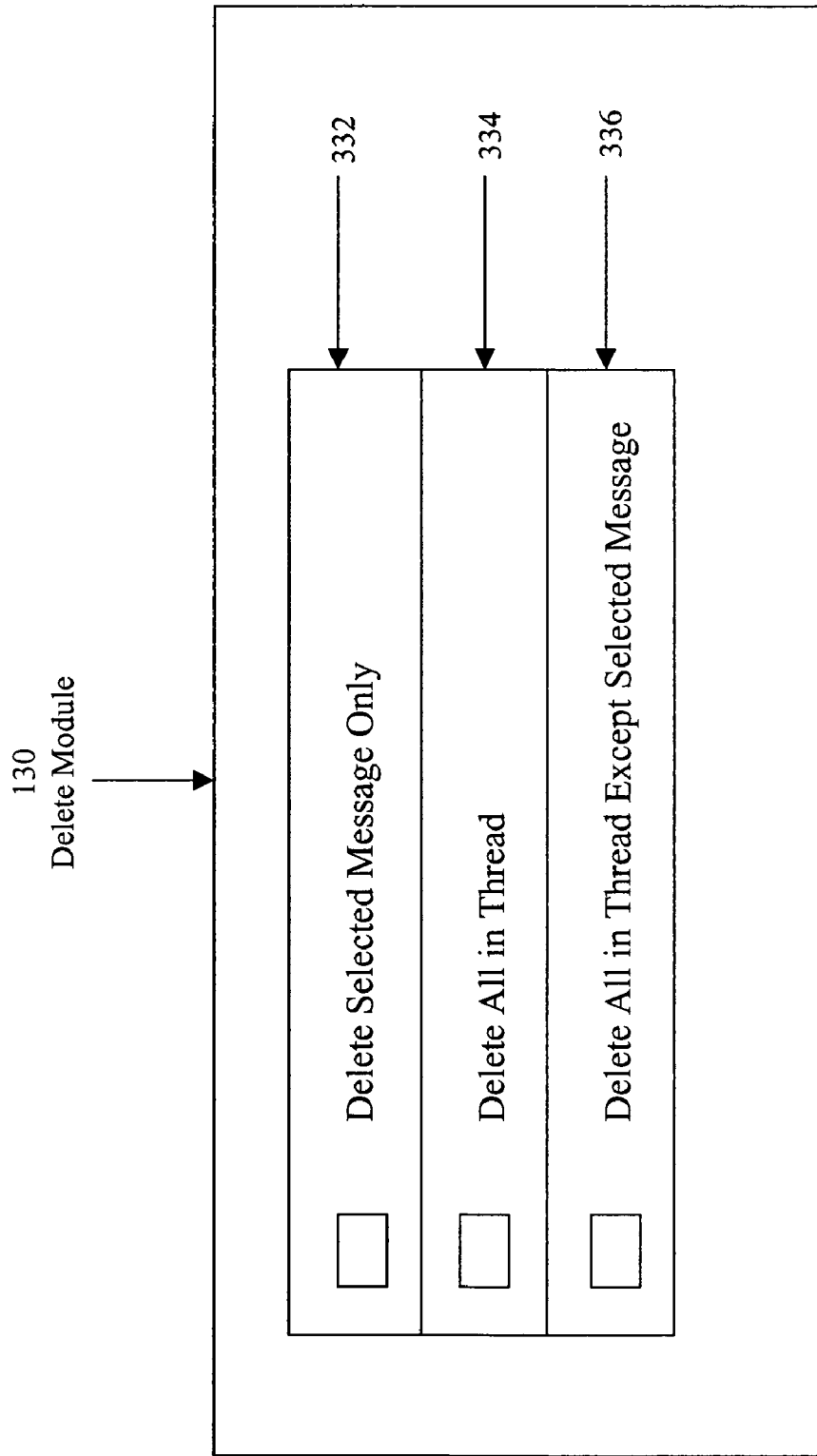


FIG. 4

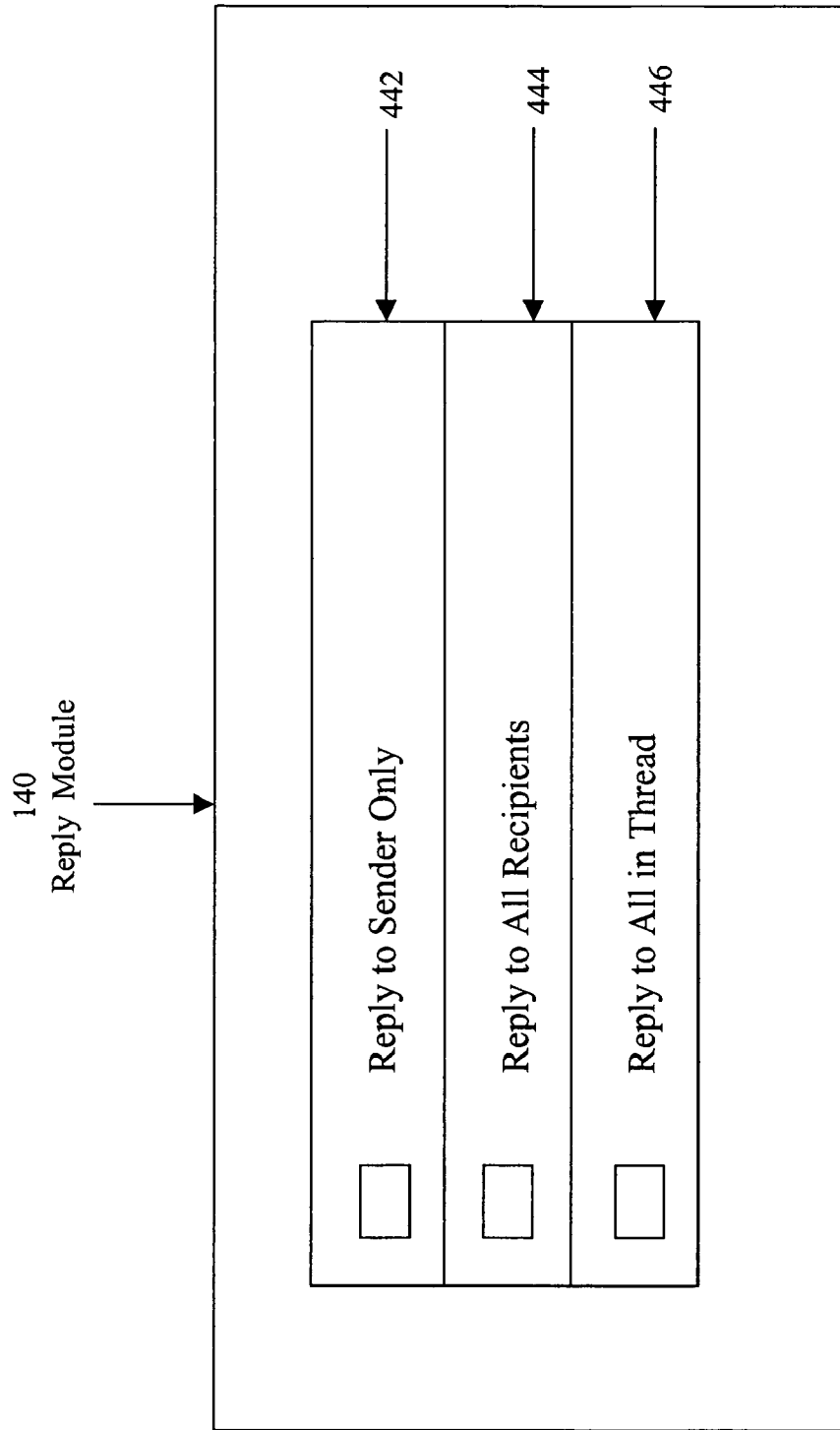
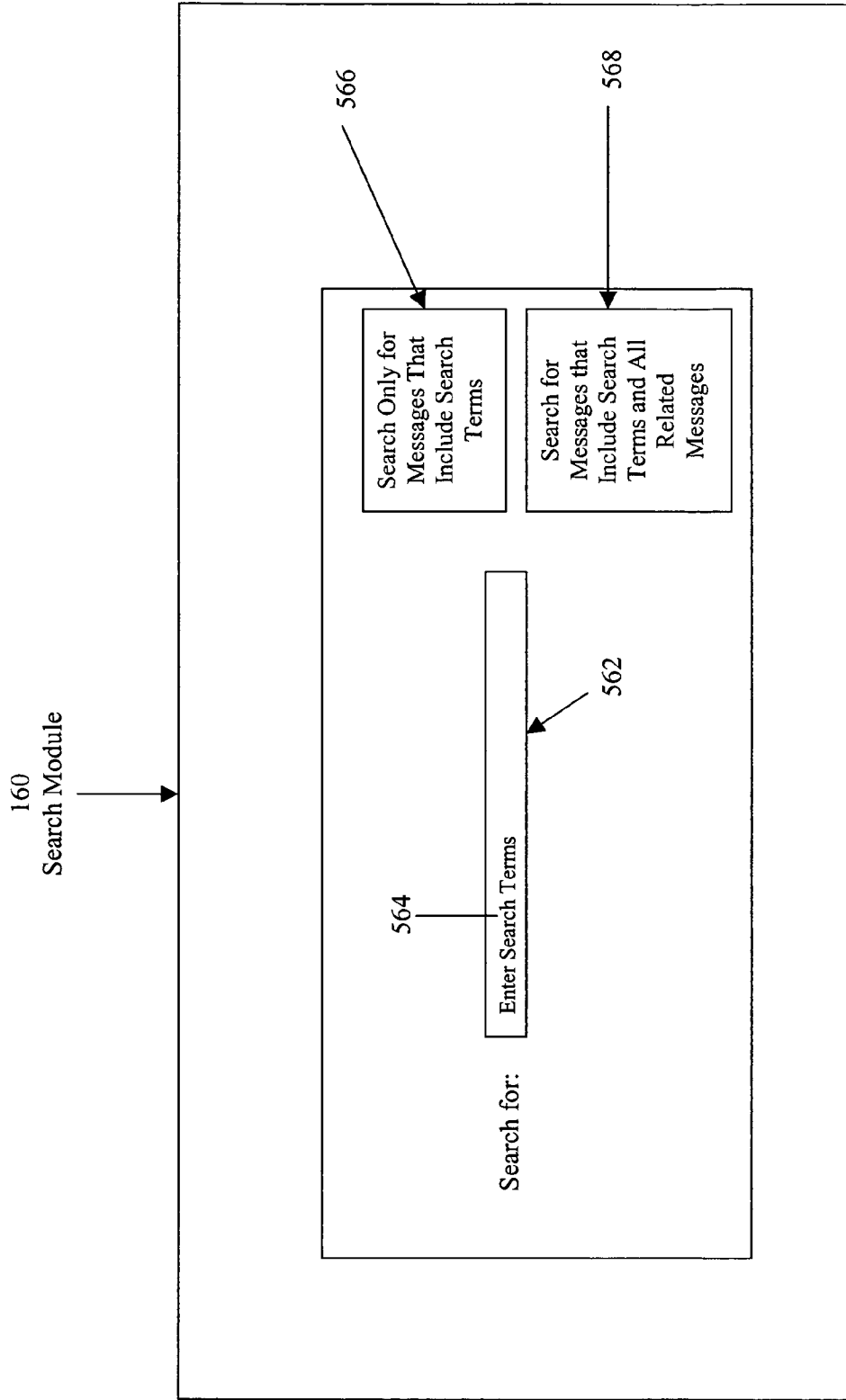


FIG. 5



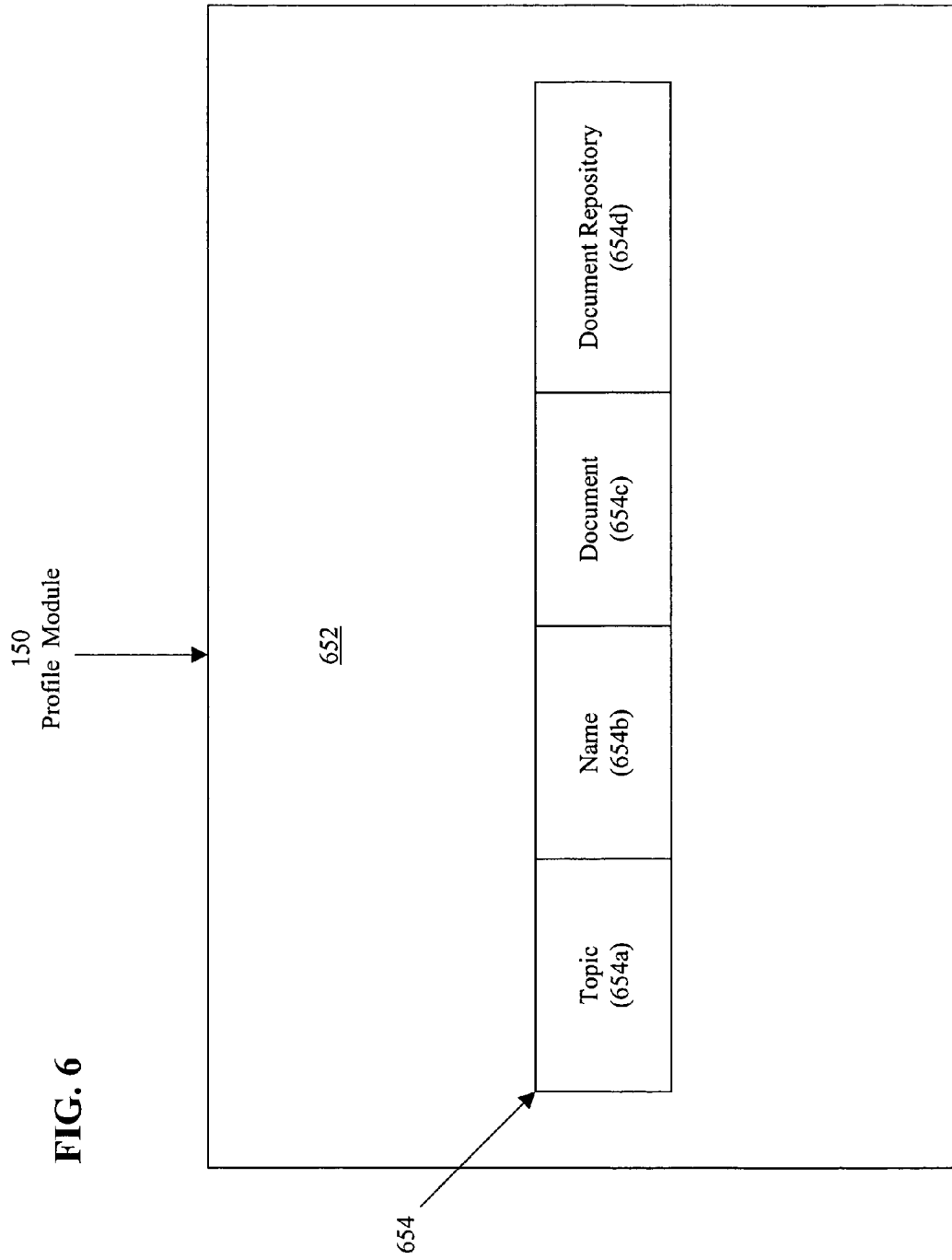


FIG. 6

1

METHOD FOR DELETING RELATED MESSAGES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is related to the commonly owned co-pending U.S. Patent Applications entitled "System and Method for Replying to Related Messages," U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/745,495, "System and Method for Building Interest Profiles from Related Messages," U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/745,589, and "System and Method for Searching and Retrieving Related Messages," U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/745,588, each filed herewith and incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to an email system that utilizes a threading service.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Conventional email systems include a "delete" command for removing unwanted messages. Typically, an unwanted email message is selected and then deleted using one of various known mechanisms. However, when the selected message is related to one or more other messages, the user must either delete each of the related messages individually or select the related messages manually and issue delete command on the selected set of messages.

Often times, users may wish to keep only one message from the set of related messages (for example, the one message which summarizes the discussion or the one message that contains the decision and its rationale). To accomplish this, users must select and delete each message in the set while taking care to not delete the single desired message.

What is needed is a mechanism that enables a user to delete a selected message and all related messages in one user action.

What is also needed is a mechanism that enables a user to keep a selected message but delete all related messages in one user action.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention solving these and other problems provides one or more delete commands for deleting messages. The delete commands may include commands for deleting the selected message, for deleting the set of related messages including the selected message, and/or for deleting the set of related messages with the exception of the selected message.

According to various embodiments of the invention, a delete module allows a user to delete a selected message and/or related messages in a variety of ways, including "Delete Selected Message Only", "Delete All in Thread", or "Delete All in Thread Except Selected Message." In some embodiments of the invention, the delete module may utilize a threading service. This threading service may reside locally at a user terminal or remotely on a server.

According to various embodiments of the invention, to access aspects of the invention, a user selects an email message. Once the user selects the email message, the user may perform an action or operation that provides the user with one

2

or more delete commands. For example, the user may select a generic delete command from a menu of the email system. Other mechanisms are available as would be apparent.

In response, the delete module requests a list of messages related to the selected message from a threading service. The list of related messages includes the selected message and all messages in the same "thread," or those messages determined by the threading service to be related to the selected message.

After the delete module receives the list of related messages, the delete module may display one or more delete commands that may provide various delete options. These delete options may include one or more of "Delete Selected Message Only", "Delete All in Thread", or "Delete All in Thread Except Selected Message" or other delete options. The user may select one of the commands corresponding to the user's desired result. If the user wishes to delete only the selected message, the user selects "Delete Selected Message Only." If the user wishes to delete the entire thread, the user selects "Delete All in Thread." If the user wishes to delete the entire thread except for the selected message, the user selects "Delete All in Thread Except the Selected Message."

Once the user has selected a delete command, the delete module deletes the appropriate message or messages. If the selected delete command is "Delete All in Thread Except the Selected Message," the selected message is compared with each message in the list of related messages provided by the threading service. Each message in the list of related messages that does not match the selected message is deleted, leaving the selected message.

If the selected delete command is "Delete All in Thread," the delete module deletes each message in the list of related messages including the selected message. If the selected delete command is "Delete Selected Message Only," the delete module deletes the select message.

Other objects and features of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings. The drawings are designed for purposes of illustration only and the invention is not limited to the particulars shown therein. Various alternatives and modifications within the scope of the invention will be apparent from the description contained herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates an email system that utilizes a threading service according to various embodiments of the invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates a user interface for an email system according to various embodiments of the invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates various delete options provided by a delete module of an email system according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 illustrates various reply options provided by a reply module of an email system according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 illustrates various search options provided by a search module of an email system according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 illustrates a profile module of an email system according to one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Various embodiments of the invention are described below in terms of email systems that include one or more email messages. However, it will become apparent from reading the following description how various aspects of the invention

may be used with other types of systems that include one or more items, such as, for example, file systems.

FIG. 1 illustrates a system 100 according to one embodiment of the invention. System 100 includes an email system 120 on a user terminal 102 and a threading service 110 operating on or hosted by a server 108. According to various aspects of the invention, threading service 110 provides enhanced features for email system 120. These enhanced features for email system 120 may be achieved through various components operating on or in conjunction with email system 120. These components include one or more of the following: a delete module 130, a reply module 140, a profile module 150, and a search module 160.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, threading service 110 may be utilized on server 108. It should be understood that threading service 110 may be located on user terminal 102 or any machine or machines associated with user terminal 102. While illustrated as separate from email system 120, it should also be understood that threading system 110 may be an integral part of email system 120 as would be appreciated.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, threading service 110 may be operatively coupled to server 108. Threading service 110 may include a database to store any type of data or information. Threading service 110 may include, or interface to, for example, the Oracle™ relational database sold commercially by Oracle Corporation, Informix™, DB2 (Database 2) or other data storage or query formats, platforms, or resources such as OLAP (On Line Analytical Processing), SQL (Standard Language Query), a SAN (storage area network), Microsoft Access™ or any other type of database.

Server 108 may be or include, for instance, a workstation running Microsoft Windows™ NT™, Microsoft Windows™ 2000, Microsoft Windows™ XP, Unix, Linux, Xenix, IBM, AIX™, Hewlett-Packard UX™, Novell Netware™, Sun Microsystems Solaris™, OS/2™, BeOS™, Mach, Apache, OpenStep™, or other operating system or platform.

In some embodiments of the invention, threading service 110 tracks relationships between various items including messages, documents, and/or other items. Various threading services may be used such as those described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/334,087 (Publication No. US20030163537A1), entitled "Method and Apparatus for Handling Conversation Threads and Message Groupings as a Single Entity," filed Dec. 30, 2002, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/995,151 (Publication No. US20030101065A1), entitled "Method and Apparatus for Maintaining Conversation Threads in Electronic Mail," filed Nov. 27, 2001, the specifications of which are herein incorporated by reference in their entirety. It should be noted that the invention is not limited to any particular mechanism for determining threads among a set of documents including email messages. Other threading services may also be used as would be apparent.

User terminal 102 may be operatively coupled over a network 106 via a communications link 104. Examples of user terminal 102 may include any one or more of, for example, a desktop computer, a laptop or other portable computer, a hand-held computer device such as a Blackberry, a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), a web-enabled mobile phone, or a Palm Pilot, or any other computer device.

Network 106 may include any one or more networks. For example, network 106 may include the Internet, an intranet, a PAN (Personal Area Network), a LAN (Local Area Network), a WAN (Wide Area Network), a SAN (Storage Area Network), a MAN (Metropolitan Area Network), or other network.

Communications link 104 may include any one or more communications links. For example, communications link 104 may include a copper telephone line, a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) connection, a Digital Data Service (DDS) connection, an Ethernet connection, an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) line, an analog modem connection, a cable modem connection, a wireless connection, or other communications link.

FIG. 2 illustrates an exemplary user interface 200 for email system 120 according to various embodiments of the invention. User interface 200 may include a toolbar 222 from which a user may manage one or more email messages in email system 120. Toolbar 222 may include various items related to email features including any one or more of New Message 222a, Reply 222b, Delete 222c, Forward 222d, Send/Receive 222e, Search 222f. Toolbar 222 may include other items corresponding to other email feature as would be apparent.

Items included in toolbar 222 allow a user to access various aspects of the invention. For example, selecting Reply 222b invokes access to reply module 140, selecting Delete 222c invokes access to delete module 130, and selecting Search 222f invokes accesses to search module 160.

Further, user interface 200 may also include a list of messages 224 for presentation and display to the user. For example, list of message 224 may include new and saved email messages for the user. In some embodiments of the invention, each message of message set 224 includes a selection box 226 as illustrated. Selection box 226 allows a user to select one or more messages and subsequently direct a performance of an action on that message, such as, for example reply, forward, or delete or other action. Although messages are described as being selected via selection box 226 in user interface 200, messages may be selected in various other ways, such as highlighting a message, clicking on a message, or any other mechanism for selecting messages as would be apparent.

FIG. 3 illustrates various delete options that may be incorporated into user interface 200 and provided or otherwise controlled by delete module 130 according to one or more embodiments of the invention. Delete module 130 allows a user to delete a selected message and/or related messages in a variety of ways, including "Delete Selected Message Only" 332, "Delete All in Thread" 334, or "Delete All in Thread Except Selected Message" 336. Depending on which delete option is selected, delete module 130 may access threading service 110.

To utilize delete module 130 of the invention, a user selects one or more messages from list of messages 224 presented in user interface 200. As discussed above, the user may accomplish this using selection box 226 or some other selecting mechanism. In some embodiments, the selected message may be a message that the user wishes to delete. In some embodiments, the selected message may be a message that the user wishes to keep, but the user may wish to delete any or all related messages except the selected message. In some embodiments, the user may wish to delete the selected message and all related messages.

After selecting a message, the user may select "Delete" 222c from toolbar 222 of email system 120. Selecting "Delete" 222c accesses or otherwise invokes delete module 130. Subsequently, delete module 130 may request a list of messages related to the selected message from threading service 110. The list of related messages includes the selected message and all messages in the same "thread," or all messages determined by threading service 110 to be related to the selected message. The list of related messages may be stored

in a temporary memory buffer (not shown) of email system **120** and accessed by delete module **130**.

In some embodiments, after delete module **130** retrieves the list of related messages, delete module **130** may display various delete commands that provide the user with various delete options. These delete options may include “Delete Selected Message Only” **332**, “Delete All in Thread” **334**, or “Delete all in Thread Except Selected Message” **336**. The user may then select one of these in accordance with the action the user wishes to take. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to delete only the selected message, the user selects “Delete Selected Message Only” **332**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to keep the selected message, but to delete all related messages, the user selects “Delete All in Thread Except the Selected Message” **336**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to delete the selected message and all related messages, the user selects “Delete All in Thread.”

After the user has selected a delete command, delete module **130** causes the appropriate messages to be deleted. If the selected delete command was “Delete All in Thread Except the Selected Message” **336**, each of the messages in the list of related message is compared with the originally selected message. Those that do not match are deleted, leaving the originally selected message. In some embodiments of the invention, delete module **130** may simply mark the messages for deletion for the benefit of another service (not otherwise illustrated) that actually deletes the messages as would be apparent. In some embodiments of the invention, actual deletion may occur at contemporaneously, at a time specified by email system **120**, at a time specified by the user, or at a time determined by the deletion service.

If the selected delete command was “Delete All in Thread” **334**, each of the messages in the list of related messages, including the selected message is be deleted. As discussed above, delete module **130** may simply mark the messages for deletion for the benefit of another service.

If the selected delete command was “Delete Selected Message Only” **332**, the originally selected message is deleted. Again, as discussed above, delete module **130** may simply mark the selected message for deletion.

FIG. 4 illustrates reply options that may be incorporated into user interface **200** and provided or otherwise controlled by reply module **140** according to one or more embodiments of the invention. Reply module **140** allows a user to reply to a selected message in a variety of ways, including “Reply to Sender Only” **442**, “Reply to All Recipients” **444**, or “Reply to All in Thread” **446**. Depending on which delete option is selected, reply module **140** may access threading service **110**.

To utilize reply module **140** of the invention, a user selects one or more messages from list of messages **224** presented in user interface **200**. As discussed above, the user may accomplish this using selection box **226** or some other selecting mechanism. In some embodiments of the invention, the user may wish to reply to only the sender of the selected message. In some embodiments of the invention, the user may wish to reply to all the recipients of the selected message. In some embodiments of the invention, the user may wish to reply to all the recipients who received the selected message or any message related to the selected message.

After selecting a message, the user may select “Reply” **222b** from toolbar **222** of email system **120**. Selecting “Reply” **222b** accesses or otherwise invokes reply module **140**. Subsequently, reply module **140** may display various reply commands that provide the user with various reply options. These reply options may include “Reply to Sender Only” **442**, “Reply to All Recipients” **444**, or “Reply to All in

Thread” **446**. The user may then select one of these in accordance with the action the user wishes to take. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to send a reply only to the sender of the selected message, the user selects “Reply to Sender Only” **442**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to send a reply to all recipients of the selected message, the user selects “Reply to All Recipients” **444**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to send a reply to all the recipients of the selected message or any message related to the selected message, the user selects “Reply to All in Thread” **446**.

After the user has selected a reply command, reply module **140** causes the appropriate reply message to be generated. If the selected reply command was “Reply to Sender Only” **442**, reply module **140** simply inserts an address of the sender of the selected message into a reply message. In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** retrieves an email address from the “From” field of the selected message and inserts it into the “To” field of the reply message as would be apparent.

If the selected reply command was “Reply to All Recipients” **444**, reply module **140** inserts an address of the sender and all recipients of the selected message into a reply message. In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** retrieves email addresses from the “From,” “To,” “CC,” and/or “BCC” fields of the selected message and inserts them into a corresponding field in the reply message as would be apparent.

If the selected reply command was “Reply to All in Thread” **446**, reply module **140** inserts an address of the sender, all recipients of the selected message, and all recipients of messages related to the selected message into a reply message. In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** retrieves email addresses from a list of messages related to the selected message. In some embodiments of the invention, this may be accomplished using header information associated with each of the messages in the list of related messages to collect unique names or addresses from the address fields therein. These names or addresses may then be inserted into corresponding fields in the reply message.

In some embodiments of the invention, in order to “Reply to All in Thread,” reply module **140** may request a list of messages related to the selected message from threading service **110**. The list of related messages includes the selected message and all messages in the same “thread,” or those messages determined by threading service **110** to be related to the selected message. The list of related messages may be stored in a temporary memory buffer (not otherwise illustrated) of email system **120**. Reply module **140** may access the temporary memory buffer and retrieve the list of related messages.

In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** may gather header information for each message in the list of related messages. The header information gathered by reply module **140** may include a variety of data fields that are used for addressing, including, but not limited to: “From,” “To,” “CC,” “BCC,” “Sent on behalf of,” “Reply to,” or any other address data field.

In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** may collect the names or addresses from the address fields of the header data from each related message, and adds only those unique names or addresses to a stored list. The stored list of gathered header information may be stored in the temporary memory buffer (not otherwise illustrated). In some embodiments of the invention, the stored list may include information regarding the field from which the names or

addresses originated. For example, "Joe Smith" may have been in the "From" field in one message and in the "To" field of a second message.

After the stored list of names or addresses has been compiled, reply module **140** may create a reply message that is related to the originally selected message. In some embodiments of the invention, reply module **140** may insert the names or addresses from the stored list of names or addresses into fields of the reply message corresponding to the fields from which the names or addresses originated (i.e., originating fields). In some embodiments of the invention, the corresponding field is determined by a rule set that specifies which originating fields cause names to be inserted into which address fields of the reply message with priority information should the name or address originate in more than one type of field.

In some embodiments of the invention, the user may also insert additional names or addresses into the address fields of the reply message as would be apparent.

FIG. 5 illustrates various search options that may be incorporated into user interface **200** and provided or otherwise controlled by search module **160** according to one or more embodiments of the invention. Search module **160** allows a user to search a list of messages **224** and/or related message in a variety of ways, including "Search Only for Messages that Include Search Terms" **566** or "Search for Messages that Include Search Terms and All Related Messages" **568**. Depending on which search option is selected, search module **160** may access threading service **110**.

To utilize search module **160** of the invention, a user selects menu item "Search" **222f** from toolbar **222** of email system **120**. Selecting menu item "Search" **222f** accesses or otherwise invokes search module **160**. Subsequently, search module **160** may display a query box **562** in which a user may enter one or more search terms **564**. The user may then enter search terms **564** comprising of a variety of text that is to be sought in list of message **224** as would be apparent.

After the user enters search terms **564** into query box **562**, the user may select from one or more search options provided by search module **160**. These search options may include "Search Only for Messages that Include Search Terms" **566** or "Search for Messages that Include Search Terms and All Related Messages" **568**. The user may select one of these in accordance with the action the user wishes to take. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to retrieve only those messages that include search terms **564**, the user may select "Search Only for Messages that Include Search Terms" **566**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the user wishes to retrieve those messages that include search terms **564** and all messages that are related thereto, the user may select "Search for Messages Containing Search Terms and All Related Messages" **568**.

After the user has selected a search command, search module **160** causes the appropriate search results to be generated. If the selected search command is "Search Only for Messages that Include Search Terms" **566**, search module **160** searches message set **224** for messages that include search terms **564** as would be apparent and provides those message as search results.

If the selected search command is "Search for Messages that Include Search Terms and All Related Messages" **568**, search module **160** searches message set **224** for messages including search terms **564**. Then, for each message that includes search terms **564**, search module **160** also determines and/or retrieves messages related thereto, whether or not the related messages include search terms **564**. Search module **160** searches each message of message set **224** for

entered search terms **564**. In some embodiments of the invention, if the search terms are found including a particular message, search module **160** determines whether the particular message belongs to a thread. If so, search module **160** requests a list of messages related to the particular message from, for example, threading service **110**. This list of related messages may include the matching message and all messages in the same "thread," or those messages determined by threading service **110** to be related to the particular message. The list of related messages may be stored in a memory buffer (not shown) of email system **120**. Search module **160** may access and retrieve the list of related messages from the particular memory buffer. Search module **160** provides search results that include the message that included the search terms **564** and the list of messages related thereto.

In some embodiments of the invention, after the search results are compiled, search module **160** may display the search results in various ways. Search module **160** may display the search results in order of relevance, date or any other mechanism. In some embodiments, the search results may include an indication so that the user may recognize that a particular message includes search terms **564**, while another message is related to a message that includes search terms.

In some embodiments of the invention, the search results may be displayed such that only a set of related messages or thread of a message, where at least one message there includes the search terms **564**. In some embodiments of the invention, the user may expand/collapse the initial message to view the entire list of related messages.

In some embodiments of the invention, the search results that are displayed may include these messages that include search terms **564**. The displayed results may include an indication of whether the message is related to other messages. In some embodiments, the user may expand/collapse the message to view the list of related messages.

FIG. 6 illustrates profile module **150** according to the various embodiments of the invention. In some embodiments, profile module **150** may use threading service **110** to expand topics and names used to create a dynamic interest profile **652**. Dynamic interest profile **652** may be generated and updated on the email system **120** of user terminal **102**.

In some embodiments of the invention, profile module **150** automatically constructs dynamic interest profile **652** in order to sort, cluster, and otherwise call attention to messages that may be of interest to a user. Dynamic interest profile **652** may include items **654** of user interest including topics **654a**, names **654b**, documents, **654c**, document repositories **654d**, or other items of user interest.

In some embodiments of the invention, profile module **150** may monitor all outgoing messages that a user sends from email system **120**. Outgoing messages and messages related thereto may be used to construct items **654** of dynamic interest profile **652**, as described further below.

For each outgoing message, profile module **150** identifies whether the outgoing message related to other messages, by, for example, being related to a thread. If so, profile module **150** requests a list of messages related to the outgoing message from threading service **110**. The list of related messages includes the outgoing message and all messages in the same "thread," or all those messages determined by threading service **110** to be related to the outgoing message. The list of related messages may be stored in a memory buffer (not shown) of email system **120**. Profile module **150** may access and retrieve messages from the memory buffer.

Profile module **150** scans the outgoing message and its related messages for terms to add to dynamic interest profile **652**. The related messages may be incoming or outgoing

messages. In some embodiments of the invention, the profile module 150 may include an algorithm for weighting the terms added to dynamic interest profile 652, such that, for example, the most relevant or frequently occurring terms appear first in dynamic interest profile 652. In some embodiments of the invention, incoming and outgoing messages may be weighted differently according to the algorithm.

While particular embodiments of the invention have been described, it is to be understood that modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. The scope of the invention is not limited to the specific embodiments described herein. Other embodiments, uses and advantages of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. The specification should be considered exemplary only, and the scope of the invention is accordingly intended to be limited by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for deleting electronic messages from an electronic message system comprising:

presenting a user with a list of electronic messages and one or more delete options via a graphical user interface of a display device;

enabling a user to select an electronic message from the list of electronic messages via an input device;

determining, with a processor, a message thread comprising a plurality of electronic messages, the plurality of electronic messages including the user-selected electronic message and one or more related electronic messages that are related to the user-selected electronic message, and wherein at least one of the one or more related electronic messages comprises content from the user-selected electronic message such that the message thread comprises redundant content; and

in response to the user selecting a delete option, deleting all of the determined related electronic messages in the message thread from the electronic message system, except for the user-selected electronic message, wherein the determined related messages are otherwise not selected by the user, to remove redundant content in the message thread.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic messages comprise email messages.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising marking the messages for deletion at a later time.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein deletion occurs at a time specified by the electronic message system, at a time specified by the user, or at a time determined by a deletion service.

5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising storing the list of messages related to the selected message in a temporary memory buffer of the electronic message system.

6. A computer-implemented method for deleting electronic messages from an electronic message system comprising:

presenting a user with a list of electronic messages in a graphical user interface of a display device;

enabling a user to select an electronic message from the list of electronic messages via an input device;

determining, with a processor, a message thread comprising a plurality of electronic messages, the plurality of electronic messages including the user-selected electronic message and one or more related electronic messages that are related to the user-selected electronic message, and wherein at least one of the one or more related electronic messages comprises content from the user-

selected electronic message such that the message thread comprises redundant content;

presenting, in the graphical user interface, the user with a plurality of delete options with regard to the user-selected message, the delete options including: a delete selected electronic message only option, a delete all electronic messages in thread option, and a delete all electronic messages in the thread except the selected electronic message option; and

in response to the user selecting the delete all messages in the thread except the selected electronic message option, deleting all of the determined related electronic messages in the message thread from the electronic message system, except for the user-selected electronic message, wherein the determined related messages are otherwise not selected by the user, to remove redundant content in the message thread.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the electronic message comprise email messages.

8. The method according to claim 6, further comprising marking the messages for deletion at a later time.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein deletion occurs at a time specified by the electronic message system, at a time specified by the user, or at a time determined by a deletion service.

10. The method according to claim 6, further comprising storing the list of messages related to the selected message in a temporary memory buffer of the electronic message system.

11. A computer-readable medium having computer readable instructions stored therein, wherein the instructions are configured to cause a processor to execute a method for deleting electronic messages from an electronic message system, the method comprising:

presenting a list of electronic messages and one or more delete options via a graphical user interface in a graphical user interface of a display device;

enabling a user to select an electronic message from the list of electronic messages via an input device;

determining a message thread comprising a plurality of electronic messages, the plurality of electronic messages including the user-selected electronic message and one or more related electronic messages that are related to the user-selected electronic message, and wherein at least one of the one or more related electronic messages comprises content from the user-selected electronic message such that the message thread comprises redundant content; and

in response to the user selecting a delete option, deleting all of the determined related electronic messages in the message thread from the electronic message system, except for the user-selected electronic message, wherein the determined related messages are otherwise not selected by the user, to remove redundant content in the message thread.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the electronic messages comprise email messages.

13. The method according to claim 11, further comprising marking the messages for deletion at a later time.

14. The method according to claim 11, wherein deletion occurs at a time specified by the electronic message system, at a time specified by the user, or at a time determined by a deletion service.

15. The method according to claim 14, further comprising storing the list of messages related to the selected message in a temporary memory buffer of the electronic message system.

11

16. A system for deleting electronic messages comprising: an electronic message system configured to maintain electronic messages; and a processor configured to:

- present a list of electronic messages and one or more delete options in a graphical user interface on a display device;
- receive a user-input to select an electronic message from the list of electronic messages via an input device;
- determine a message thread comprising a plurality of electronic messages, the plurality of electronic messages including the user-selected electronic message and one or more related electronic messages that are related to the user-selected electronic message, and wherein at least one of the one or more related electronic messages comprises content from the user-selected electronic message such that the message thread comprises redundant content; and

in response to the user selecting a delete option, deleting all of the determined related electronic messages in the message thread from the electronic message system,

12

except for the user-selected electronic message, wherein the determined related messages are otherwise not selected by the user, to remove redundant content in the message thread.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the electronic messages comprise email messages.

18. The system according to claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to mark the messages for deletion at a later time.

19. The system according to claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to delete the related message at a time specified by the electronic message system, at a time specified by the user, or at a time determined by a deletion service.

20. The system according to claim 19, wherein the processor is configured to store the list of messages related to the selected message in a temporary memory buffer of the electronic message system.

* * * * *