US 20110314378A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

Nijim et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2011/0314378 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 22, 2011**

(54) **CONTENT PURCHASES AND RIGHTS STORAGE AND ENTITLEMENTS**

(75) Inventors: **Yousef Wasef Nijim**, Roswell, GA (US); **Francisco Gonzalez**, Atlanta, GA (US); **Terry Douglas Lee**, Lawrenceville, GA (US); **Charlotte Lee McLure**, Alpharetta, GA (US)

(73) Assignee: **COX COMMUNICATIONS, INC.**, Atlanta, GA (US)

(21) Appl. No.: **13/048,216**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 15, 2011**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/356,431, filed on Jun. 18, 2010.

Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**

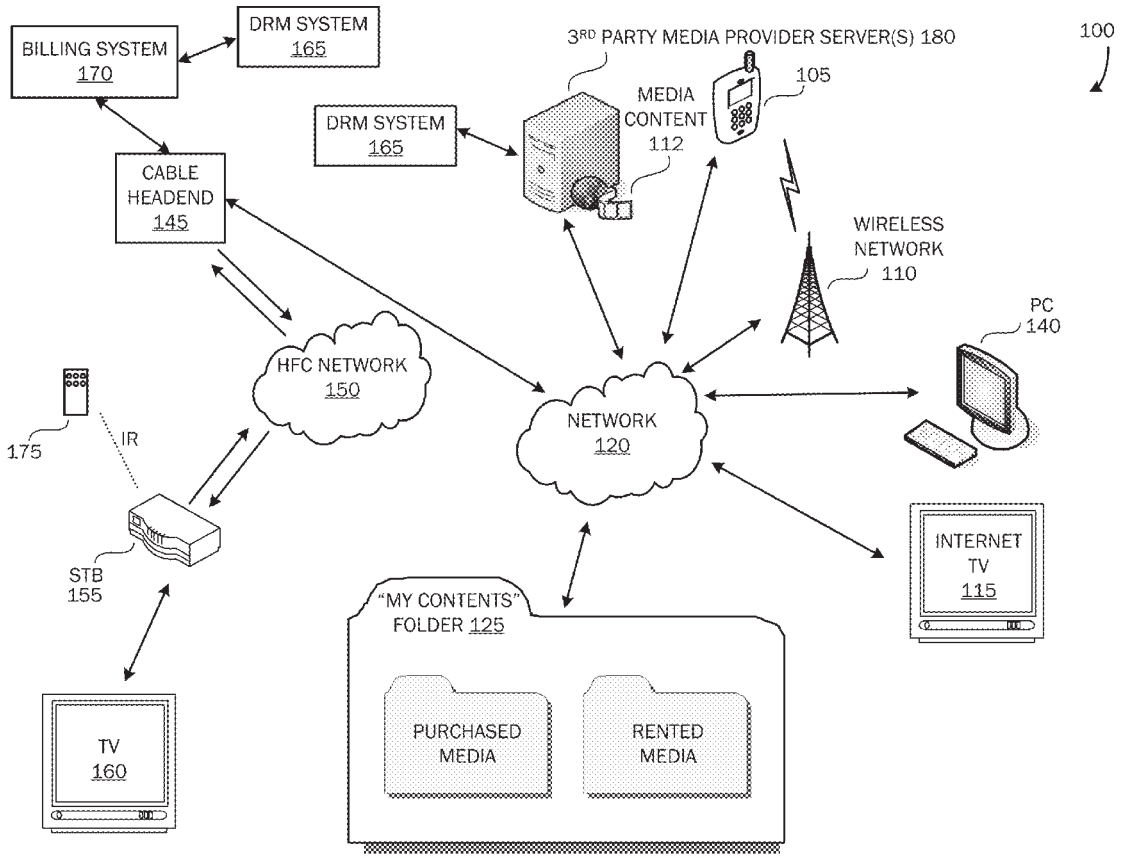
G06F 3/01 (2006.01)

G06F 17/30 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **715/716**; 707/827; 707/E17.01

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Storing asset ID and entitlement data of purchased and rented media from various sources in a media contents account and allowing access to the stored asset ID and entitlement data from various devices is provided. A user may access a media contents account via a network-connected device to view his/her purchased and rented media. The network-connected device may be a device that has been registered with the account. A user may select a title of purchased or rented media to stream or download. Upon verification of entitlement rights, the media may be streamed or downloaded to the user.



EX1027
Roku V. Media Chain
U.S. Patent No. 10,885,154

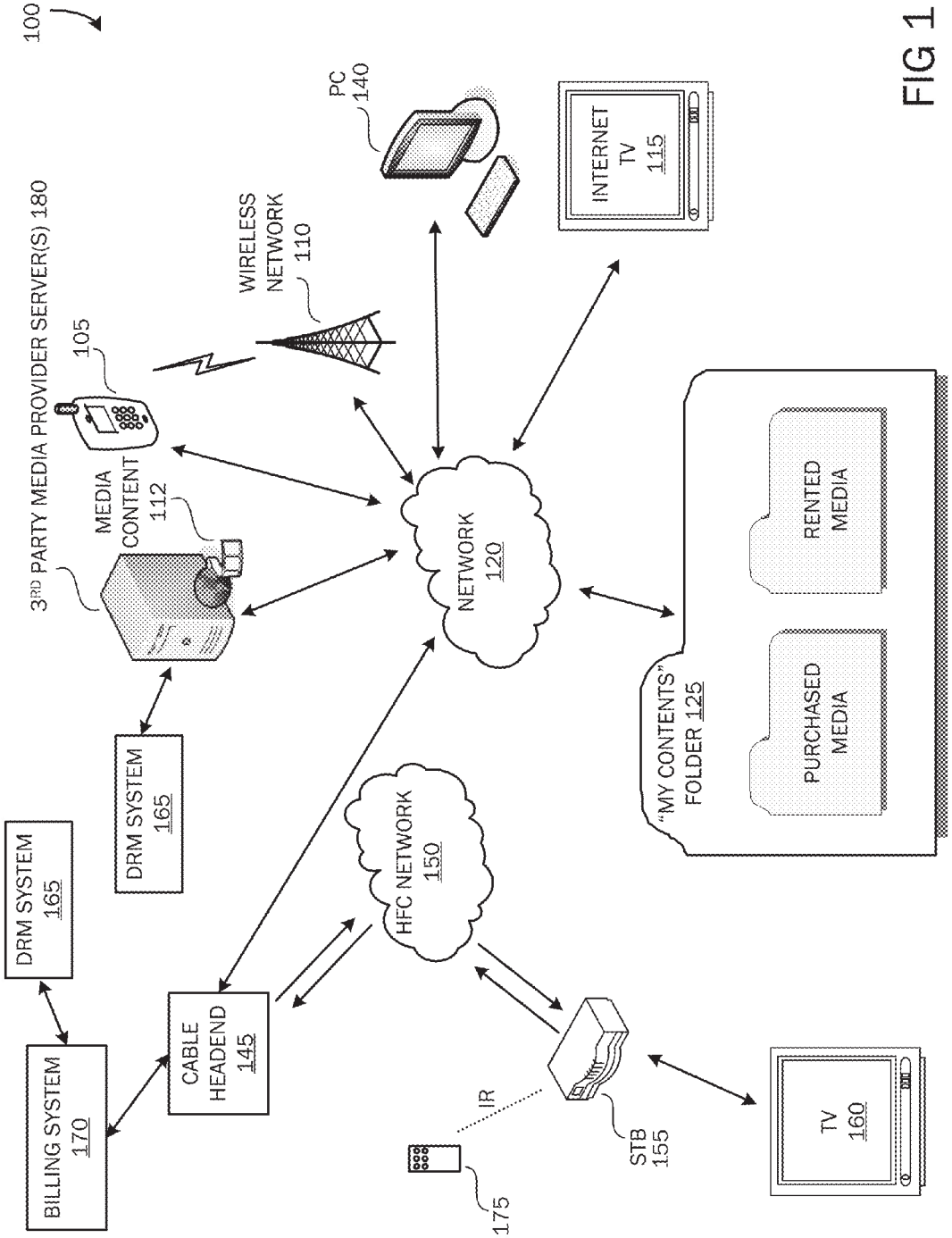

100
3RD PARTY MEDIA PROVIDER SERVER(S) 180
MEDIA CONTENT 112
105
WIRELESS NETWORK 110
PC 140
INTERNET TV 115
NETWORK 120
RENTED MEDIA
PURCHASED MEDIA
"MY CONTENTS" FOLDER 125
DRM SYSTEM 165
DRM SYSTEM 165
HFC NETWORK 150
BILLING SYSTEM 170
CABLE HEADEND 145
IR
175
STB 155
TV 160

FIG 1

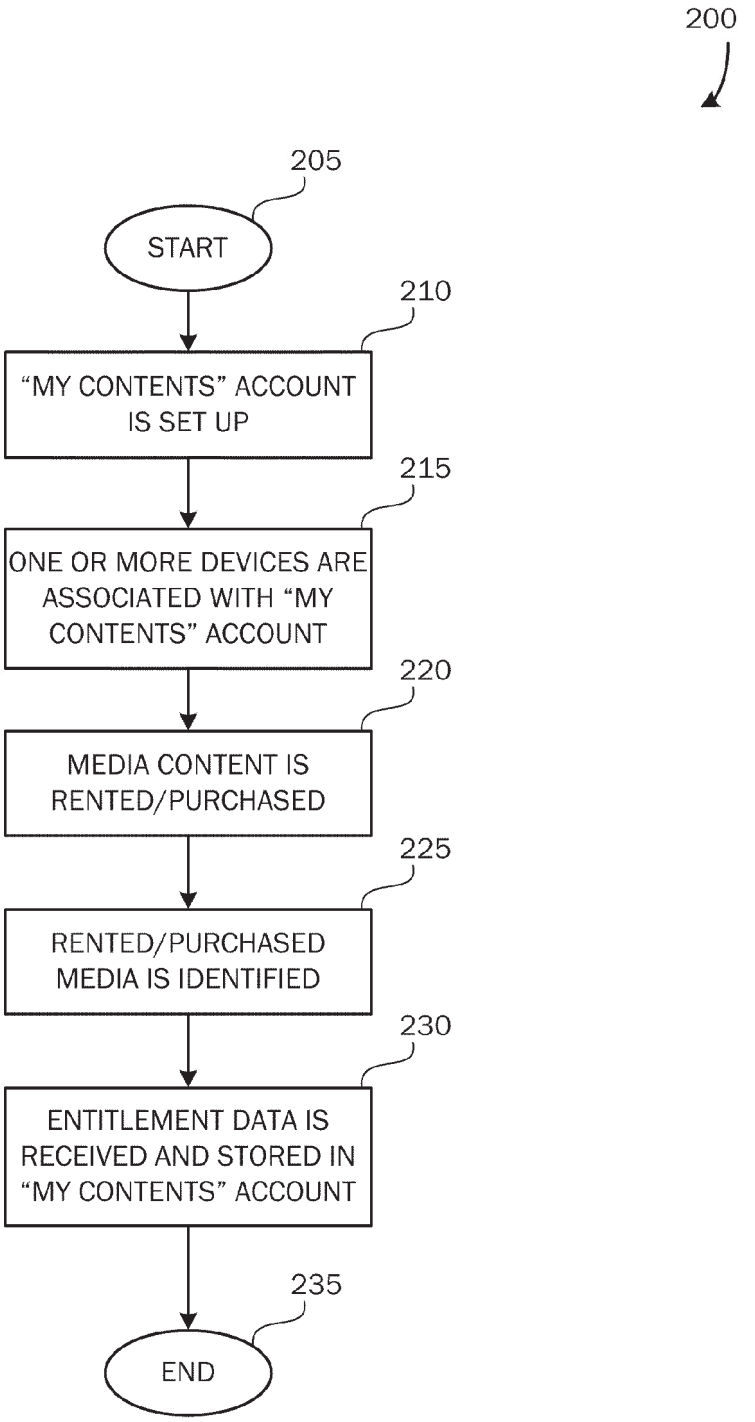

200
205
START
210
"MY CONTENTS" ACCOUNT IS SET UP
215
ONE OR MORE DEVICES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH "MY CONTENTS" ACCOUNT
220
MEDIA CONTENT IS RENTED/PURCHASED
225
RENTED/PURCHASED MEDIA IS IDENTIFIED
230
ENTITLEMENT DATA IS RECEIVED AND STORED IN "MY CONTENTS" ACCOUNT
235
END

FIG 2

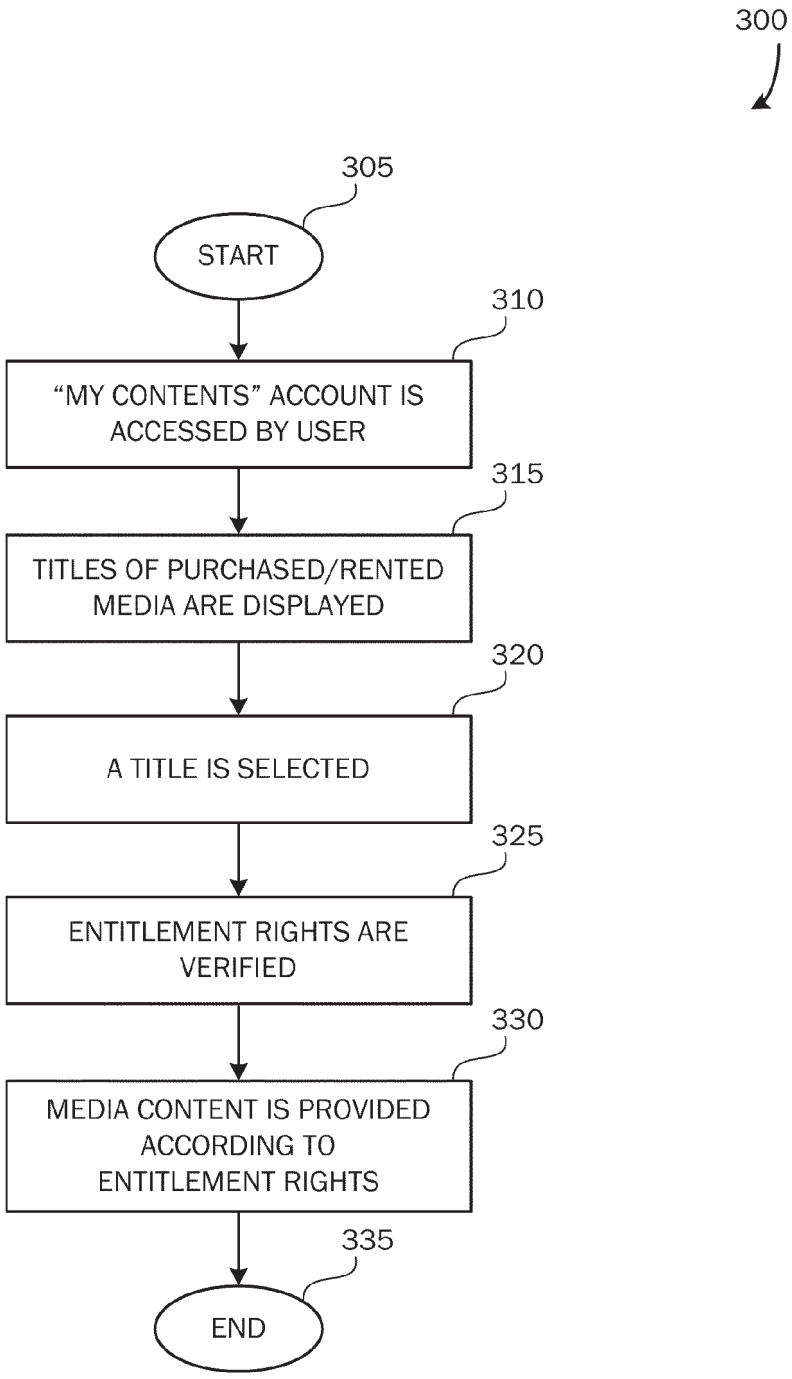

300
305
START
310
"MY CONTENTS" ACCOUNT IS ACCESSED BY USER
315
TITLES OF PURCHASED/RENTED MEDIA ARE DISPLAYED
320
A TITLE IS SELECTED
325
ENTITLEMENT RIGHTS ARE VERIFIED
330
MEDIA CONTENT IS PROVIDED ACCORDING TO ENTITLEMENT RIGHTS
335
END

FIG 3

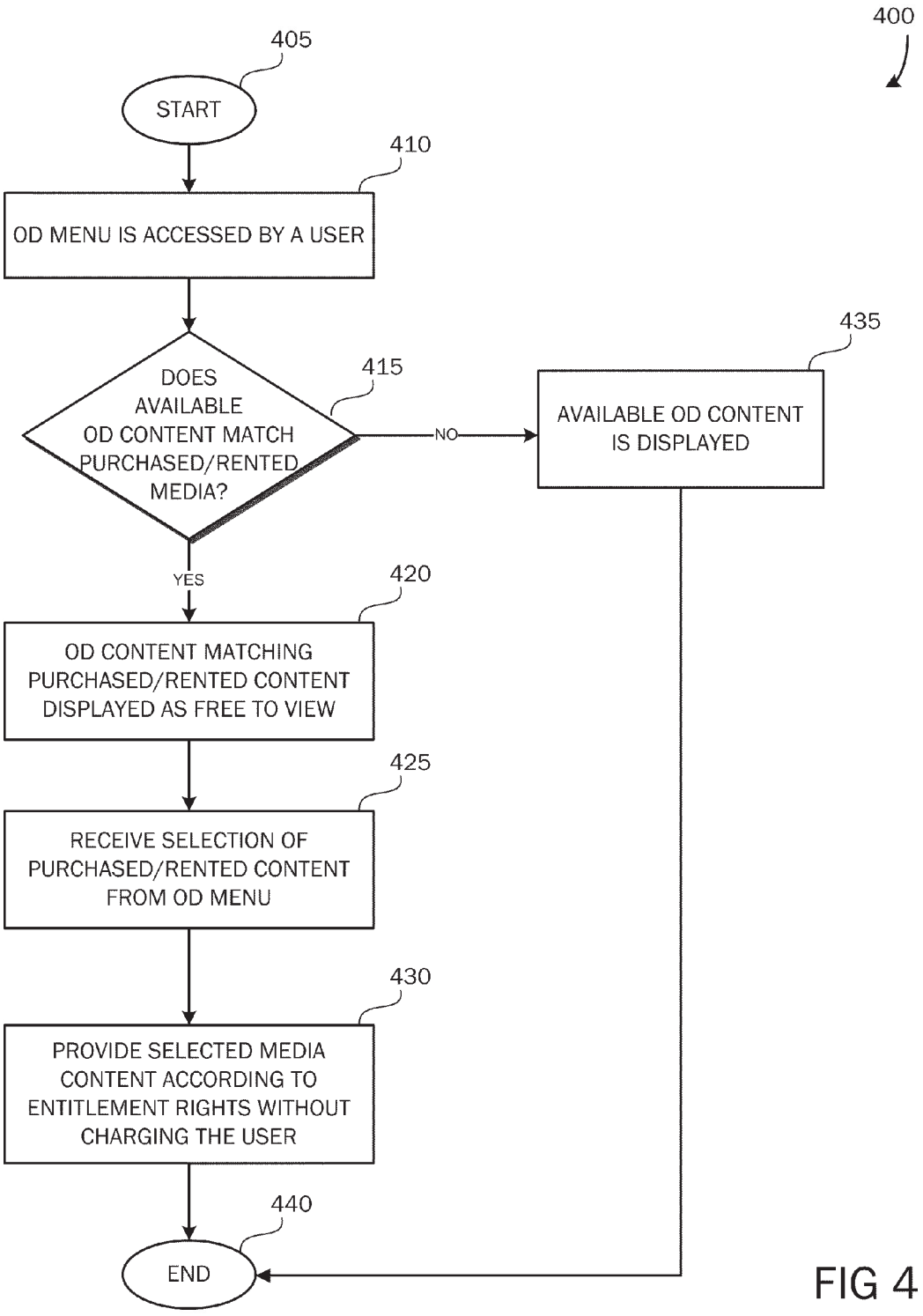

400
405
START
410
OD MENU IS ACCESSED BY A USER
415
DOES AVAILABLE OD CONTENT MATCH PURCHASED/RENTED MEDIA?
NO
435
AVAILABLE OD CONTENT IS DISPLAYED
YES
420
OD CONTENT MATCHING PURCHASED/RENTED CONTENT DISPLAYED AS FREE TO VIEW
425
RECEIVE SELECTION OF PURCHASED/RENTED CONTENT FROM OD MENU
430
PROVIDE SELECTED MEDIA CONTENT ACCORDING TO ENTITLEMENT RIGHTS WITHOUT CHARGING THE USER
440
END

FIG 4

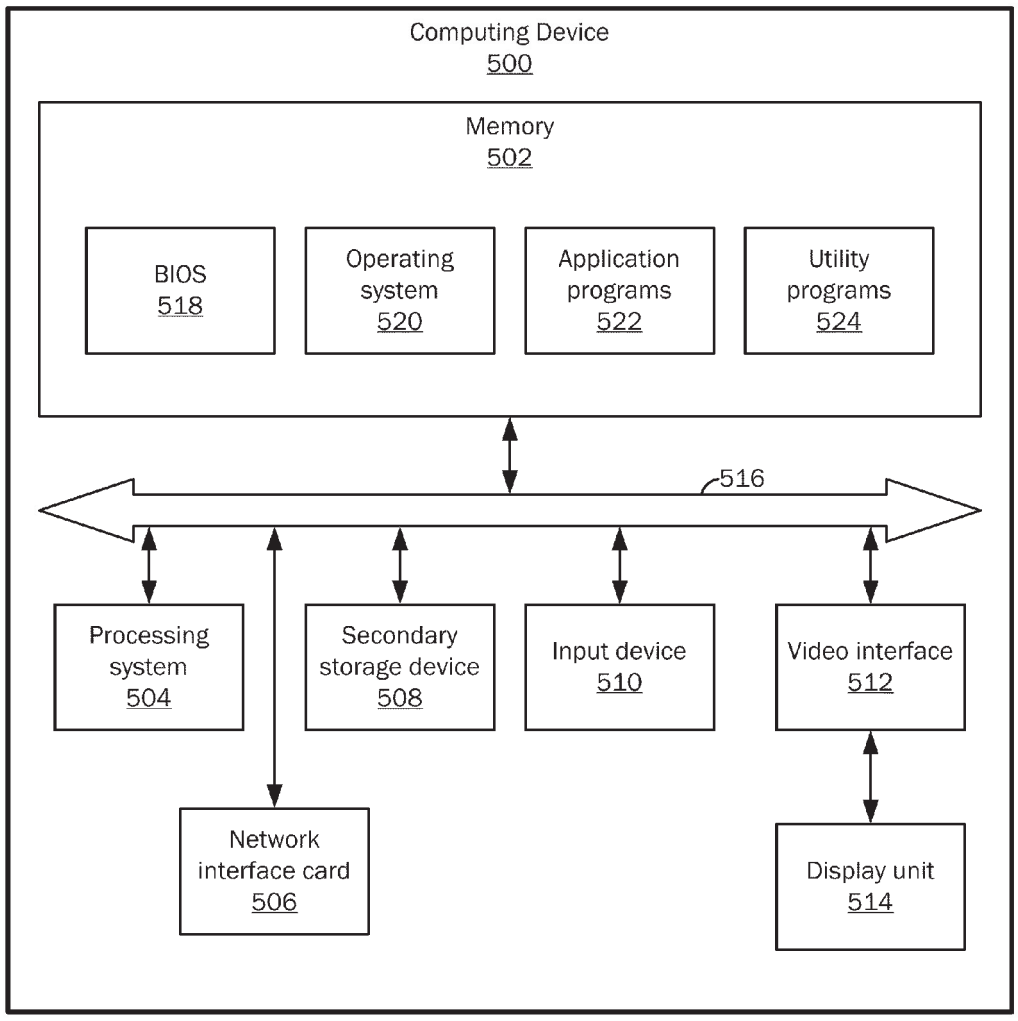

Computing Device
500
Memory
502
BIOS
518
Operating system
520
Application programs
522
Utility programs
524
516
Processing system
504
Secondary storage device
508
Input device
510
Video interface
512
Network interface card
506
Display unit
514

FIG 5

CONTENT PURCHASES AND RIGHTS STORAGE AND ENTITLEMENTS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/356,431 filed Jun. 18, 2010, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] In today's digital age, many users use an on demand (OD) system to select and view or listen to media content. Media content may be streamed through various devices, such as set-top boxes (STB), computers, Internet televisions, smartphones, gaming consoles, or other types of network-connected devices. Many media content providers offer OD streaming whereby a user purchases a piece of media content, and the content is available to the user for viewing for a limited period of time (i.e., rental digital content), or for an indefinite period of time (i.e., purchased digital content). Media content providers may offer OD downloading whereby a user purchases a piece of media content, and the content is available for downloading onto a designated number of authorized devices.

[0003] In current systems, if a user purchases a piece of media content from a content provider, an account may be provided by the content provider for allowing the user to view content purchased from the content provider, to select purchased content to watch, to initiate a download, and to view available licenses for his/her content. While a media account may be useful for managing media content purchased from a given content provider, oftentimes, users purchase content from a plurality of content providers via various platforms (e.g., mobile, web, STB, etc.) and/or purchase content from one content provider, but want to be able to access the content via various platforms.

[0004] Thus, there is a need for methods, systems and computer readable media for storing entitlements associated with a user's OD media rentals and purchases so that the rented and purchased media may be available to the user from various platforms on various devices. It is with respect to these and other considerations that the present invention has been made.

SUMMARY

[0005] The above and other problems are solved by providing for storing asset identification (ID) and entitlement data of purchased and rented media from various sources and for allowing access to the stored asset ID and entitlement data form various devices.

[0006] Media content, which may include, but is not limited to, video, audio, image, and data files, may be purchased or rented from various media providers. Embodiments of the present invention provide for a media contents folder/account that may store asset ID and entitlement data of purchased and rented media from various media providers. The stored asset ID and entitlement data may be accessed by various user devices, such as a smart phone, a computer, Internet television (TV), a set-top box (STB), a game console, a tablet computer, a BLU-RAY player, or other type of network-connected device. A user may access purchased and rented media content from any registered device regardless of where the media was purchased/rented or from what device the purchase/rental was made.

[0007] The details of one or more embodiments are set forth in the accompanying drawings and description below. Other features and advantages will be apparent from a reading of the following detailed description and a review of the associated drawings. It is to be understood that the following detailed description is explanatory only and is not restrictive of the invention as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] FIG. **1** is a block diagram illustrating an example system with which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented.

[0009] FIG. **2** is a flowchart illustrating an example method of receiving and storing asset ID and entitlement data associated with a purchase or rental of media content.

[0010] FIG. **3** is a flowchart illustrating an example method of accessing purchased or rented media content via a "My Contents" folder.

[0011] FIG. **4** is a flowchart illustrating an example method of accessing purchased or rented media content via an On Demand menu.

[0012] FIG. **5** is a block diagram illustrating a computing device with which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] As briefly described above, embodiments of the present invention are directed to allowing a user to purchase or rent on demand content from a plurality of platforms and to access the purchased content from a plurality of registered devices.

[0014] Embodiments of the present invention provide for a media contents folder/account for storing asset ID and entitlement data associated with purchased and rented media content. Media content may be purchased from a plurality of media providers via various platforms (e.g., web, mobile, set-top box). The web-based folder may be accessible to a user via various platforms and devices so that the user may have access to all his/her purchased and rented media from a single library.

[0015] According to embodiments, a user may allow for a communication of a purchase or rental of media from a media provider to a "My Contents" account. Asset ID and entitlement data may be provided to the account, where the data may be stored. A user may access his/her "My Contents" account via a network-connected device to view his/her purchased media. The network-connected device may be a device that has been registered with the account. A user may select a title of purchased or rented media from his/her "My Contents" folder to stream or download. Upon verification of entitlement rights, the media may be streamed or downloaded to the user.

[0016] Other embodiments provide for a "My Contents" folder to be available to a user through an On Demand menu. Available On Demand media may be displayed to the user through an On Demand menu. A determination may be made to identify if any of the content available through the On Demand menu is content that the user has previously purchased or rented and is stored in the user's "My Contents" folder. If there is media available that the user has previously purchased or rented, and if the rights and privileges allow for accessing it, the media content may be provided to the user free of charge.

[0017] These embodiments may be combined, other embodiments may be utilized, and structural changes may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention. The following detailed description is therefore not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is defined by the appended claims and their equivalents. Referring now to the drawings, in which like numerals refer to like elements throughout the several figures, embodiments of the present invention and an exemplary operating environment will be described.

[0018] FIG. **1** is a block diagram illustrating an example system **100** with which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented. As illustrated in the example of FIG. **1**, the system **100** includes various user devices which a user may use to purchase, download, and/or stream media content **112** including, but not limited to, a smart phone **105**, a computer **140**, Internet television (TV) **115**, a set-top box (STB) **155**, a game console, a tablet computer, a BLU-RAY player, or other type of network-connected device. The user devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155** may access media content **112** via various network interfaces such as a local area network (LAN), wide area network (e.g., Internet) **120**, or other type of network. The network interface **120** may receive signals according to various technologies including, but not limited to, wireless network **110** technologies, hybrid fibre-coaxial (HFC) network **150** technologies, etc.

[0019] Media content **112** may be provided by a cable television (CATV) services or telephone services system (telco) services headend **145**, by a VOD server connected to a CATV headend, or by various third party media provider servers **180**, which may be computer systems storing video, audio, or other digital media content **112** for sending to users' devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155**. Media content may include, but is not limited to, video, audio, image, and data files. For example, media content may include movies, music, photographs, electronic books, etc. Media content **112** may be streamed from an OD provider **145**, **180**, wherein the media content may be compressed and sent over a network **120**, **150**. The media content **112** may then be decompressed by a receiving device **105**, **140**, **115**, **155** for display. Alternatively, media content **112** may be in the form of a media file that may be downloaded to a user's device **105**, **140**, **115**, **155** to be played.

[0020] A media provider system **145**, **180** may comprise data services, which may include a number of services operated by the services provider and which may include data on a given customer. Data services may include one or more of a billing system **170**, an email system, a digital rights management system (e.g., license server) **165**, and a customer information database. A digital rights management (DRM) system **165** may include information such as secure user names and passwords utilized by customers for access to network services or content. According to embodiments, the DRM system **165** may be an encryption/decryption management method for controlling a user's access to digital media. The DRM system **165** may offer security for purchases and other transactions, and may store entitlement data including, but not limited to, licenses or usage rights to digitally protected media, access permissions, keys to decrypt encrypted media content, and a list of device identifications associated with devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155** that are authorized to access digital media content.

[0021] According to some licenses for purchased or rented digital media, a user may be authorized to stream or download content by way of a predefined number of authorized devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155**. Device identification data may be authenticated by a service and/or media content provider **145**,**180**. As mentioned, device identification and authentication data may be stored in a DRM system **165**, but may alternatively be stored in a customer information database or in a media contents folder/account **125** as will be described below.

[0022] The data services systems comprising the data services may operate as separate data services systems, which communicate with a web services along a number of different communication paths and according to a number of different communication protocols. A web services system serving as a collection point for data requested from each of the disparate data services systems comprising the data services may be included.

[0023] An application server located at a cable headend **145** or at a third party media provider **180** may require customer profile data from one or more of the data services for preparation or update of a customer profile, and may pass a data query to the web services system. The web services system formulates a data query to each of the available data services systems for obtaining any available data for a given customer as identified by a set-top box identification associated with the customer. The web services system serves as an abstraction layer between the various data services systems and the application server. That is, the application server is not required to communicate with the disparate data services systems, nor is the application server required to understand the data structures or data types utilized by the disparate data services systems. The web services system is operative to communicate with each of the disparate data services systems for obtaining necessary customer profile data. The customer profile data obtained by the web services system is assembled and is returned to the application server for ultimate processing via a middleware layer.

[0024] The system **100** may comprise a web-based media contents folder/account, hereafter referred to as a "My Contents" folder **125**, for storing entitlements of purchased and rented media content **112**, including unique asset IDs associated with purchased/rented media content and a list of device identifications associated with devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155** that are authorized to access purchased/rented media content. A "My Contents" folder **125** may be accessible across various platforms including, but not limited to STB **155**, web portal/PC **140**, **115**, and via mobile devices **105**. Although the "My Contents" folder **125** is illustrated as a remote system, it may be integrated with a service provider headend **145** or billing system **170**.

[0025] According to embodiments, a piece of media content **112** may be purchased or rented from a CATV service provider **145** or from a third party media provider **180** via a variety of platforms (e.g., STB **155**, web-based **140**,**115**, mobile **105**). Entitlements of the purchased/rented media content **112** may be maintained in a "My Contents" folder **125** regardless of where it was purchased **145**,**180** or from what platform it was purchased/rented (e.g., mobile, web, STB). When a piece of media content **112** is purchased/rented from a content provider **145**,**180**, the purchase/rental may be recorded and stored to allow unlimited access to the content from any available platform as allowed according to the entitlement data. According to embodiments, a "My Contents" folder **125** may comprise a subfolder for purchases and a subfolder for rentals.

[0026] According to some digital rights, a specified type and/or number of devices may be allowed by a media provider **145**,**180** to stream or download media content **112**. A device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** may be authorized by a given media provider before streaming or downloading of media **112** is allowed. A device may be identified via a unique identifier, such as a MAC address or an IP address. Upon authentication, device identification information associated with a user may be stored in a media provider database **145**, billing system **170**, or in the "My Contents" folder **125**. According to embodiments, one or more devices **105**, **115**, **140**, **155** may be associated with a "My Contents" folder **125**. Device identification information may be entered manually by a user, may be automatically captured upon accessing the "My Contents" folder **125**, or may be automatically captured upon purchasing a piece of media content **112** from a media content provider **145**,**180**.

[0027] Purchased and rented media content **112** may have a unique asset ID by which the content may be identified, managed, and accessed. Entitlement data may be stored and maintained in a "My Contents" folder **125** based on the unique asset ID of the media content. A user may access purchased media content **112** as many times as allowed on his/her authorized devices **105**, **140**, **115**, **155**. For example, a user may purchase a movie A from online store A on the user's mobile phone **105**, movie B from a VOD menu via the user's STB **155**, and movie C from online store C via the user's personal computer **140**. The asset IDs and entitlement data associated with movies A, B, and C may collectively be stored in the user's "My Contents" folder **125**, and accessible from any of the user's registered devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**.

[0028] Embodiments of the present invention may include an automatic detection of purchased and rented media **112**. A user may have an account with or purchase/rent media **112** from one or more media content providers **145**,**180**. A user may wish to associate an account or folder associated with a media content provider **145**,**180** with a "My Contents" folder **125**. Upon receiving access rights to share data from a media content provider **145**,**180** account with a "My Contents" folder **125**, the "My Contents" folder may be automatically populated with unique asset ID and entitlement data of media content **112** purchased or rented from the media content provider **145**, **180**. According to other embodiments, a user may manually add media content **112** purchased/rented from a third party media provider **180** to a "My Contents" folder **125**.

[0029] Other media content associated content may be provided and stored in a "My Contents" folder **125** such as poster arts of titles and extras such as cut scenes, reviews, etc. When allowed by a content provider **145**,**180**, high level/personal metadata may be edited by a user. Metadata changes may be local to the user, may be added, but may not replace the metadata that is associated with the media content **112** (e.g., title, price, rating, crew, etc.).

[0030] Purchases and rentals may be updated and synchronized across the different platforms in real time. According to embodiments, bookmarks may be stored per user so that when a user views a piece of media content **112** from a "My Contents" folder **125**, and the user presses STOP or when a PAUSE functionality times out, the user may access and resume watching the content from the point at which he/she stopped watching previously.

[0031] When a user accesses a "My Contents" folder **125** from a given device, for example, a STB **155**, the user may be automatically provided with a format suitable to the platform. For example, if a user is trying to watch a movie **112** from a television **160**, the user may be automatically provided with the highest format available (e.g., high-definition) unless the user decides to view a lower format version of the media.

[0032] According to embodiments, a "My Contents" folder **125** may be a category in an On Demand menu. If a piece of media content **112** has been purchased by a user, either though a CATV service provider **145** or via another third party provider **180**, and the specified media content is available and listed in an On Demand menu, the media content may be selected by the user from the menu and accessed for no charge. That is, a record of the purchase or rental of the media content **112** and entitlement data will be stored in a "My Contents" folder **125**. A communication of the purchase will allow the provider of the OD content **112** to provide a streaming of the content without charging the user again. If a purchased or rented media **112** is no longer available in an OD menu category, the user may still access the content through his/her "My Contents" folder **125**. The media content **112** may be streamed or pushed to the user based on the requesting device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**.

[0033] When media content **112** is rented by a user, limited rights and licenses may be granted to the user. For example, the user may only be allowed to stream or download the rented content **112** to one authorized device **105**,**115**,**140**, **155**, and may be available to the user for a limited time period (e.g., a specified number of days from the time of rental; or a specified amount of time from when the user starts viewing the rented media). Embodiments of the present invention provide for allowing a user to purchase rented media **112** both during the rental period and after the rental period has expired. According to embodiments, the user may purchase the media from the same provider **145**,**180** from which he/she rented the media, or alternatively, may purchase the media from another provider. The another provider may be a provider which has been associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125** so that a communication of rental and purchase information and entitlement rights may be shared between billing systems **170**. A purchase of media **112** may occur on the same device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** the user rented the media, or alternatively may occur on another device associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. A discounted price may be provided to the user. For example, if a user chooses to purchase a rented movie **112** during the rental time period, the price to purchase the movie may be equal to the purchase price minus the rental fee already paid by the user. If the user chooses to purchase a piece of media content **112** after a rental time period has expired, a discount may be provided to the user according to a media provider's **145**,**180** business plan.

[0034] According to embodiments, various views of media titles may be provided, so that when a user accesses a "My Contents" folder **125**, he/she may be able to sort his/her purchases and rentals via title, release date, price, ratings, etc. Additionally, a user may group media content **112** based on studio or content provider **145**,**180**, based on genre, or by category (e.g., children, drama, horror, etc.).

[0035] According to another embodiment, media content **112** may be downloaded by a user, authenticated by service provider **145**, and stored on a local or remote computer-readable storage medium. The entitlement data may be stored in a "My Contents" folder **125**, wherein the user may access the downloaded content **112** from his/her various devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**. For example, a user may purchase a DVD

of a movie **112**, authenticate the purchase of the movie, and download the content to a storage medium at a service provider headend **145**. The user may want to watch the movie **112** on his/her Internet-connected television **115**. He/she may access his "My Contents" folder **125**, select the movie title, and have the content streamed to his/her Internet television **115**.

[0036] Having described a system architecture for embodiments of the present invention, FIG. **2** is a flow diagram illustrating a method for receiving and storing identification and entitlement data associated with purchased/rented media content **112** in a unified account **125** that may be accessed from various devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**. The method starts at OPERATION **205** and proceeds to OPERATION **210** where a "My Contents" folder **125** is set up. According to embodiments, the "My Contents" folder **125** may be maintained by a media content provider **145**,**180**, or alternatively may not be affiliated with a content provider system. Setting up a "My Contents" folder **125** may include entering credential data, such as a username and password.

[0037] At OPERATION **215**, one or more user devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** are associated with the "My Contents" folder **125**. According to embodiments, a user device may be associated with a "My Contents" folder by manually entering a unique identification of a user device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**, by automatically capturing a unique identification of a user device upon accessing the "My Contents" folder **125**, or by automatically capturing a unique identification of a user device upon purchasing/renting a piece of media content **112** from a media content provider **145**,**180**.

[0038] At OPERATION **220**, media content **112** may be purchased or rented. According to embodiments, media content may include, but is not limited to, video, audio, image, and data files. Media content **112** may be a piece of physical media, such as a DVD, CD, BLU-RAY, etc., or may be in a digital format that may be downloaded or streamed to a device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**. Media content **112** may be purchased or rented in a physical store, via a web-based media provider **180**, or via an On Demand (OD) menu associated with a media services provider (e.g., CATV **145**).

[0039] At OPERATION **225**, the purchased or rented media **112** is identified. The media may be identified via a unique asset ID. According to embodiments, purchased or rented media **112** may be identified manually, wherein a user enters a unique asset ID associated with a piece of purchased/rented media **112** into his/her "My Contents" folder **125**. Alternatively, purchased/rented media **112** may be automatically identified upon purchase/rental of the media if the media is purchased/rented via a networked device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. According to another embodiment as was described above, purchased/rented media **112** may be automatically identified upon purchase/rental of the media if the media is purchased/rented from a media provider **145**,**180** which has been associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125**.

[0040] Upon identification of purchased/rented media **112**, entitlement data associated with the media may be received from the media provider **145**,**180** and stored in the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. The method ends at OPERATION **235**.

[0041] Referring now to FIG. **3**, a process flow of a method for accessing purchased/rented media **112** via a "My Contents" folder **125** is illustrated. The method starts at OPERATION **305** and proceeds to OPERATION **310** where a user accesses his/her "My Contents" folder **125**. According to embodiments, the folder **125** may be accessed via various types of network-connected devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**. Access to the "My Contents" folder **125** may include entering credential data, such as a user ID and/or password. Alternatively, access to the "My Contents" folder **125** may be granted upon recognition of a registered device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** from which the user is accessing the folder.

[0042] At OPERATION **315**, titles of purchased/rented media content **112** are displayed in a user interface. As was described above, various views may be provided, so that when a user accesses a "My Contents" folder **125**, he/she may be able to sort his/her purchases via title, release date, price, ratings, etc. Additionally, a user may group media content **112** based on studio or content provider **145**,**180**, based on genre, or by category (e.g., children, drama, horror, etc.). Other media content associated content may be provided and stored in a "My Contents" folder **125** such as poster arts of titles and extras such as cut scenes, reviews, etc.

[0043] At OPERATION **320**, a title of a purchased/rented piece of media content **112** may be selected by the user. At OPERATION **325**, entitlement rights may be verified. Verifying entitlement rights may include, but is not limited to, verifying that the media content **112** may be accessed by the device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** that is requesting the content, verifying that the type of access the user is requesting is allowed (e.g., downloading of content vs. streaming), and verifying that a rental period of a rental piece of media content has not expired.

[0044] At OPERATION **325**, the requested media content **112** may be provided to the requesting device **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** according to the entitlement rights verified at OPERATION **320**. According to embodiments, a format suitable to the requesting device may be automatically provided. For example, if a user is trying to watch a movie **112** from a television **160**, the user may be automatically provided with the highest format available (e.g., high-definition) unless the user decides to view a lower format version of the media. The method ends at OPERATION **335**.

[0045] Referring now to FIG. **4**, a process flow of a method for accessing purchased/rented media **112** via an On Demand (OD) menu is illustrated. Generally, media content **112** may be purchased or rented from various sources **145**,**180**, and asset ID and entitlement rights and privilege data associated with the purchased/rented media is stored in a folder **125** that is accessible to various devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**. When a user views media titles of available media **112** through an On Demand menu, a determination is made whether any of the content available through the On Demand menu is content that the user has previously purchased or rented and is stored in the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. If there is media available that the user has previously purchased or rented, and if the rights and privileges allow for accessing it, the media content **112** may be provided to the user free of charge.

[0046] The method starts at OPERATION **405** and proceeds to OPERATION **410** where an OD menu is accessed by a user. An OD menu may include titles of media **112** that may be available to view, purchase, and/or rent.

[0047] At DECISION OPERATION **415**, a determination may be made as to whether any of the available media **112** included in the OD menu matches any titles included in the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. If none of the available OD media **112** included in the OD menu matches any of the media associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125**, at OPERATION **435**, the available OD media titles may be

displayed in the OD menu as they would typically be displayed. If there are one or more matches between media **112** available through the OD menu and media associated with the user's "My Contents" folder **125**, at OPERATION **420**, the matching title(s) of the media content may be displayed to the user as being available to view/access for free. For example, a user may purchase video A **112** through media provider A **180**, and the asset ID and entitlement data associated with video A is stored in the user's "My Contents" folder **125**. The user may subscribe to a CATV service **145**, and may be viewing a Video On Demand menu on his/her television **160** connected to a STB **155**. He/she may see video A listed as a movie that is available through his/her CATV services provider. Because he/she has already purchased video A through another provider **180**, and the asset ID and entitlement data are stored in his/her "My Contents" folder **125**, video A may be listed in the VOD menu, and may include information letting the user know that video A is available to access through the menu and that he/she will not be charged additionally for accessing the video if he/she chooses to select it to watch.

[0048] According to another embodiment, if a user has rented a piece of media content **112** from a media provider **145**, **180** and later decides to purchase the media through the same or another media provider associated with a "My Contents" folder **125** via any one of his/her registered devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155** associated with the folder **125**, a discounted price may be provided to the user.

[0049] At OPERATION **425**, the user selects a previously purchased media title **112** from the OD menu. At OPERATION **430**, the user is provided with the media content **112** according to entitlement rights associated with the media content without being charged for the media again. The method ends at OPERATION **440**.

[0050] FIG. **5** is a block diagram illustrating an example computing device **500** with which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented. In some embodiments, the "My Contents" folder **125**, the user devices **105**, **115**,**140**,**155**, and/or the media provider servers **145**,**180** are implemented using one or more computing devices like the computing device **500**. It should be appreciated that in other embodiments, the "My Contents" folder **125**, the user devices **105**,**115**,**140**,**155**, and/or the media provider servers **145**,**180** are implemented using computing devices having hardware components other than those illustrated in the example of FIG. **5**.

[0051] Computing devices are implemented in different ways in different embodiments. For instance, in the example of FIG. **5**, the computing device **500** comprises a memory **502**, a processing system **504**, a network interface **506**, a secondary storage device **508**, an input device **510**, a video interface **512**, a display unit **514**, and a communication medium **516**. In other embodiments, the computing device **500** is implemented using more or fewer hardware components (e.g., a video interface, a display unit, or an input device).

[0052] The memory **502** includes one or more computer-readable storage media capable of storing data and/or computer-executable instructions. In various embodiments, the memory **502** is implemented in various ways. For example, the memory **502** can be implemented as various types of computer-readable storage media. Example types of computer-readable storage media include, but are not limited to, solid state memory, flash memory, dynamic random access memory (DRAM), double data rate synchronous dynamic random access memory (DDR SDRAM), DDR2 SDRAM, DDR3 SDRAM, read-only memory (ROM), reduced latency DRAM, electrically-erasable programmable ROM (EEPROM), and other types of devices and/or articles of manufacture that store data.

[0053] According to embodiments, the term computer-readable media includes communication media and computer-readable storage media. Communication media include information delivery media. Computer-executable instructions, data structures, program modules, or other data in a modulated data signal, such as a carrier wave or other transport mechanism, may be embodied on a communications medium. The term modulated data signal describes a signal that has one or more characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. For example, communication media can include wired media, such as a wired network or direct-wired connection, and wireless media, such as acoustic, radio frequency (RF), infrared, and other wireless media.

[0054] The term computer-readable storage medium may also refer to devices or articles of manufacture that store data and/or computer-executable instructions readable by a computing device. The term computer-readable storage media encompasses volatile and nonvolatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in various methods or technologies for storage and retrieval of information. Such information can include data structures, program modules, computer-executable instructions, or other data.

[0055] The processing system **504** includes one or more processing units, which may include tangible integrated circuits that selectively execute computer-executable instructions. In various embodiments, the processing units in the processing system **504** are implemented in various ways. For example, the processing units in the processing system **504** can be implemented as one or more processing cores. In this example, the processing system **504** can comprise one or more Intel Core microprocessors. In another example, the processing system **504** can comprise one or more separate microprocessors. In yet another example embodiment, the processing system **504** can comprise Application-Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs) that provide specific functionality. In yet another example, the processing system **504** provides specific functionality by using an ASIC and by executing computer-executable instructions.

[0056] The computing device **500** may be enabled to send data to and receive data from a communication network via a network interface card **506**. In different embodiments, the network interface card **506** is implemented in different ways, such as an Ethernet interface, a token-ring network interface, a fiber optic network interface, a wireless network interface (e.g., WiFi, WiMax, etc.), or another type of network interface.

[0057] The secondary storage device **508** includes one or more computer-readable storage media, and may store data and computer-executable instructions not directly accessible by the processing system **504**. That is, the processing system **504** performs an I/O operation to retrieve data and/or computer-executable instructions from the secondary storage device **508**. In various embodiments, the secondary storage device **508** can be implemented as various types of computer-readable storage media, such as by one or more magnetic disks, magnetic tape drives, CD-ROM discs, DVD-ROM

discs, BLU-RAY discs, solid state memory devices, and/or other types of computer-readable storage media.

[0058] The input device **510** enables the computing device **500** to receive input from a user. Example types of input devices include, but are not limited to, keyboards, mice, trackballs, stylus input devices, key pads, microphones, joysticks, touch-sensitive display screens, and other types of devices that provide user input to the computing device **500**.

[0059] The video interface **512** outputs video information to the display unit **514**. In different embodiments, the video interface **512** is implemented in different ways. For example, the video interface **512** is a video expansion card. In another example, the video interface **512** is integrated into a motherboard of the computing device **500**. In various embodiments, the display unit **514** can be a an LCD display panel, a touch-sensitive display panel, an LED screen, a projector, a cathode-ray tube display, or another type of display unit. In various embodiments, the video interface **512** communicates with the display unit **514** in various ways. For example, the video interface **512** can communicate with the display unit **514** via a Universal Serial Bus (USB) connector, a VGA connector, a digital visual interface (DVI) connector, an S-Video connector, a High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) interface, a DisplayPort connector, or another type of connection.

[0060] The communications medium **516** facilitates communication among the hardware components of the computing device **500**. In different embodiments, the communications medium **516** facilitates communication among different components of the computing device **500**. For instance, in the example of FIG. **5**, the communications medium **516** facilitates communication among the memory **502**, the processing system **504**, the network interface card **506**, the secondary storage device **508**, the input device **510**, and the video interface **512**. In different embodiments, the communications medium **516** is implemented in different ways, such as a PCI bus, a PCI Express bus, an accelerated graphics port (AGP) bus, an Infiniband interconnect, a serial Advanced Technology Attachment (ATA) interconnect, a parallel ATA interconnect, a Fiber Channel interconnect, a USB bus, a Small Computing system Interface (SCSI) interface, or another type of communications medium.

[0061] The memory **502** stores various types of data and/or software instructions. For instance, in the example of FIG. **5**, the memory **502** stores a Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) **518**, and an operating system **520**. The BIOS **518** includes a set of software instructions that, when executed by the processing system **504**, cause the computing device **500** to boot up. The operating system **520** includes a set of software instructions that, when executed by the processing system **504**, cause the computing device **500** to provide an operating system that coordinates the activities and sharing of resources of the computing device **500**. The memory **502** also stores one or more application programs **522** that, when executed by the processing system **504**, cause the computing device **500** to provide applications to users. The memory **502** also stores one or more utility programs **524** that, when executed by the processing system**5**, cause the computing device **500** to provide utilities to other software programs.

[0062] Embodiments of the present invention, for example, are described above with reference to block diagrams and/or operational illustrations of methods, systems, and computer program products according to embodiments of the invention. The functions/acts noted in the blocks may occur out of the order as shown in any flowchart. For example, two blocks shown in succession may in fact be executed substantially concurrently or the blocks may sometimes be executed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality/acts involved.

[0063] While certain embodiments of the invention have been described, other embodiments may exist. Further, the disclosed methods' stages may be modified in any manner, including by reordering stages and/or inserting or deleting stages, without departing from the invention. Although embodiments of the present invention have been described with reference to particular standards and protocols, the present invention is not limited to such standards and protocols.

[0064] While the specification includes examples, the invention's scope is indicated by the following claims. Furthermore, while the specification has been described in language specific to structural features and/or methodological acts, the claims are not limited to the features or acts described above. Rather, the specific features and acts described above are disclosed as example for embodiments of the invention.

[0065] As described herein, methods, systems and computer readable media for storing asset ID and entitlement data of purchased and rented media **112** from various sources and allowing access to the stored asset ID and entitlement data from various devices are provided. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications or variations may be made in the present invention without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for maintaining and allowing access to purchased and rented media content, the method comprising:

registering one or more network-connected devices with a media contents account;

receiving an indication of a purchase or rental of media content from one of various media providers and sources;

receiving asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content; and

storing the asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content in the media contents account.

2. The method of claim **1**, further comprising providing a user interface displayed on a display of a registered network-connected device whereby a user may view purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account.

3. The method of claim **2**, further comprising allowing a user to select purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account via the user interface displayed on the display of the registered network-connected device.

4. The method of claim **3**, further comprising receiving a selection of purchased or rented media content, verifying entitlement rights, and providing the media content to the registered network-connected device according to the entitlement rights.

5. The method of claim **4**, wherein providing the media content to the registered network-connected device according to the entitlement rights includes streaming media content to the registered network-connect device.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein providing the media content to the registered network-connected device according to the entitlement rights includes playing downloaded media content on the registered network-connect device.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising providing the media content to the registered network-connected device in a format suitable for the network-connected device.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein registering one or more network-connected devices with a media contents account includes registering a computer, a set-top box, a mobile device, a gaming device, a television, a DVD player, or a BLU-RAY player with the media contents account.

9. The method of claim 2, wherein providing a user interface includes providing an On Demand menu including a listing of purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein if purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account matches On Demand content displayed in the On Demand menu, providing the media content through the On Demand system to the user without additional charge to the user.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising associating a media provider account with the media contents account.

12. The method of 1, wherein receiving an indication of a purchase or rental of media content from a media provider includes communication of content in a media provider account with the media contents account.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication to store media content on a storage medium and associating an asset identification and entitlement data of the media content with the media contents account.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an indication to purchase rented media content and providing a discount of a purchase price.

15. A system for maintaining and allowing access to purchased and rented media content, the system comprising:

a media contents account operative to:

register one or more network-connected devices with the media contents account;

receive an indication of a purchase or rental of media content from one of various media providers and sources;

receive asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content;

store the asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content in the media contents account; and

manage network-connected device registration information, asset identification, and entitlement data to enable access to purchased and rented media content from a registered network-connected device;

one or more media provider servers operative to:

receive a request to purchase or rent media content;

provide asset identification and entitlement data associated with purchased or rented media content;

one or more network-connected devices operative to:

register with a media contents account by providing a unique identifier;

provide access to one or more media content providers via a network for allowing a user to purchase or rent media content from the one or more media content providers;

display a user interface whereby a user may view purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account; and

access the purchased and rented media content.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the user interface includes an On Demand menu for displaying On Demand content and a listing of purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the one or more network-connected devices comprise memory for storing downloaded media content.

18. The system of claim 15, wherein the asset identification and entitlement data are provided by a digital rights management system associated with one or more media content providers.

19. The system of claim 15, wherein the media contents account is integrated with a service provider billing system.

20. A computer-readable medium including executable instructions which, when executed by a processor, perform a method for maintaining and allowing access to purchased and rented media content, the method comprising:

registering one or more network-connected devices with a media contents account;

receiving an indication of a purchase or rental of media content from one of various media providers and sources;

receiving asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content;

storing the asset identification and entitlement data associated with the purchased or rented media content in the media contents account;

providing a user interface displayed on a display of a registered network-connected device whereby a user may view purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account;

allowing a user to select purchased and rented media content whose asset identification and entitlement data are stored in the media contents account via the user interface displayed on the display of the registered network-connected device;

receiving a selection of purchased or rented media content;

verifying entitlement rights; and

providing the media content to the registered network-connected device according to the entitlement rights.

* * * * *