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(54) **USER INTERFACE ENHANCEMENTS FOR MEDIA CONTENT ACCESS SYSTEMS AND METHODS**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06F 3/048 (2013.01)
G06F 3/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **715/848**; 715/834; 715/836; 715/841; 715/849; 715/850; 715/851; 715/852; 715/719; 715/720; 715/721; 725/39; 725/42; 725/44

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 715/830, 848–852, 834, 836, 719–721; 725/39, 42, 44
See application file for complete search history.

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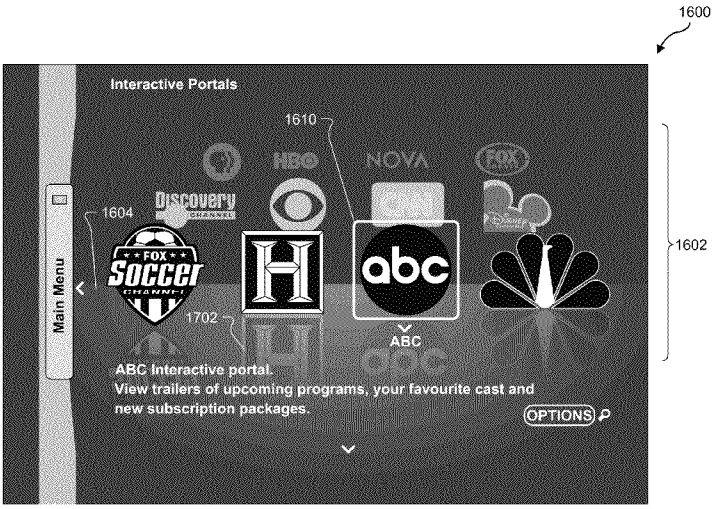
Primary Examiner — Steven B Theriault

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Exemplary user interface enhancements for media content access systems and methods are described herein. An exemplary method includes a media content access system launching a graphical user interface for display, the graphical user interface initially including a graphical representation of a channel guide comprising a grid matrix of channel icons representing a plurality of media content channels through which media content is accessible by the media content access system and a graphical representation of an advertisement displayed together with the channel guide in the graphical user interface, detecting a user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface, and replacing, in response to the user navigation event, the graphical representation of the advertisement with a graphical representation of content specific to a media content channel within the plurality of media content channels. Corresponding user interfaces, systems, and methods are also disclosed.

19 Claims, 19 Drawing Sheets



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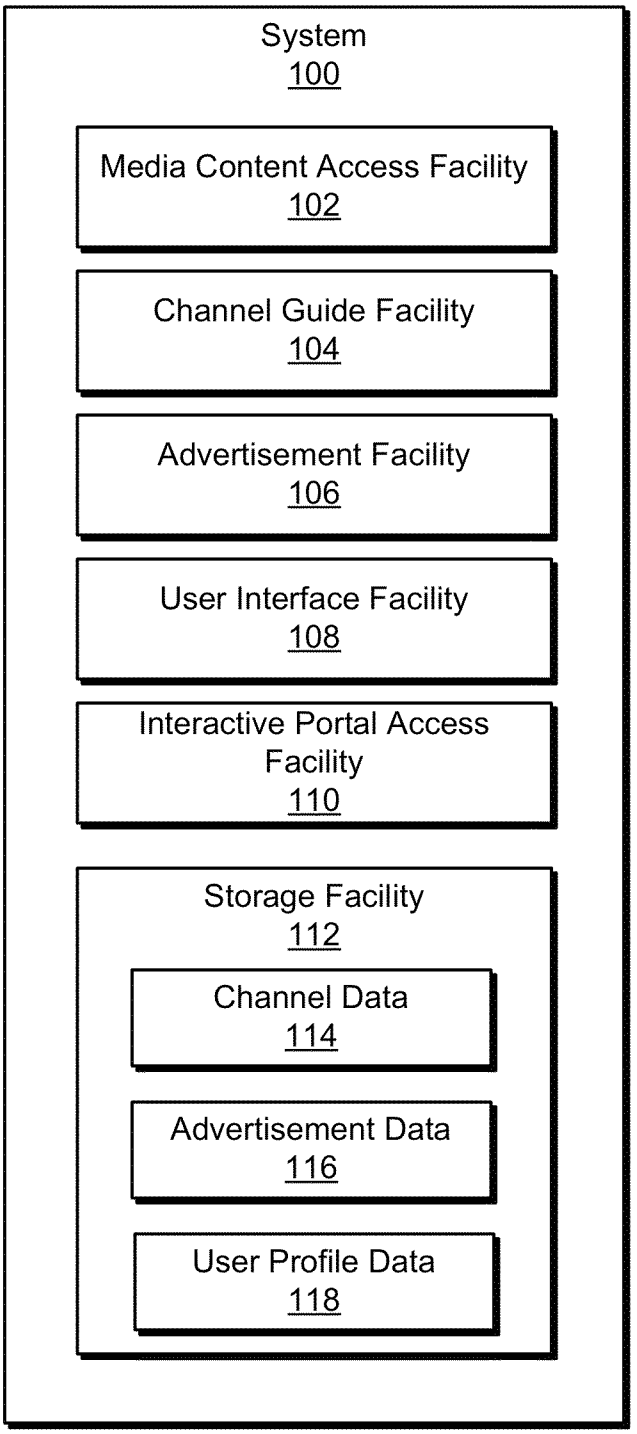
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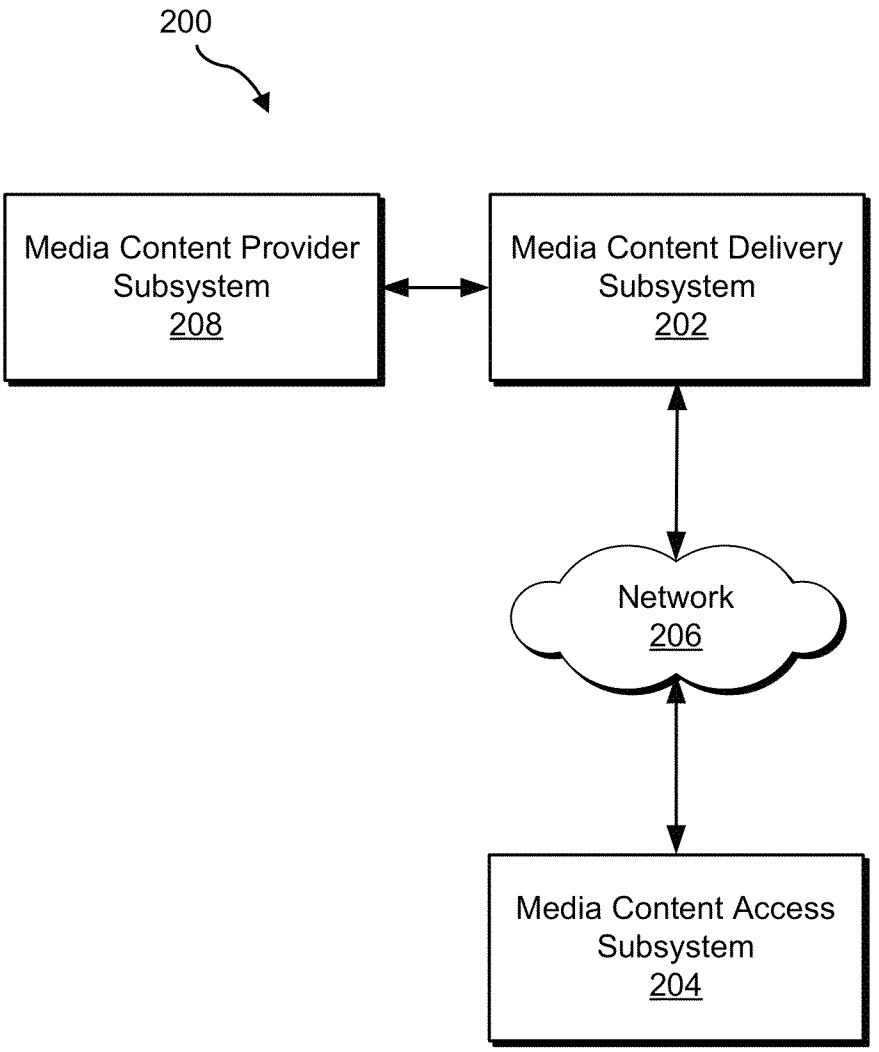
Media Content Access Facility
102
Channel Guide Facility
104
Advertisement Facility
106
User Interface Facility
108
Interactive Portal Access Facility
110
Storage Facility
112
Channel Data
114
Advertisement Data
116
User Profile Data
118

Fig. 1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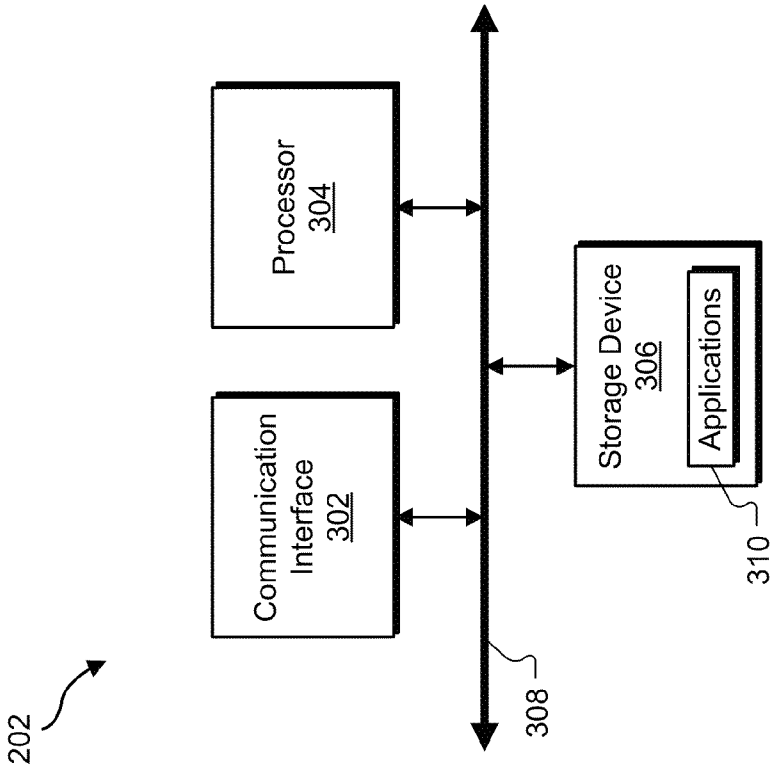
Media Content Delivery Subsystem 202
Network 206
Media Content Access Subsystem 204

Fig. 2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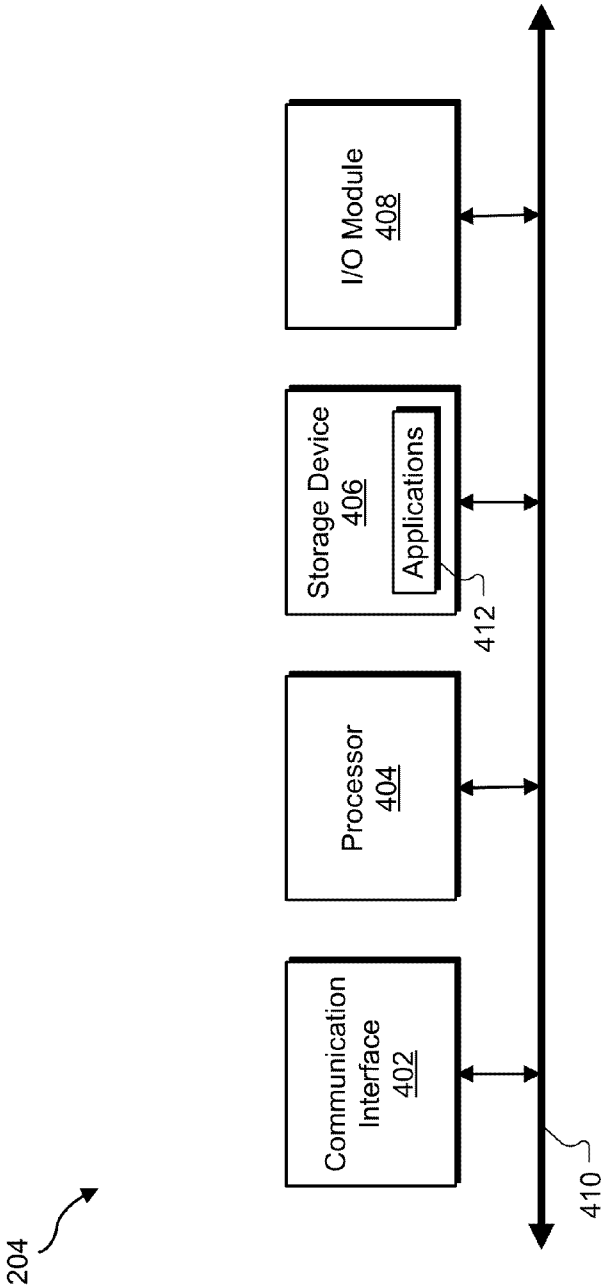
Processor 304
308
Storage Device 306
Applications
310

Fig. 3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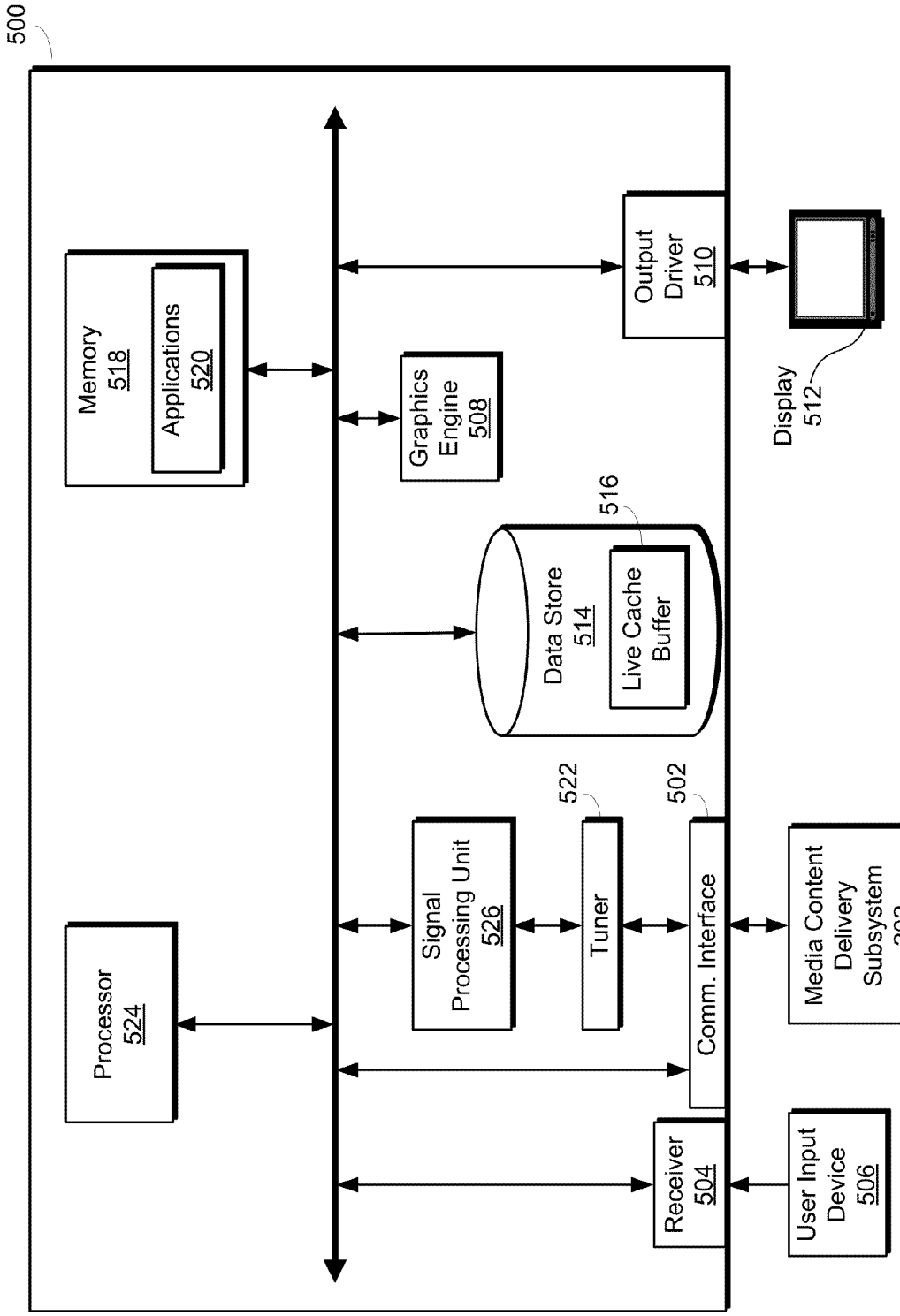
Processor 404
Storage Device 406
Applications
412
I/O Module 408
410

Fig. 4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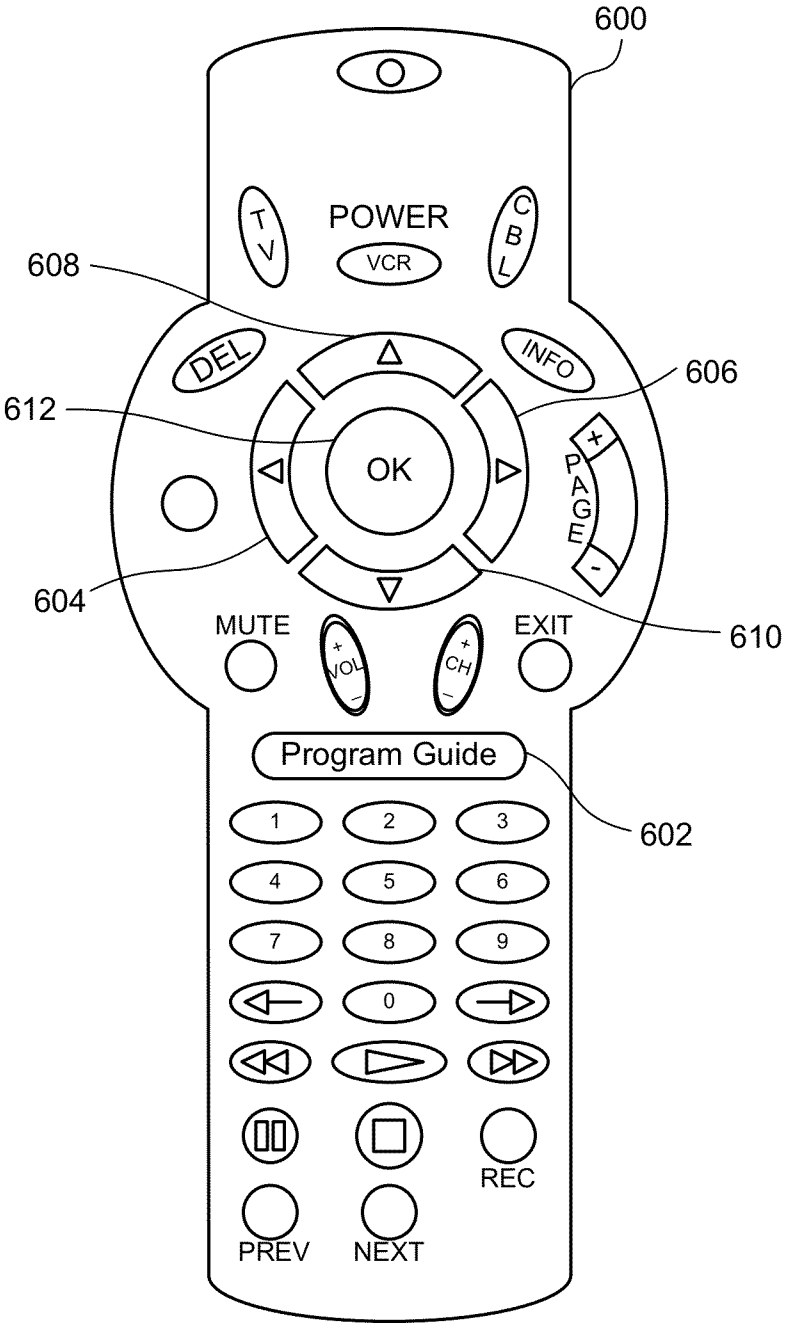
Memory 518
Applications 520
Processor 524
Graphics Engine 508
Output Driver 510
Display 512
Data Store 514
Live Cache Buffer
516
Signal Processing Unit 526
Tuner
522
Comm. Interface
502
Media Content Delivery Subsystem 202
Receiver 504
User Input Device 506

Fig. 5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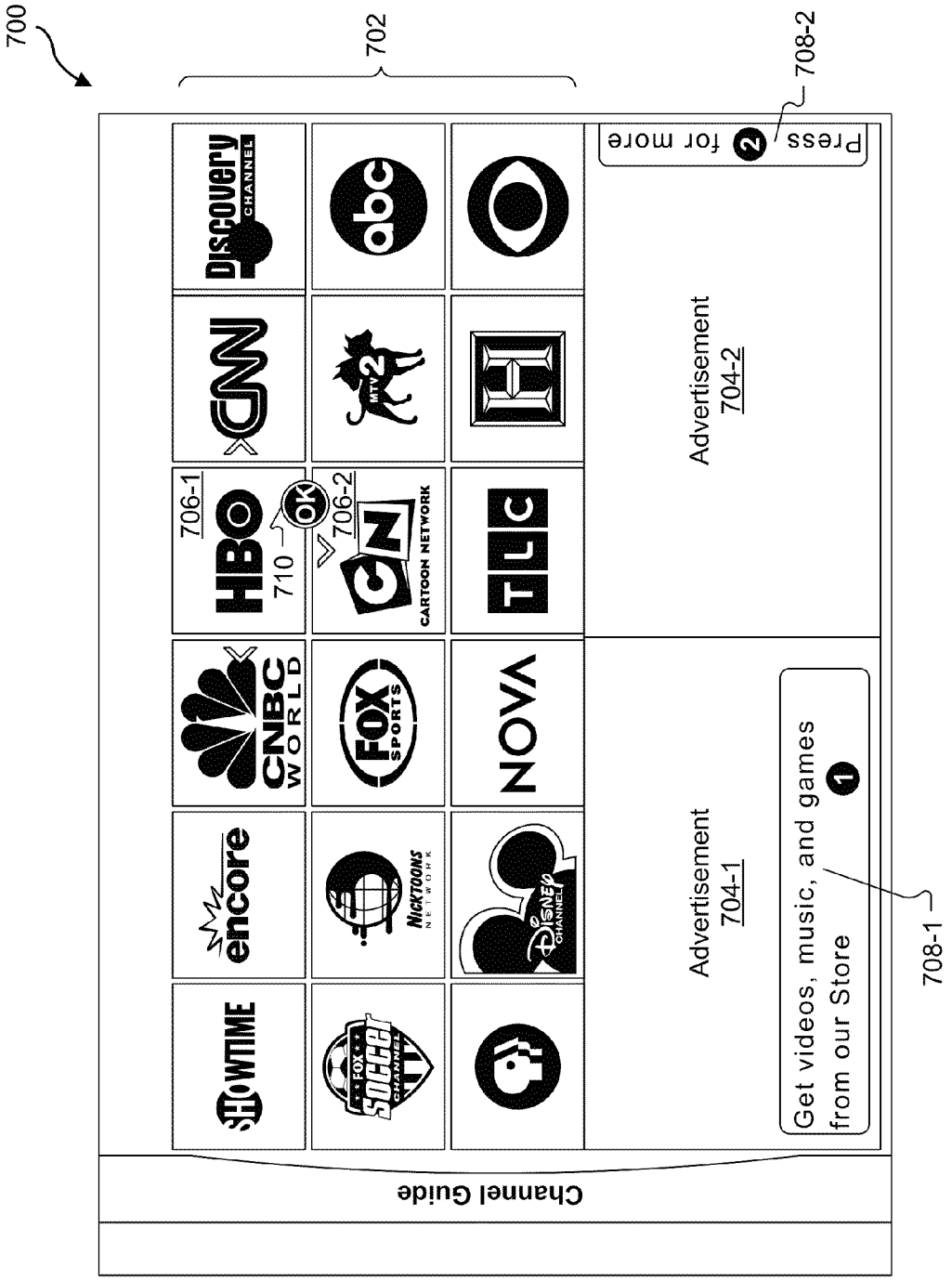
TV
VCR
CBL
608
DEL
INFO
606
612
OK
PAGE
+
-
604
610
MUTE
VOL
CH
EXIT
Program Guide
602
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
0
REC
PREV
NEXT

Fig. 6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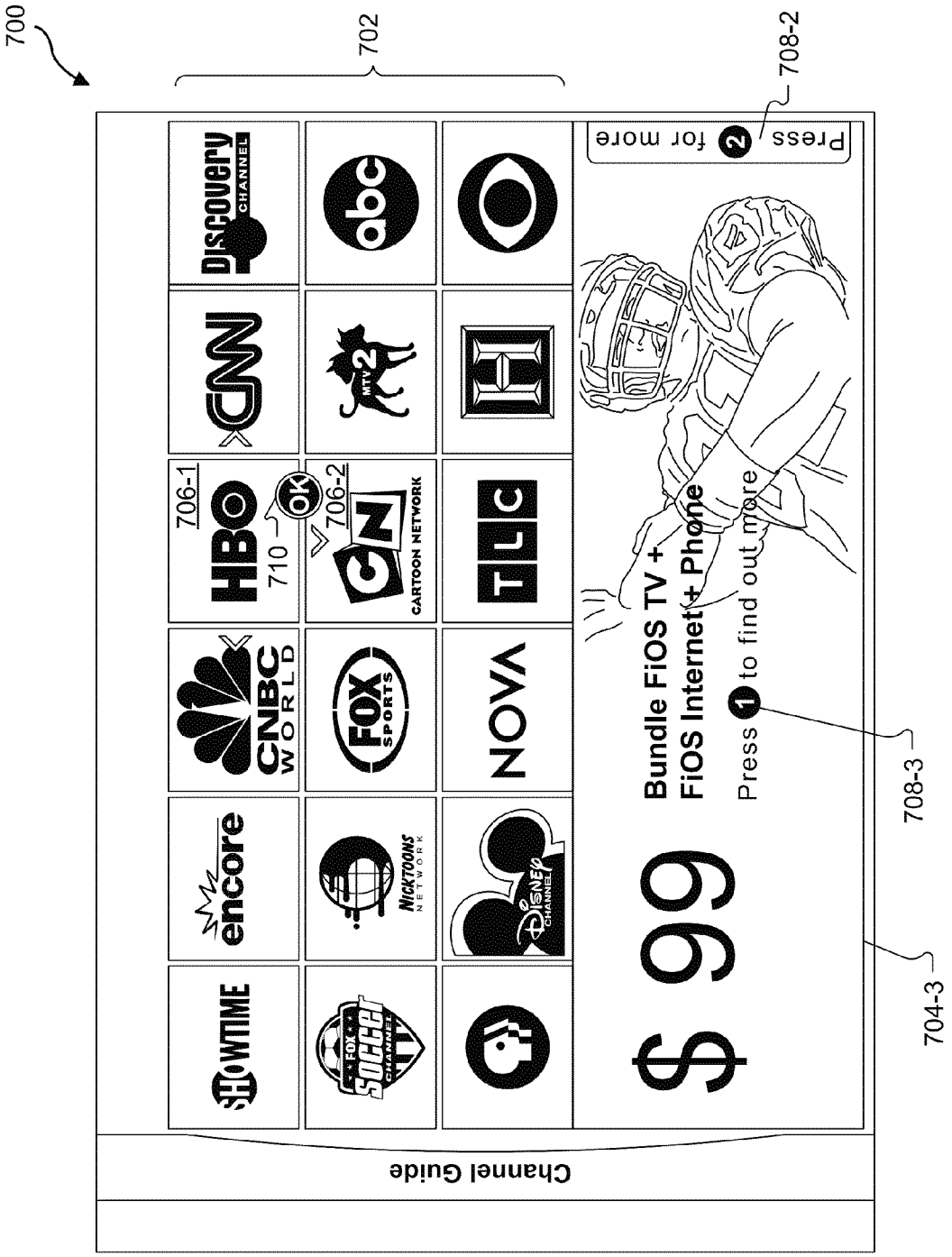
702
708-2
Press 2 for more
Advertisement
704-2
706-1
HBO
710
OK
706-2
CN
CARTOON NETWORK
TLC
CNBC WORLD
FOX SPORTS
NOVA
encore
NICKTOONS NETWORK
Disney CHANNEL
SHOWTIME
Advertisement
704-1
Get videos, music, and games from our Store 1
708-1
Channel Guide

Fig. 7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702
708-2
Press 2 for more
706-1
HBO
710
OK
706-2
CN
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CNBC WORLD
FOX SPORTS
NOVA
TLC
encore
NICKTOONS NETWORK
DISNEY CHANNEL
SHOWTIME
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$99
Bundle FiOS TV +
FiOS Internet + Phone
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704-3
Channel Guide

Fig. 8

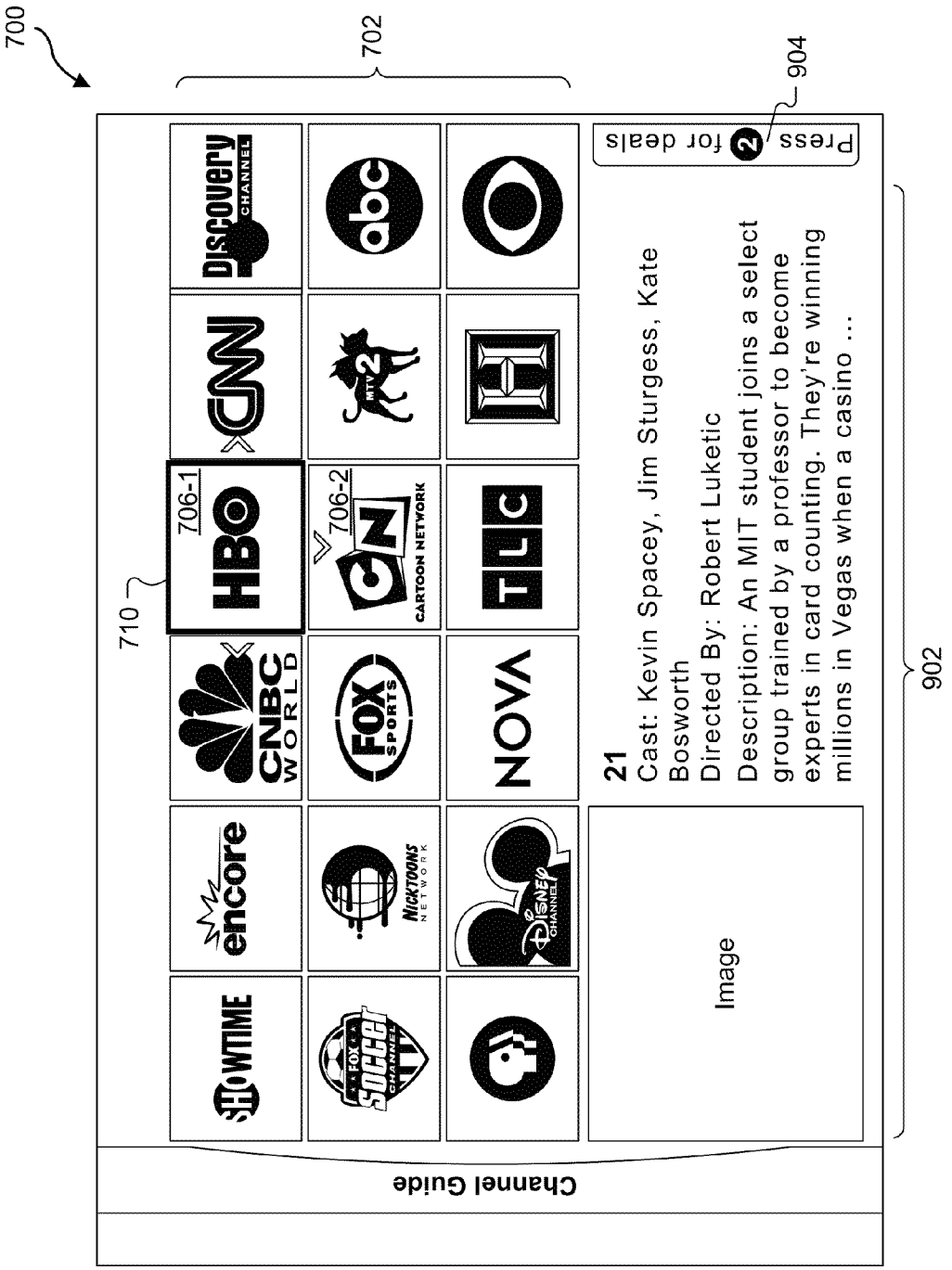
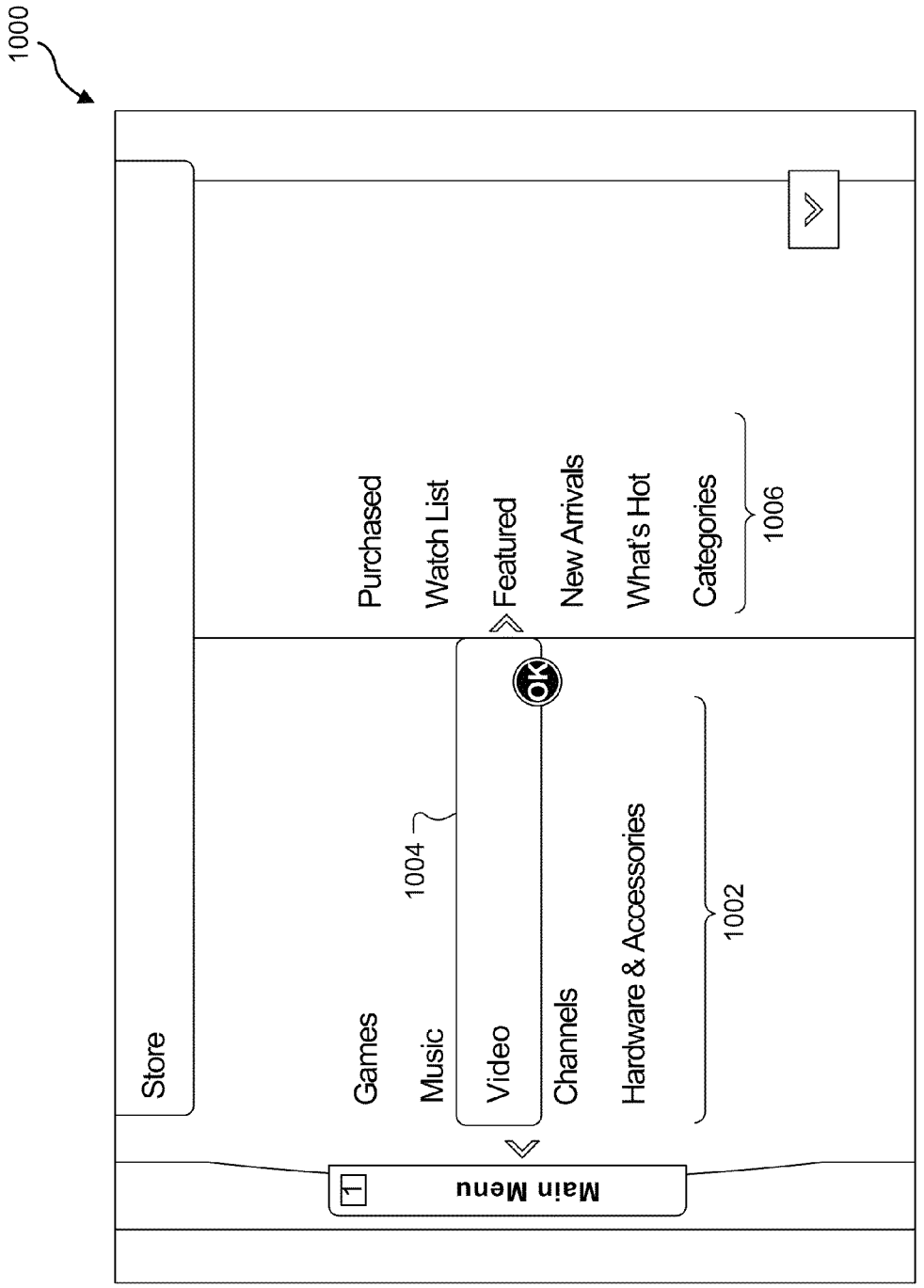

700
702
904
710
706-1
706-2
902
Channel Guide
Discovery CHANNEL
CNN
abc
MTV 2
HBO
CN CARTOON NETWORK
TLC
CNBC WORLD
FOX SPORTS
NOVA
encore
NICKTOONS NETWORK
Disney CHANNEL
SHOWTIME
FOX SOCCER CHANNEL
Press 2 for deals
21
Cast: Kevin Spacey, Jim Sturgess, Kate Bosworth
Directed By: Robert Luketic
Description: An MIT student joins a select group trained by a professor to become experts in card counting. They're winning millions in Vegas when a casino ...
Image

Fig. 9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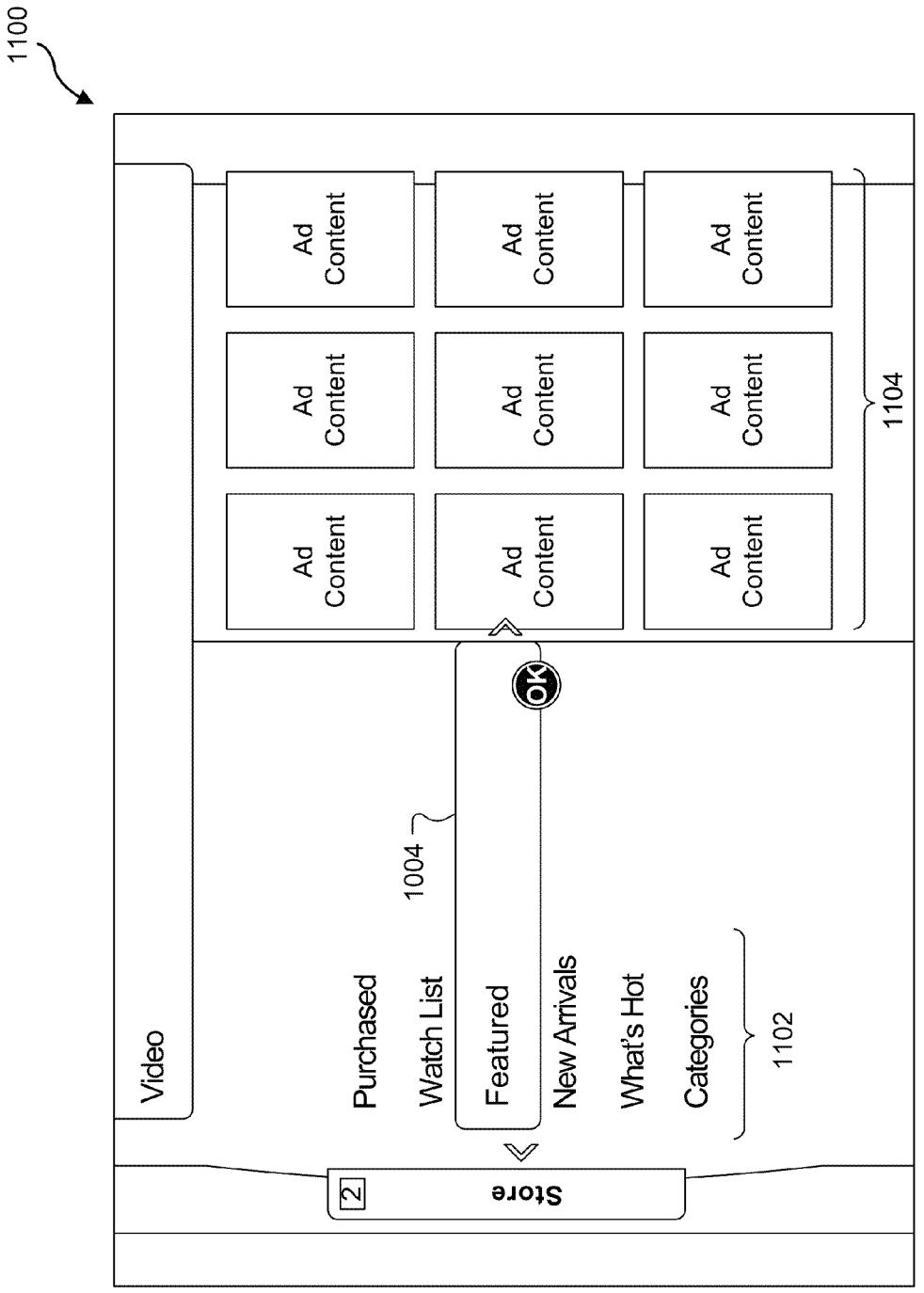
Store
Main Menu
1
Games
Music
Video
Channels
Hardware & Accessories
1004
1002
ok
Purchased
Watch List
Featured
New Arrivals
What's Hot
Categories
1006

Fig. 10


1100
Video
Purchased
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New Arrivals
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1004
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Store
2
OK
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
1104

Fig. 11

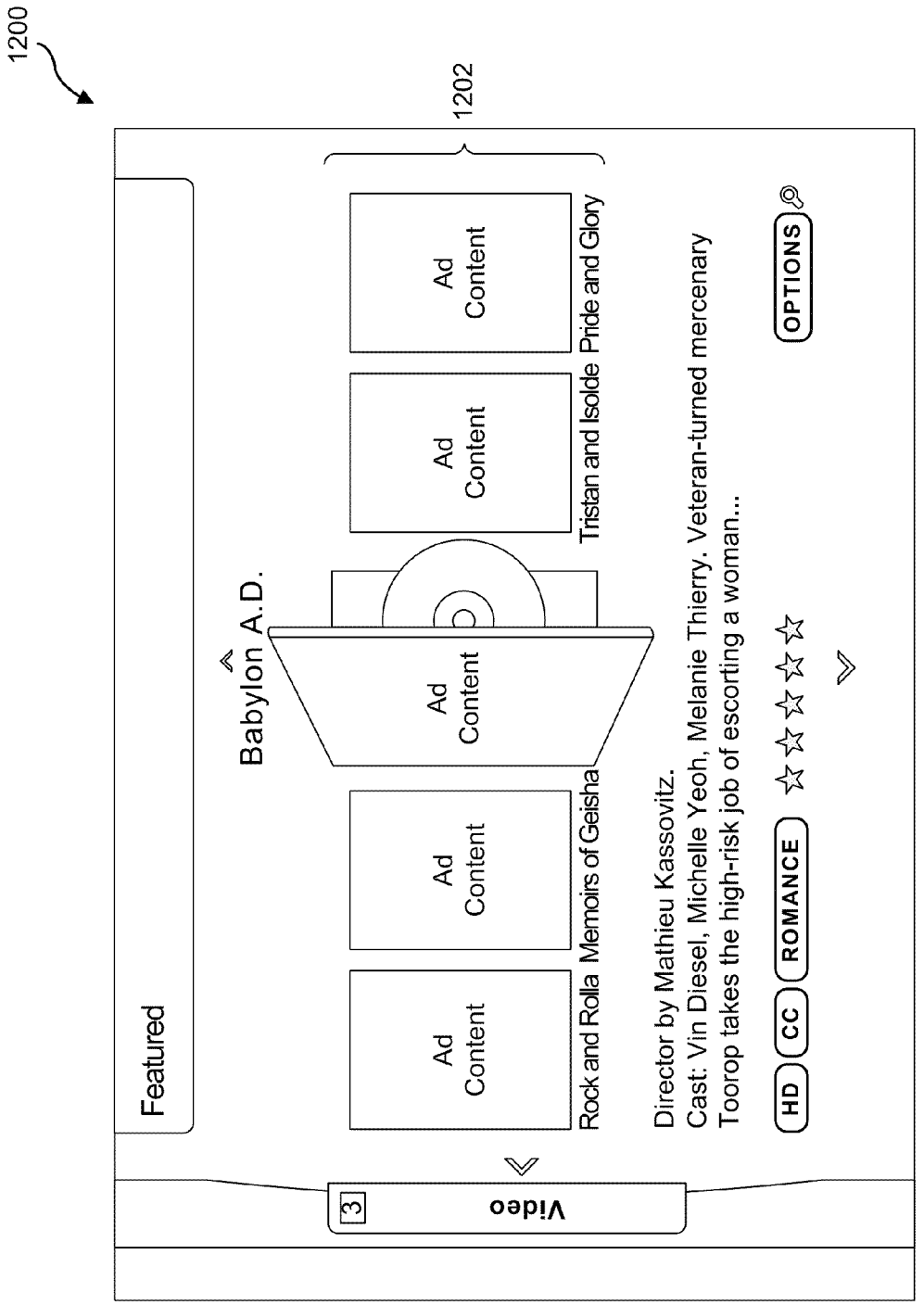
1200
1202
Featured
Video
3
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Ad Content
Rock and Rolla
Memoirs of Geisha
Babylon A.D.
Tristan and Isolde
Pride and Glory
Director by Mathieu Kassovitz.
Cast: Vin Diesel, Michelle Yeoh, Melanie Thierry. Veteran-turned mercenary
Toorop takes the high-risk job of escorting a woman...
HD
CC
ROMANCE
OPTIONS

Fig. 12

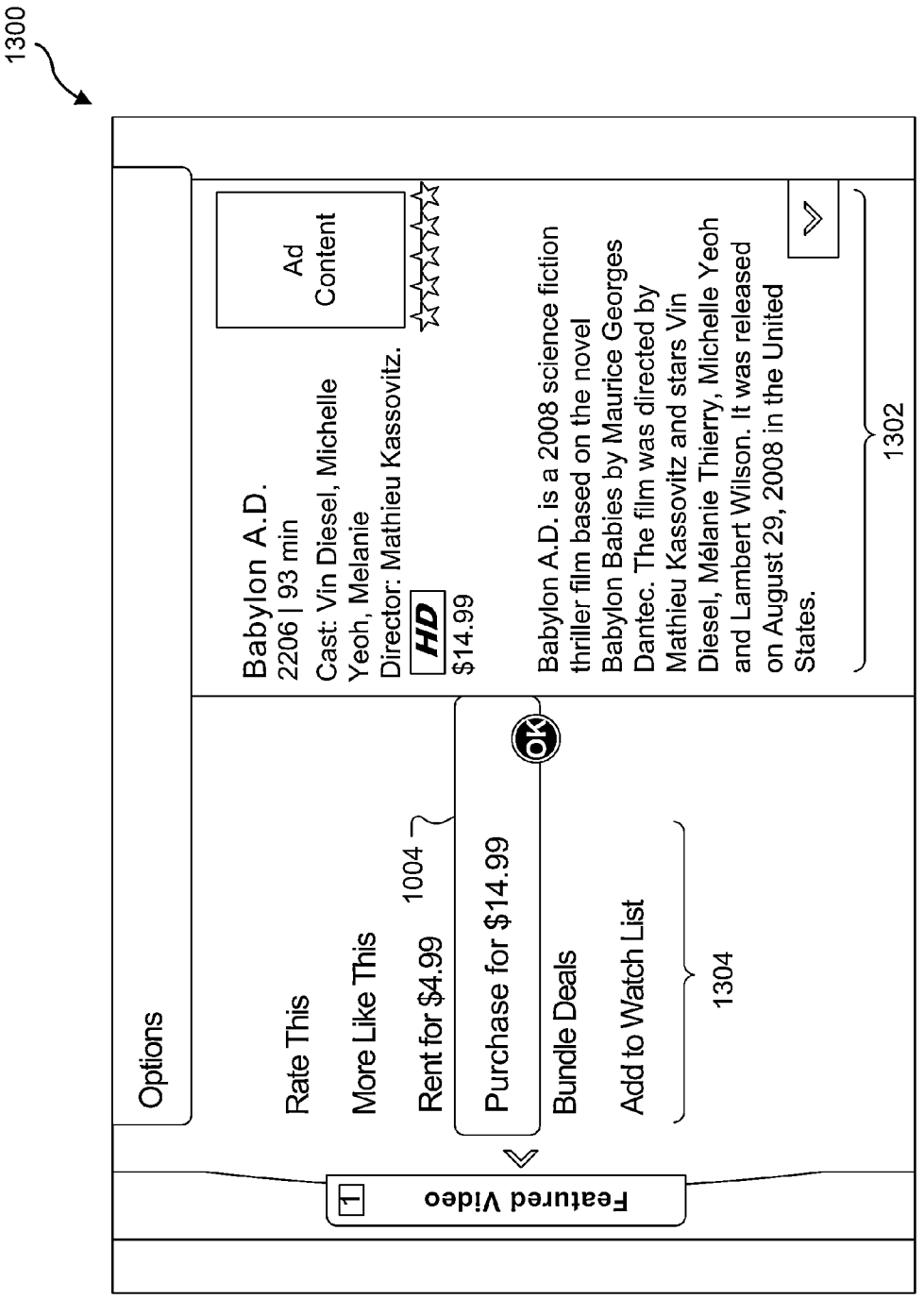
1300
Options
Rate This
More Like This
Rent for $4.99
1004
Purchase for $14.99
OK
Bundle Deals
Add to Watch List
1304
Featured Video
1
Babylon A.D.
2206 | 93 min
Cast: Vin Diesel, Michelle Yeoh, Melanie
Director: Mathieu Kassovitz.
HD
$14.99
Ad Content
Babylon A.D. is a 2008 science fiction thriller film based on the novel Babylon Babies by Maurice Georges Dantec. The film was directed by Mathieu Kassovitz and stars Vin Diesel, Mélanie Thierry, Michelle Yeoh and Lambert Wilson. It was released on August 29, 2008 in the United States.
1302

Fig. 13

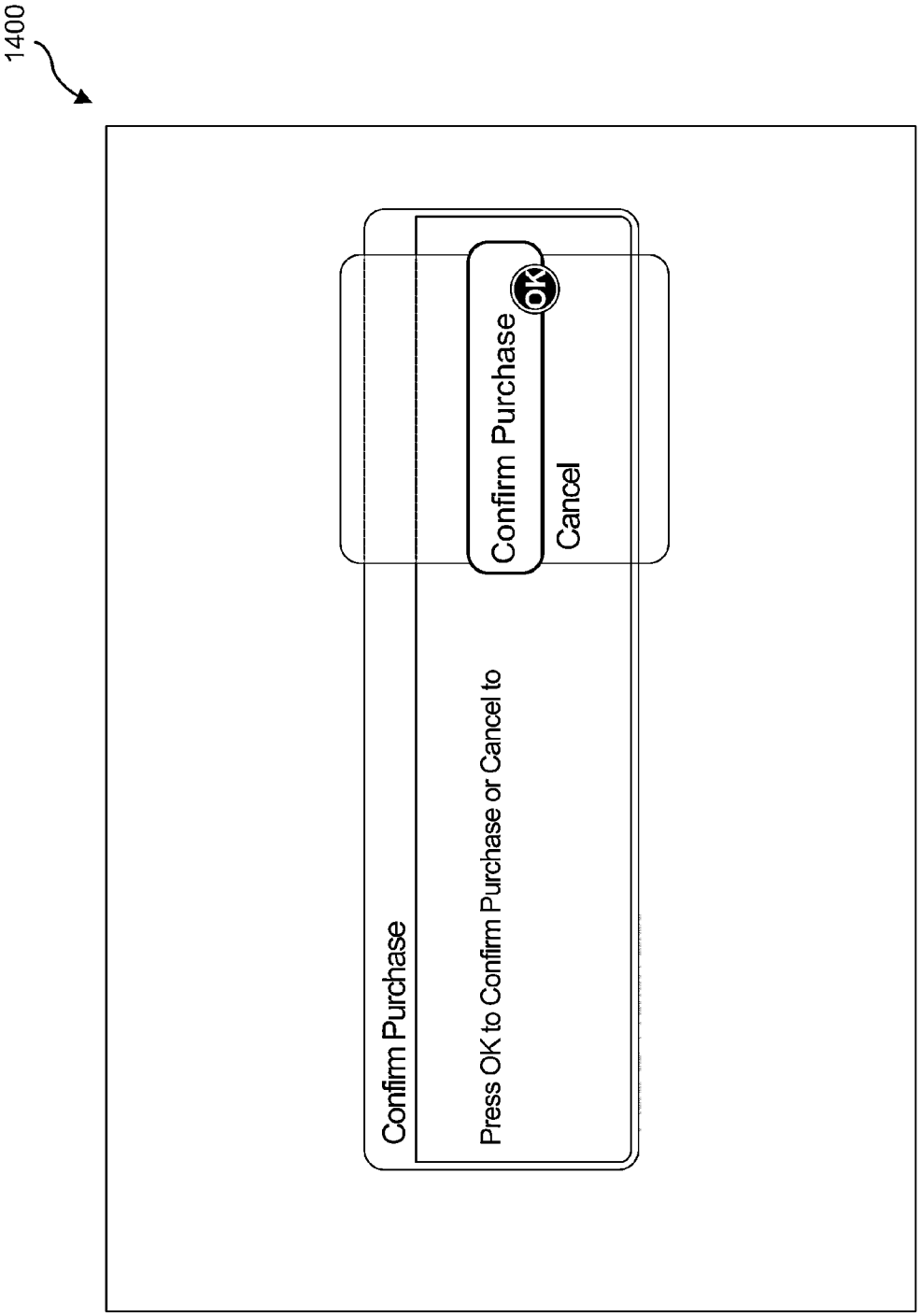
1400
Confirm Purchase
Press OK to Confirm Purchase or Cancel to
Confirm Purchase
OK
Cancel

Fig. 14

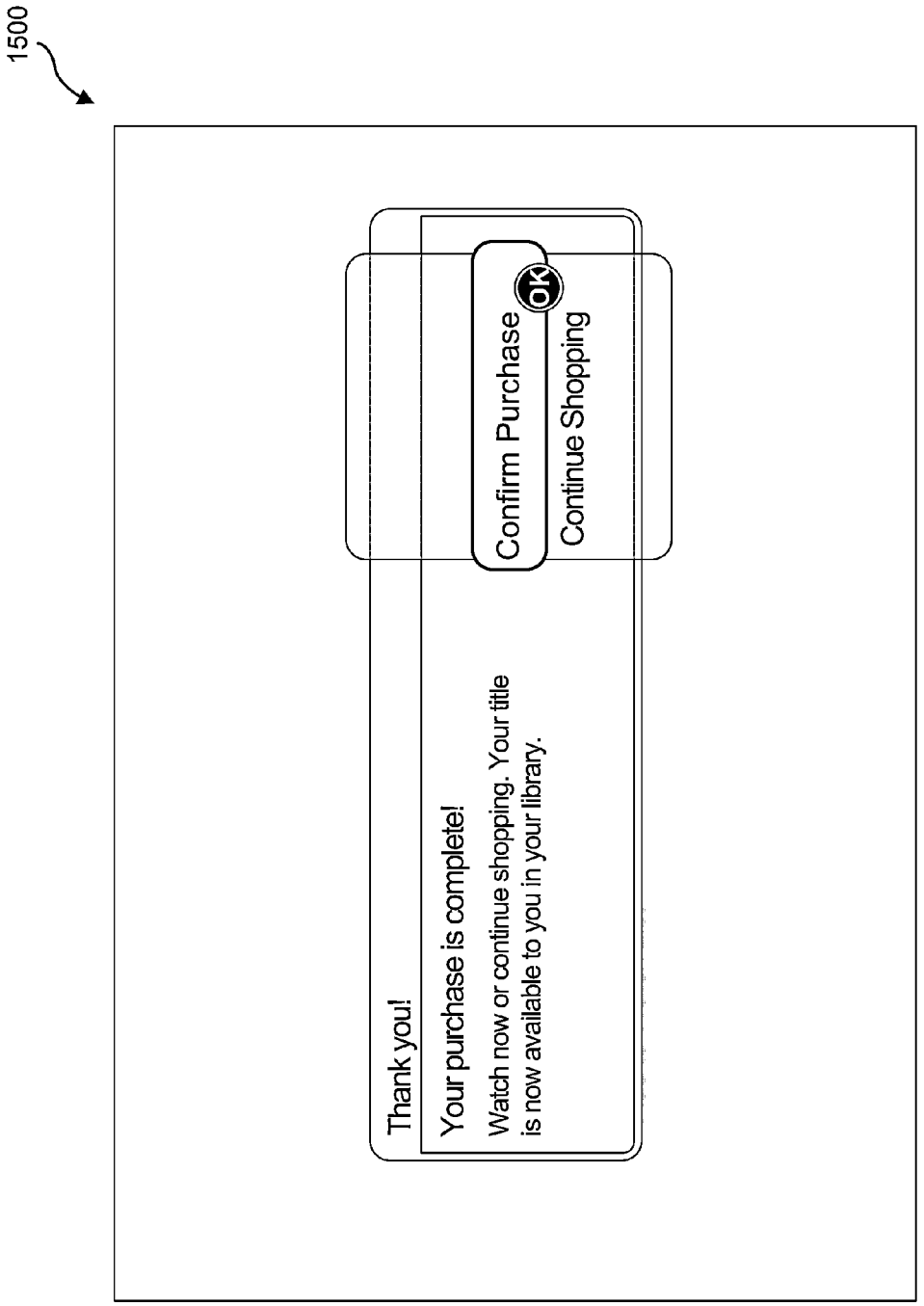
1500
Thank you!
Your purchase is complete!
Watch now or continue shopping. Your title is now available to you in your library.
Confirm Purchase
OK
Continue Shopping

Fig. 15

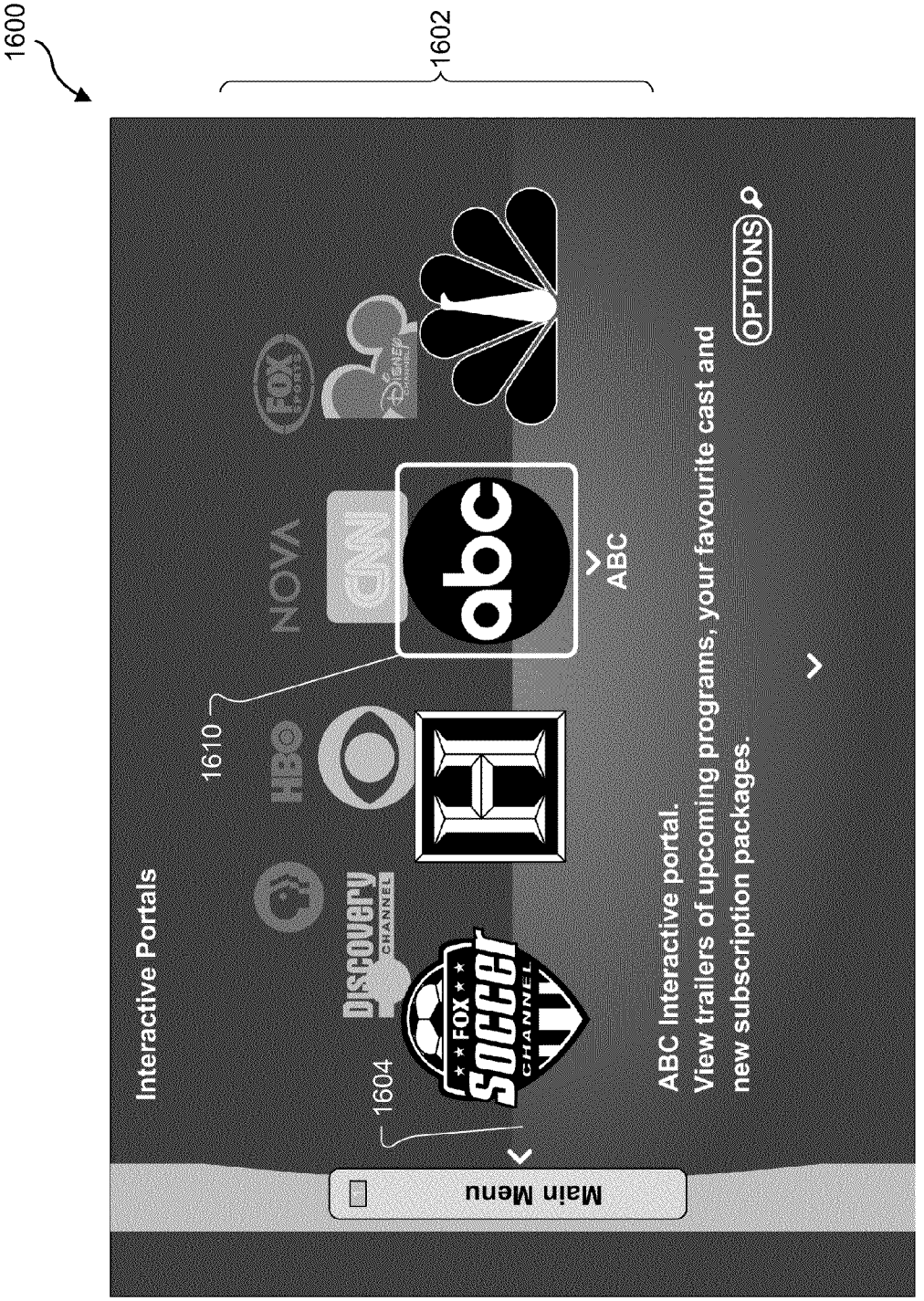
1600
1602
Interactive Portals
1610
1604
Main Menu
ABC
ABC Interactive portal.
View trailers of upcoming programs, your favourite cast and new subscription packages.
OPTIONS

Fig. 16

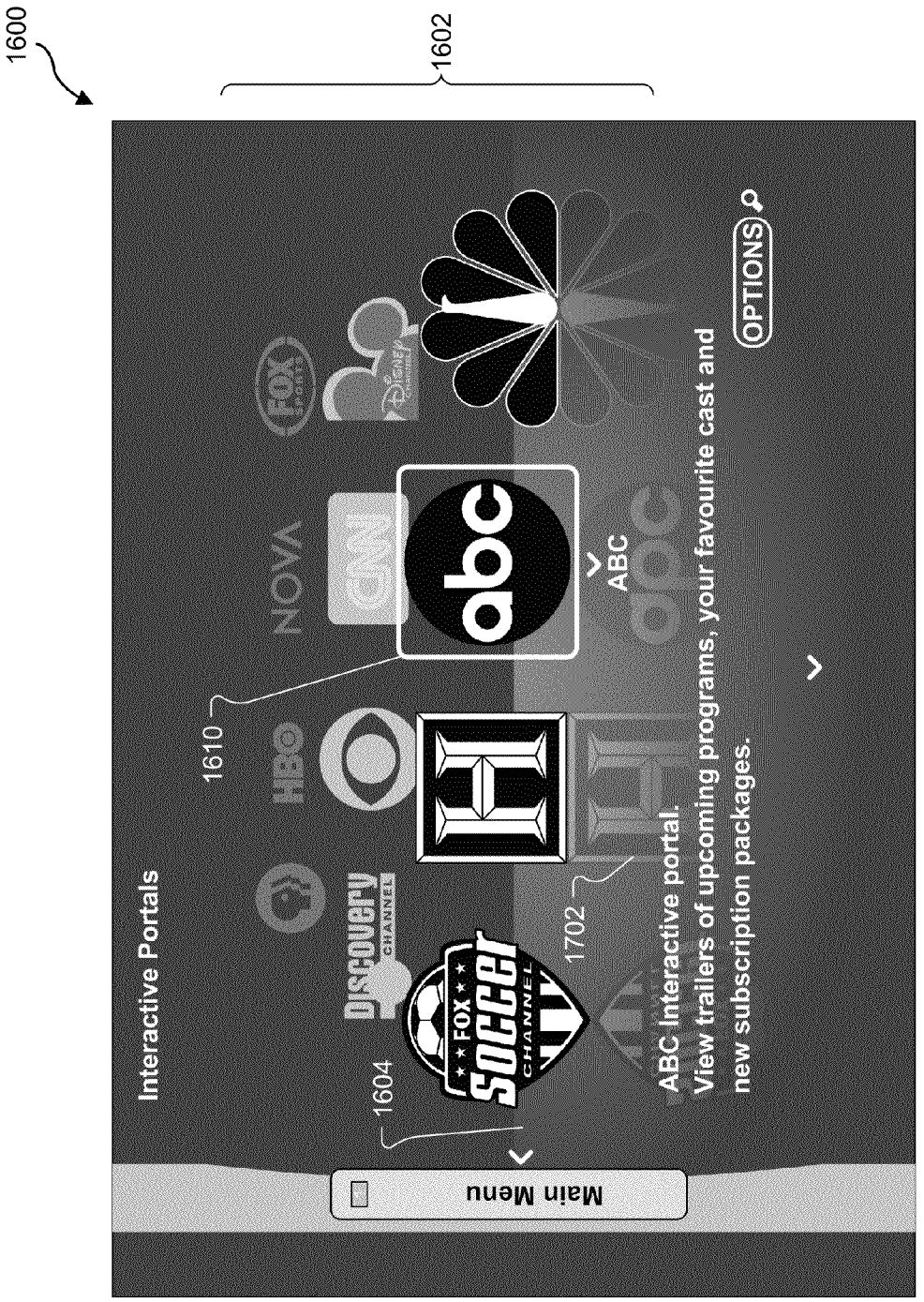
1600
1602
Interactive Portals
Main Menu
1604
1610
1702
ABC
ABC Interactive portal.
View trailers of upcoming programs, your favourite cast and
new subscription packages.
OPTIONS

Fig. 17

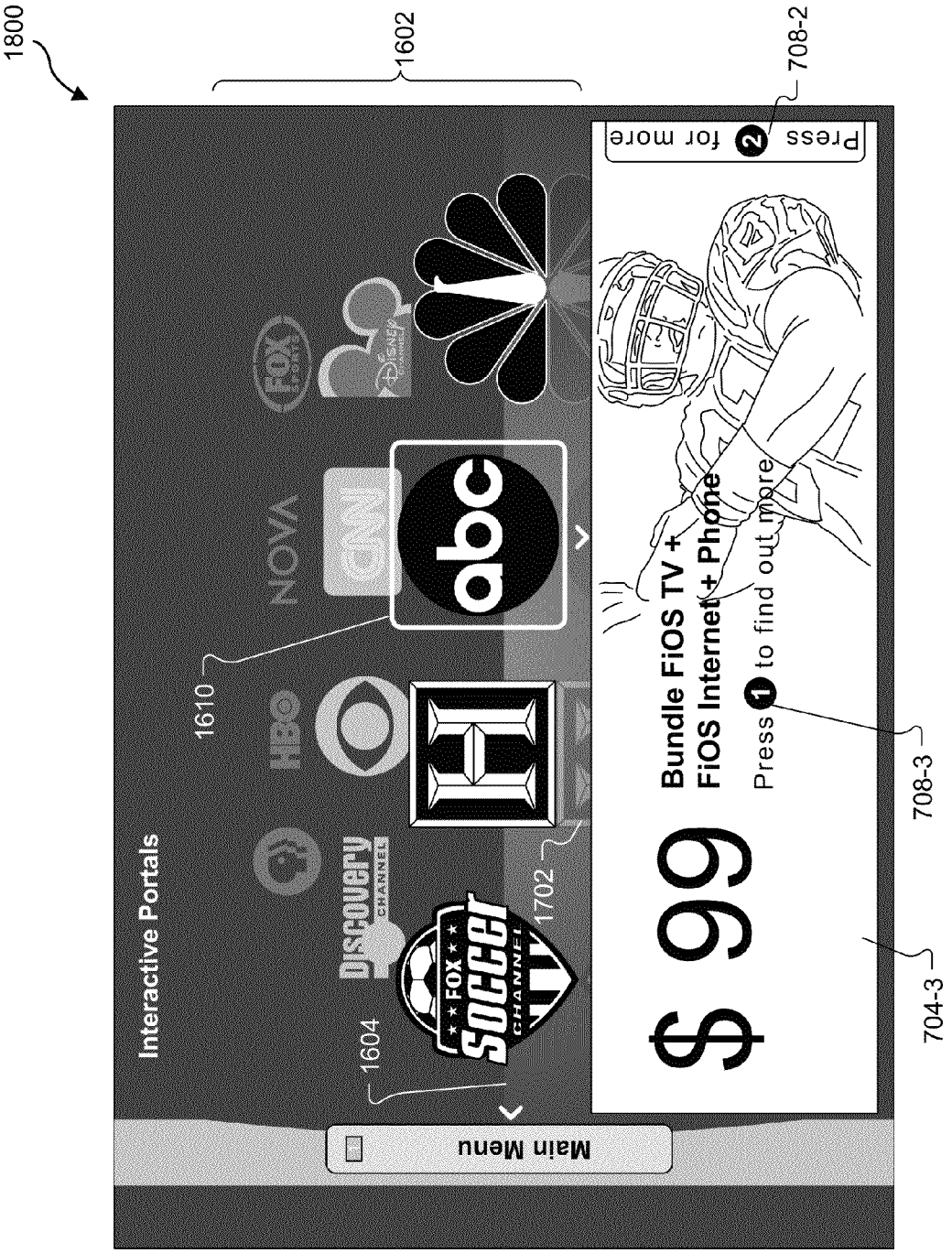
1800
1602
708-2
Interactive Portals
Main Menu
1604
1610
1702
Press 2 for more
$ 99
Bundle FiOS TV +
FiOS Internet + Phone
Press 1 to find out more
708-3
704-3

Fig. 18

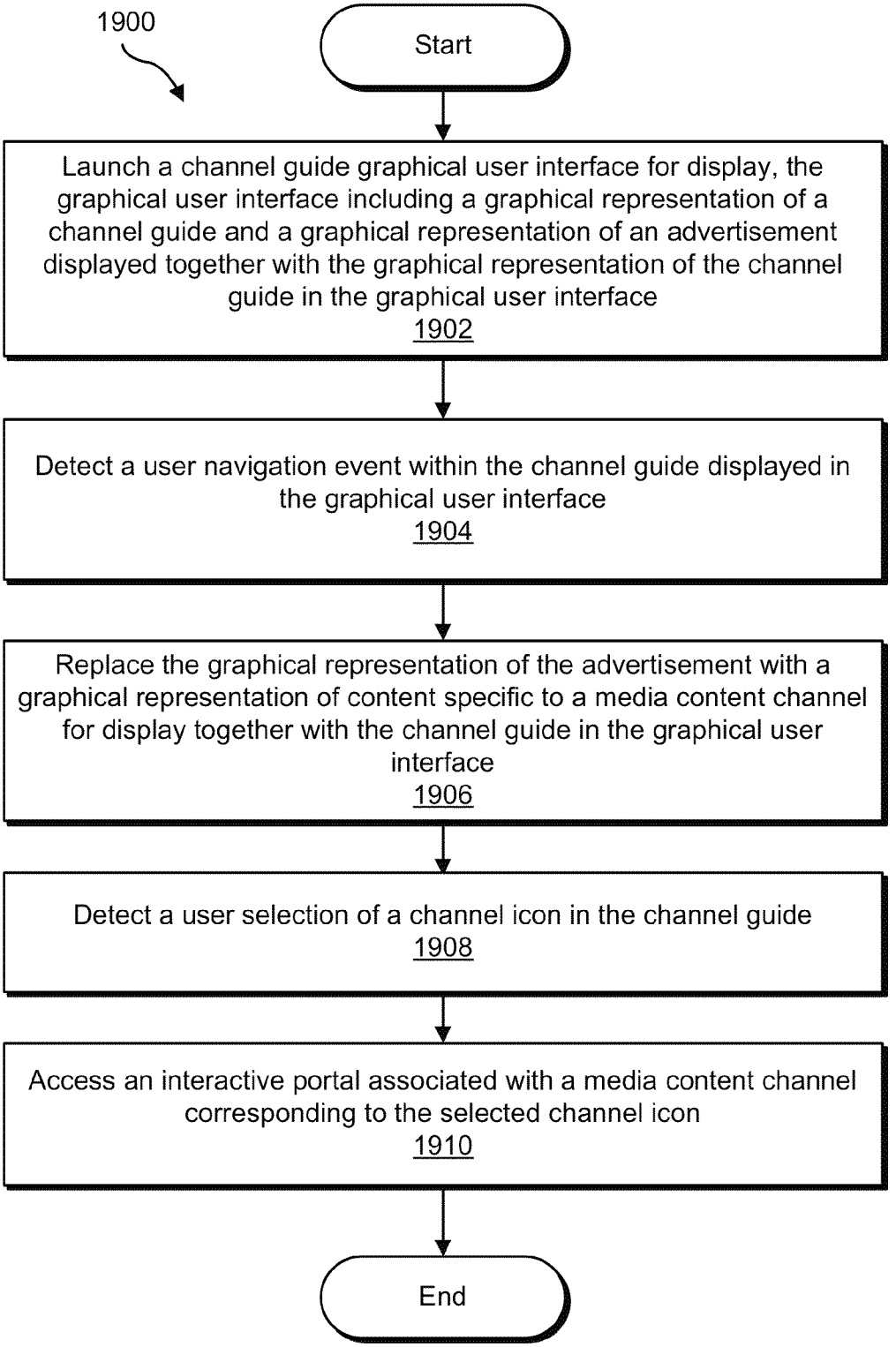
1900
Start
Launch a channel guide graphical user interface for display, the graphical user interface including a graphical representation of a channel guide and a graphical representation of an advertisement displayed together with the graphical representation of the channel guide in the graphical user interface
1902
Detect a user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface
1904
Replace the graphical representation of the advertisement with a graphical representation of content specific to a media content channel for display together with the channel guide in the graphical user interface
1906
Detect a user selection of a channel icon in the channel guide
1908
Access an interactive portal associated with a media content channel corresponding to the selected channel icon
1910
End

Fig. 19

USER INTERFACE ENHANCEMENTS FOR MEDIA CONTENT ACCESS SYSTEMS AND METHODS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The advent of set-top boxes and other media content access devices has provided users of such devices with access to a large number and variety of media content programs, services, and choices. For example, a user may choose to experience a variety of distributed media content, including broadcast or multicast television programs, pay-per-view programming, video-on-demand programming, and audio programming via a set-top box.

A set-top box typically generates and provides data representative of graphical user interfaces ("GUIs") that may be displayed to a user, who may utilize the GUIs to control operations and access functionality of the set-top box. For example, a set-top box typically provides menu GUIs through which a user may access various functions of the set-top box. As another example, a set-top box typically provides media program guide GUIs through which a user may identify and access media content. While conventional set-top box GUIs provide a user with tools to interact with a set-top box, there remains room to improve set-top box GUIs and related functionality. Thus, designers of GUIs for set-top boxes seek to design improved GUIs that provide an intuitive and appropriate balance of information, advertisements, usability, aesthetics, and functionality.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings illustrate various embodiments and are a part of the specification. The illustrated embodiments are merely examples and do not limit the scope of the disclosure. Throughout the drawings, identical or similar reference numbers designate identical or similar elements.

FIG. **1** illustrates an exemplary media content access system according to principles described herein.

FIG. **2** illustrates an exemplary implementation of the system of FIG. **1** according to principles described herein.

FIG. **3** illustrates exemplary components of a media content delivery subsystem according to principles described herein.

FIG. **4** illustrates exemplary components of a media content access subsystem according to principles described herein.

FIG. **5** illustrates an exemplary media content access device having the media content access subsystem of FIG. **4** implemented thereon according to principles described herein.

FIG. **6** illustrates an exemplary remote control user input device according to principles described herein.

FIGS. **7-18** illustrate exemplary views of graphical user interfaces that may be displayed on a display screen according to principles described herein.

FIG. **19** illustrates an exemplary channel guide user interface advertising method according to principles described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Exemplary user interfaces and user interface enhancements for media content access systems and methods are described herein. As described in more detail below, in certain embodiments, advertisement content may be integrated within exemplary graphical user interfaces ("GUIs"), such as GUIs displaying media channel and/or program guides, in a way that may provide an appropriate balance of information, advertisements, usability, aesthetics, and/or functionality to a user who views and/or interacts with the GUIs. As an example, one or more graphical representations of one or more advertisements promoting products and/or services may be displayed together with a graphical representation of a channel guide that includes a plurality of channel icons representing a plurality of media content channels through which media content may be accessed. As described in more detail further below, advertisement content may be selected for display together with the channel guide in the GUI in response to a launch of the GUI and/or a user navigation event within the channel guide.

In some examples, the channel icons may provide launching points through which interactive portals associated with media content providers distributing media content via the media content channels may be accessed. In some examples, the channel guide may include channel icons arranged to form a three-dimensional grid matrix view of channel icons, and the channel icons may be positioned relative to a graphical representation of a three-dimensional stage in GUI.

As used herein, the term "media content" may refer generally to any content that may be accessed and/or presented by a media content access system for experiencing by a user of the media content access system. The term "media content program" as used herein may refer generally to any instance of media content, including any television program, on-demand media program, pay-per-view media program, broadcast media program (e.g., broadcast television program), multicast media program, narrowcast media program, IPTV program, video program, streamed media program, recorded live transmission of a media program, and any other form of media content that may be accessed and presented by the media content access system.

The term "media content channel," "media channel," or "channel" as used herein may refer generally to any carrier of media content, including, but not limited to, media (e.g., television) channels, streams, addresses, frequencies or other carriers of media content. In some examples, the media content channels may include frequency bands to which media content access facility may tune to access media content carried over the frequency bands. Additionally or alternatively, the media content channels may include virtual channels that are mapped to frequency bands to which media content access facility may tune to access media content carried over the frequency bands.

As used herein, the term "advertisement" or "advertisement content" may refer to any advertisement promoting a product and/or service and that is configured to be displayed for viewing by a user. An advertisement may be in the form of one or more graphical representations (e.g., visual images) of advertisement content that may be displayed for viewing by a user. Typically, an advertisement may be designed to attract the attention of a user when the advertisement is displayed in a GUI and/or to prompt the user to take steps toward acquiring an advertised product and/or service.

Exemplary user interface enhancements for media content access systems and methods will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. **1** illustrates an exemplary media content access system **100** (or simply "system **100**"). As will be described in more detail below, system **100** may be configured to access and present media content, as well as to generate and provide

one or more GUIs for viewing and utilization by a user (e.g., an end user such as a subscriber to one or more services accessible by system **100**).

System **100** may include, without limitation, a media content access facility **102**, a channel guide facility **104**, an advertisement facility **106**, a user interface facility **108**, an interactive portal access facility **110**, and a storage facility **112** selectively and communicatively coupled to one another. Any suitable communication technologies, including any of the communication technologies mentioned herein, may be employed to facilitate communications between facilities **102-112**. Each of these facilities will now be described in more detail.

Media content access facility **102** may be configured to access, process, and present media content for experiencing by a user. Media content access facility **102** may employ any technologies suitable for accessing media content, including accessing media content distributed by a remote source. In certain embodiments, media content access facility **102** may be configured to access media content that is distributed over one or more media content channels. In certain examples, each media content channel may be associated with and carry media content provided by a certain media content provider, such as American Broadcasting Company ("ABC"), for example. Accordingly, media content access facility **102** may select (e.g., tune to) a particular media content channel to access media content provided by a particular media content provider associated with the media content channel.

Media content access facility **102** may be configured to process and present media content for experiencing by a user. A presentation of media content may be performed in any suitable way such as by generating and/or providing output signals representative of media content to a display device (e.g., a television) and/or an audio output device. For example, media content access facility **102** may display, play back, or otherwise present a media content program for experiencing by a user.

Channel guide facility **104** may be configured to maintain channel data representative of one or more media content channels through which media content access facility **102** may access media content. The channel data may be stored as channel data **114** in storage facility **112**. Channel data **114** may include any information descriptive of or otherwise related to the media content channels. For example, channel data **114** may include, without limitation, data representative of channel identifiers (e.g., virtual channel numbers), channel frequency ranges, mappings of virtual channels to frequency ranges, information about media content providers associated with media channels, and graphical images associated media content channels (e.g., channel logos and/or media content provider logos).

Channel data **114** may be utilized by channel guide facility **104** to generate a channel guide for presentation to a user. A channel guide may include any compilation of channel data **114** that may be presented to a user. The user may utilize the channel guide to identify and/or access media content associated with a media channel. A channel guide may be integrated within an interactive media program guide in some embodiments or presented independently of an interactive media program guide in other embodiments. Exemplary graphical representations of channel guides are described in more detail further below.

Advertisement facility **106** may be configured to maintain advertisement data representative of one or more advertisements that may be presented to a user. The advertisement data may be stored as advertisement data **116** in storage facility **112**. Advertisement data **116** may include any data representative of, descriptive of, or otherwise related to advertisements. For example, advertisement data **116** may include, without limitation, data representative of advertisement content (e.g., advertisements images, artwork, and text) as well as advertisement metadata, which may be descriptive of one or more attributes of advertisement content. Exemplary graphical representations of advertisements are described in more detail further below.

In certain embodiments, advertisement facility **106** may be configured to select personalized advertisements for presentation to a user. For example, advertisement facility **106** may analyze advertisement metadata and information about the user and select an advertisement that is likely of interest to the user based on the analysis. To this end, advertisement facility **106** may access user profile data **118** stored in storage facility **112** and which may include a user profile containing information about a user. A user's profile may specify one or more preferences of a user, historical media content access data associated with the user (e.g., data indicating one or more media channels and/or media content programs accessed by the user), and any other information about the user that may be helpful for selecting a personalized advertisement for presentation to the user.

In certain embodiments, advertisement data **116** may be managed by an entity (e.g., a person or organization) controlling delivery of media content to media content access facility **102**. For example, an entity that delivers media content from media content providers to end users may manage advertisement data **116**. The management of advertisement data **116** may include, but is not limited to, creating, compiling, and providing graphical advertisement content to be displayed in one or more GUIs.

User interface facility **108** may be configured to generate and launch one or more GUIs for display to a user. A launch of a GUI may include any process for facilitating a display of a GUI that was not displayed immediately prior to the launch. In certain examples, a launch of a GUI may include an initial instantiation of a GUI in response to user input requesting that the GUI be displayed. In other examples, a launch of a GUI may include an activation and/or selection of an already-instantiated GUI in response to user input requesting that the GUI be displayed. In other examples, a launch may include transforming a GUI from a non-displayed state to a displayed state on a display screen.

User interface facility **108** may be configured to access and utilize channel data **114** maintained by channel guide facility **104** and/or advertisement data **116** maintained by advertisement facility **106** to generate and launch a GUI for display. For example, user interface facility **108** may be configured to request a channel guide from channel guide facility **104** and one or more advertisements from advertisement facility **106** for inclusion in the GUI. Channel guide facility **104** may respond by providing data representative of a channel guide, and advertisement facility **106** may respond by providing data representative of one or more advertisements for inclusion in the GUI. Hence, in certain embodiments, the GUI may include a graphical representation of a channel guide representing media content channels through which media content may be accessed by media content access facility **102**, and a graphical representation of at least one advertisement displayed together with the channel guide in the GUI. The channel guide and the advertisement may be displayed together in the GUI in a manner that is designed to provide an intuitive and appropriate balance of information, advertisements, usability, aesthetics, and functionality. For example, the advertisement may be integrally displayed together with the channel guide in the GUI on a temporary basis until an occur-

rence of a predetermined event is detected. In response to the detected event, the advertisement may be replaced in the GUI, for example. Examples of GUI views including channel guides and/or advertisements are described in more detail further below in reference to the drawings.

User interface facility **108** may be further configured to control the contents of a GUI. For example, user interface facility **108** may initially populate a GUI with content such as a graphical representation of a channel guide and a graphical representation of an advertisement. Subsequently, user interface facility **108** may modify the contents of the GUI such as by adding new content to the GUI, removing content from the GUI, modifying content in the GUI, and replacing content in the GUI with new content. As described in more detail further below, for example, user interface facility **108** may replace a graphical representation of an advertisement with a graphical representation of other content, such as content specific to a media content channel in the channel guide of the GUI.

User interface facility **108** may be configured to receive user input and provide user output and may include any hardware, firmware, software, or combination thereof supportive of user interface input and output capabilities. Accordingly, user interface facility **108** may receive input from and provide output to a user. In certain embodiments, user interface facility **108** may be configured to detect user input indicating an occurrence of a predetermined event in a GUI. For example, user interface facility **108** may detect user input indicating an event such as a user navigation event or a user selection event. A user navigation event may include any user-initiated navigation within a channel guide and/or GUI. In certain embodiments, for example, a user navigation event may include a browsing event that moves a selector within a channel guide displayed in a GUI (e.g., from one channel icon to another channel icon). A user selection event may include any user-initiated selection of an object included in a channel guide and/or GUI, such as a selection of a channel icon in a channel guide displayed in a GUI. Examples of a user navigation event and a user selection event are described in more detail further below.

Interactive portal access facility **110** may be configured to access one or more interactive portals. As used herein, an interactive portal may include any platform through which content associated with a media content channel may be accessed. The content may include information, media content, advertisements, other content, services, service offers, and/or any other material specific to the media content channel and/or a media content provider associated with the media content channel. In certain embodiments, an interactive portal may be operated by a media content provider associated with a media content channel such that content accessible through the interactive portal is provided by the media content provider. In alternative embodiments, an interactive portal may be operated at least in part by an entity that facilitates delivery of media content to media content access facility **102** via a media content channel.

To illustrate, a media content channel may be associated with a media content provider such as Home Box Office ("HBO"). HBO may maintain an interactive portal through which interactive portal access facility **110** may access information, media content, advertisements, other content, services, service offers, and/or any other material provided by HBO. Such an interactive portal may be used by HBO to promote HBO's brand, disseminate information, promote media content, and/or promote a service (e.g., an HBO subscription package) on a platform that is conveniently accessible by interactive portal access facility **110**.

In certain embodiments, a channel icon in a channel guide may be configured to function as a launching point to an interactive portal such that when a user selects the channel icon in a GUI, interactive portal access facility **110** respond by accessing the interactive portal for the media content channel associated with the channel icon.

Storage facility **112** may be configured to store data, including channel data **114**, advertisement data **116**, user profile data **118**, and any other electronic data as may suit a particular implementation. Storage facility **112** may include and/or employ any suitable data storage technologies.

System **100**, including facilities **102-112**, may include any computer hardware and/or computer-implemented instructions (e.g., software), or combinations of computer-implemented instructions and hardware, configured to perform one or more of the processes described herein. In particular, system **100** may be implemented on one physical computing device or may be implemented on more than one physical computing device. Accordingly, system **100** may include any number of computing devices, and may employ any of a number of computer operating systems. Moreover, it will be recognized that although facilities **102-112** are shown to be separate facilities in FIG. **1**, any of those facilities may be combined into a single facility as may serve a particular application.

Accordingly, one or more of the processes described herein may be implemented at least in part as instructions executable by one or more computing devices. In general, a processor (e.g., a microprocessor) receives instructions, from a computer-readable medium, (e.g., a memory, etc.), and executes those instructions, thereby performing one or more processes, including one or more of the processes described herein. Such instructions may be stored and/or transmitted using any of a variety of known computer-readable media.

A computer-readable medium (also referred to as a processor-readable medium) includes any medium that participates in providing data (e.g., instructions) that may be read by a computer (e.g., by a processor of a computer). Such a medium may take many forms, including, but not limited to, non-volatile media and/or volatile media. Non-volatile media may include, for example, optical or magnetic disks and other persistent memory. Volatile media may include, for example, dynamic random access memory ("DRAM"), which typically constitutes a main memory. Common forms of computer-readable media include, for example, a floppy disk, flexible disk, hard disk, magnetic tape, any other magnetic medium, a CD-ROM, a DVD, any other optical medium, a RAM, a PROM, an EPROM, a FLASH-EEPROM, any other memory chip or cartridge, or any other medium from which a computer can read.

FIG. **2** illustrates an exemplary implementation **200** of system **100** wherein a media content delivery subsystem **202** (or simply "delivery subsystem **202**") is communicatively coupled to a media content access subsystem **204** (or simply "access subsystem **204**"). As will be described in more detail below, media content access facility **102**, channel guide facility **104**, advertisement facility **106**, user interface facility **108**, interactive portal access facility **110**, and storage facility **112** may each be implemented on one or both of delivery subsystem **202** and access subsystem **204**.

Access subsystem **204** may be configured to communicate with and receive a signal and/or data stream containing data representative of media content and/or data associated with media content (e.g., metadata, program guide data, etc.) from delivery subsystem **202**. Access subsystem **204** and delivery subsystem **202** may communicate using any suitable commu-

nication technologies, devices, networks, media, and protocols supportive of remote data communications.

For example, as shown in FIG. **2**, delivery subsystem **202** may be configured to communicate with access subsystem **204** over a network **206** (and communications links thereto). Network **206** may include one or more networks or types of networks capable of carrying communications and/or data signals between delivery subsystem **202** and access subsystem **204**. For example, network **206** may include, but is not limited to, a cable network, optical fiber network, hybrid fiber coax network, wireless network (e.g., a Wi-Fi and/or mobile telephone network), satellite network, wireless broadcast network (e.g., a satellite media broadcasting network or terrestrial broadcasting network), subscriber television network, a provider-specific network (e.g., a Verizon® FIOS® network), the Internet, an intranet, local area network, any other suitable network, and any combination or sub-combination of these networks.

Delivery subsystem **202** and access subsystem **204** may communicate over network **206** using any suitable communication technologies, devices, media, and protocols supportive of remote data communications, including, but not limited to, data transmission media, communications devices, Transmission Control Protocol ("TCP"), Internet Protocol ("IP"), File Transfer Protocol ("FTP"), Telnet, Hypertext Transfer Protocol ("HTTP"), Real Time Protocol ("RTP"), User Datagram Protocol ("UDP"), Ethernet, and any other suitable communications technologies, devices, media, and protocols.

While FIG. **2** shows delivery subsystem **202** and access subsystem **204** communicatively coupled via network **206**, it will be recognized that delivery subsystem **202** and access subsystem **204** may be configured to communicate one with another in any other suitable manner (e.g., via a direct connection).

In some examples, delivery subsystem **202** may be configured to deliver media content to access subsystem **204**. Access subsystem **204** may be configured to facilitate access by a user to media content received from delivery subsystem **202**. To this end, access subsystem **204** may present the media content for experiencing (e.g., viewing) by a user, record the media content, parse metadata and/or other data associated with the media content, etc.

As shown in FIG. **2**, delivery subsystem **202** may be communicatively coupled to a media content provider subsystem **208** (or simply "provider subsystem **208**), which may provide media content to delivery subsystem **202** for distribution over network **206**. In certain embodiments, provider subsystem **208** may include or be implemented by one or computing devices operated by a media content provider (e.g., HBO) and that are configured to provide data representative of media content to delivery subsystem **202**. Delivery subsystem **202** may distribute the media content associated with the media content provider over network **206** via a media content channel.

FIG. **3** illustrates exemplary components of delivery subsystem **202**. As shown in FIG. **3**, delivery subsystem **202** may include a communication interface **302**, a processor **304**, and a storage device **306** communicatively coupled one to another via a communication infrastructure **308**. The components of delivery subsystem **202** may communicate with one another, including sending data to and receiving data from one another, using any suitable communication technologies. Moreover, the components of delivery subsystem **202** may be implemented on any computing device or combination of computing devices, such as one or more servers, personal computers, or the like.

While an exemplary delivery subsystem **202** is shown in FIG. **3**, the components illustrated in FIG. **3** are not intended to be limiting. Additional or alternative components may be used in other embodiments. Components of the delivery subsystem **202** shown in FIG. **3** will now be described in additional detail.

Communication interface **302** may be configured to communicate with one or more computing devices, including access subsystem **204**. In particular, communication interface **302** may be configured to transmit and/or receive communication signals, media content, and/or data to/from access subsystem **204**. Examples of communication interface **302** include, without limitation, a wired network interface (such as a network interface card), a wireless network interface (such as a wireless network interface card), a modem, and any other suitable interface.

In some examples, communication interface **302** may be configured to transmit (e.g., broadcast, multicast, and/or narrowcast) data representative of one or more media content programs to access subsystem **204**. Such data may be transmitted in one or more media content streams, as one or more data files, via one or more media content channels, or in any other suitable manner as may serve a particular application. Communication interface **302** may be configured to interface with any suitable communication media, protocols, and formats, including any of those mentioned above.

Processor **304** generally represents any type or form of processing unit capable of processing data or interpreting, executing, and/or directing execution of one or more of the instructions, processes, and/or operations described herein. Processor **304** may direct execution of operations in accordance with one or more applications **310** or other computer-executable instructions such as may be stored in storage device **306** or another computer-readable medium. As an example, processor **304** may be configured to process data, including modulating, encoding, and/or otherwise preparing data (e.g., media content data) for transmission by communication interface **302**.

Storage device **306** may include one or more data storage media, devices, or configurations and may employ any type, form, and combination of data storage media and/or device. For example, storage device **306** may include, but is not limited to, a hard drive, network drive, flash drive, magnetic disc, optical disc, random access memory ("RAM"), dynamic RAM ("DRAM"), other non-volatile and/or volatile data storage units, or a combination or sub-combination thereof. Electronic data, including data described herein, may be temporarily and/or permanently stored in storage device **306**. For example, data representative of one or more executable applications **310** configured to direct processor **304** to perform any of the operations described herein may be stored within storage device **306**. In some examples, data may be arranged in one or more databases residing within storage device **306**.

In some examples, media content access facility **102**, channel guide facility **104**, advertisement facility **106**, user interface facility **108**, interactive portal access facility **110**, and/or storage facility **112** may be implemented by or within one or more components of delivery subsystem **202**. For example, one or more applications **310** residing within storage device **306** may be configured to direct processor **304** to perform one or more processes or functions associated with media content access facility **102**, channel guide facility **104**, advertisement facility **106**, user interface facility **108**, and/or interactive portal access facility **110**. Likewise, storage facility **112** may be implemented by or within storage device **306**. For example, channel data **114**, advertisement data **116**, and/or user profile data **118** may be stored within storage device **306**.

FIG. **4** illustrates exemplary components of access subsystem **204**. As shown in FIG. **4**, access subsystem **204** may include a communication interface **402**, a processor **404**, a storage device **406**, and an input/output ("I/O") module **408** communicatively coupled one to another via a communication infrastructure **410**. The components of access subsystem **204** may communicate with one another, including sending data to and receiving data from one another, using any suitable communication technologies. Moreover, the components of access subsystem **204** may be implemented on any computing device or combination of computing devices, such as a set-top box, a communications device, a mobile device (e.g., a mobile phone device), a handheld device, a personal computer, a phone device (e.g., Verizon Hub device), a personal-digital assistant device, gaming device, a DVR device, a television device, a media player device, and/or any media content access device configured to perform one or more of the processes and/or operations described herein.

While an exemplary access subsystem **204** is shown in FIG. **4**, the components illustrated in FIG. **4** are not intended to be limiting. Additional or alternative components may be used in other embodiments. Components of the access subsystem **204** shown in FIG. **4** will now be described in additional detail.

Communication interface **402** may be configured to communicate with one or more computing devices, including delivery subsystem **202**. In particular, communication interface **402** may be configured to transmit and/or receive communication signals, media content, and/or data to/from delivery subsystem **202**. Examples of communication interface **402** include, without limitation, a wired network interface (such as a network interface card), a wireless network interface (such as a wireless network interface card), a modem, and any other suitable interface.

As mentioned, delivery subsystem **202** may transmit (e.g., broadcast, multicast, and/or narrowcast) data representative of one or more media content programs. Communication interface **402** may be configured to receive such data such that the data may be processed by access subsystem **204**. To this end, communication interface **402** may include any device, logic, and/or other technologies suitable for receiving signals, data streams, and/or data representative of media content. Communication interface **402** may be configured to interface with any suitable communication media, protocols, and formats, including any of those mentioned above.

In certain embodiments, delivery subsystem **202** may be configured to transmit and access subsystem **204** may be configured to receive data streams or signals including data representative of various media content programs in accordance with a transmission schedule. The transmission schedule may specify that particular media content programs are to be transmitted at scheduled transmission times and on certain media content channels. As used herein, the term "scheduled transmission time" or "scheduled transmission" may refer generally to any period of time during which a media content program is to be transmitted to access subsystem **204**.

Communication interface **402** may be configured to selectively identify, receive, and/or process appropriate data streams and/or media content programs at the scheduled transmission times and on the appropriate media content channels. For instance, in certain implementations communication interface **402** may include a tuner configured to selectively receive media content carried on a particular media content channel. The tuner may be tuned to a particular media content channel such that the media content carried on the media content channel is received and may be processed by access subsystem **204**.

In some examples, communication interface **402** may include multiple tuners such that media content carried on different media content channels may be concurrently received for processing by the access subsystem **204**. For example, communication interface **402** may include a first tuner configured to receive media content carried on an analog video signal and a second tuner configured to concurrently receive media content carried on a digital compressed signal.

While one or more tuners may be used to receive various types of media content-carrying signals transmitted by delivery subsystem **202**, additionally or alternatively, communication interface **402** may be configured to receive other types of signals (e.g., other types of media content carrying signals) from delivery subsystem **202** and/or one or more other sources without using a tuner. For example, delivery subsystem **202** may transmit digital streams of data packets (e.g., Internet Protocol ("IP") based data packets) that can be received without using a tuner. For such types of signals, communication interface **402** may receive and forward the signals directly to other components of access subsystem **204** without the signals going through a tuner. For an IP-based signal, for example, communication interface **402** may function as an IP receiver.

Processor **404** generally represents any type or form of processing unit capable of processing data or interpreting, executing, and/or directing execution of one or more of the instructions, processes, and/or operations described herein. Processor **404** may direct execution of operations in accordance with one or more applications **412** or other computer-executable instructions such as may be stored in storage device **406** or another computer-readable medium. As an example, processor **404** may be configured to process data, including demodulating, decoding, and/or parsing data (e.g., data representative of media content received from delivery subsystem **202** by communication interface **402**), and encoding and modulating data for transmission by communication interface **402**.

Storage device **406** may include one or more data storage media, devices, or configurations and may employ any type, form, and combination of data storage media and/or device. For example, storage device **406** may include, but is not limited to, a hard drive, network drive, flash drive, magnetic disc, optical disc, RAM, DRAM, other non-volatile and/or volatile data storage units, or a combination or sub-combination thereof. Electronic data, including data described herein, may be temporarily and/or permanently stored in storage device **406**. For example, data representative of one or more executable applications **412** configured to direct processor **404** to perform any of the operations described herein may be stored within storage device **406**. In some examples, data may be arranged in one or more databases residing within storage device **406**.

I/O module **408** may be configured to receive user input and provide user output and may include any hardware, firmware, software, or combination thereof supportive of input and output capabilities. For example, I/O module **408** may include one or more devices for capturing user input, including, but not limited to, a microphone, speech recognition technologies, keyboard or keypad, touch screen component (e.g., touch screen display), receiver (e.g., an RF or infrared receiver), and one or more input buttons.

I/O module **408** may include one or more devices for presenting output to a user, including, but not limited to, a graphics engine, a display (e.g., a display screen, one or more output drivers (e.g., display drivers), one or more audio speakers, and one or more audio drivers. In certain embodi-

ments, I/O module **408** is configured to provide graphical data to a display for presentation to a user. The graphical data may be representative of one or more GUIs, GUI views, media content views, channel guide views, and/or any other view as may serve a particular application.

In some examples, media content access facility **102**, channel guide facility **104**, advertisement facility **106**, user interface facility **108**, interactive portal access facility **110**, and/or storage facility **112** may be implemented by or within one or more components of access subsystem **204**. For example, one or more applications **412** residing within storage device **406** may be configured to direct processor **404** to perform one or more processes or functions associated with media content access facility **102**, channel guide facility **104**, advertisement facility **106**, user interface facility **108**, and/or interactive portal access facility **110**. Likewise, storage facility **112** may be implemented by or within storage device **406**. For example, channel data **114**, advertisement data **116** and/or user profile data **118** may be stored within storage device **406**.

Access subsystem **204** and/or components of access subsystem **204** may be implemented as may suit a particular application. FIG. **5** illustrates an exemplary media content access device **500** (or simply "device **500**") having access subsystem **204** implemented thereon. Device **500** may include one or more of the components of access subsystem **204** shown in FIG. **4** and may be configured to perform one or more of the processes and/or operations described herein. Device **500** may include, but is not limited to, a set-top box, a media content processing device, a communications device, a mobile device (e.g., a mobile phone device), a handheld device, a personal computer, a phone device (e.g., Verizon Hub device), a personal-digital assistant device, a gaming device, a DVR device, a television device, a media player device, and/or any device configured to perform one or more of the processes and/or operations described herein.

As shown in FIG. **5**, device **500** may include a communication interface **502** configured to receive media content (e.g., media content) and/or data (e.g., metadata, program guide data, and/or any other data associated with media content) in any acceptable format from delivery subsystem **202** or from any other suitable external source. Communication interface **502** may include any device, logic, and/or other technologies suitable for receiving signals and/or data representative of media content and/or other types of media content or data. Communication interface **502** may be configured to interface with any suitable communication media, protocols, and formats, including any of those mentioned above.

Device **500** may also include a receiver **504** configured to receive user input signals from a user input device **506**. User input device **506** may include, for example, a remote control device or any other suitable input device and may be configured to communicate with receiver **504** via a wireless link (e.g., by infrared signaling), electrical connection, or any other suitable communication link.

FIG. **6** illustrates an exemplary remote control device **600** that may implement user input device **506**. In some examples, remote control device **600** may be configured to facilitate a user controlling operations of access subsystem **204**. For instance, a program guide button **602** may be configured to evoke a presentation of a program guide GUI on a display. A left button **604**, a right button **606**, an up button **608**, a down button **610**, and a select button **612** ("OK" button **612**) may be included and configured to facilitate a user evoking and/or navigating through various views, options, and GUIs displayed by a display. Remote control device **600** is merely illustrative of one of the many different types of user input devices that may be used to provide input commands (e.g., channel guide browsing commands) to access subsystem **204**.

Returning to FIG. **5**, device **500** may include a graphics engine **508** and an output driver **510**. Graphics engine **508** may be configured to generate graphics to be provided to output driver **510**, which may be configured to interface with or drive a display **512**. Output driver **510** may provide output signals to display **512**, the output signals including graphical content (e.g., media content, program guide media content, user interfaces, and/or advertisement views) generated by graphics engine **508** and to be presented by display **512** for experiencing by a user. Graphics engine **508** and output driver **510** may include any combination of hardware, software, and/or firmware as may serve a particular application.

Data store **514** may include one or more data storage media, devices, or configurations and may employ any type, form, and combination of storage media. For example, data store **514** may include, but is not limited to, a hard drive, network drive, flash drive, magnetic disc, optical disc, or other non-volatile storage unit. Media content and/or data associated with media content may be temporarily and/or permanently stored in data store **514**.

Data store **514** is shown to be included within device **500** in FIG. **5** for illustrative purposes only. It will be understood that data store **514** may additionally or alternatively be located external to device **500**.

Data store **514** may include one or more live cache buffers **516**. Live cache buffer **516** may additionally or alternatively reside in memory **518** or in a storage device external to device **500**. In some examples, media content data may be temporarily stored in live cache buffer **516** to facilitate recording of media content and/or presentation of media content in one or more trick play modes.

Device **500** may include memory **518**. Memory **518** may include, but is not limited to, FLASH memory, RAM, DRAM, other suitable computer-readable media, or any combination or sub-combination thereof. In some examples, one or more applications **520** configured to run on or otherwise be executed by device **500** may reside in memory **518**.

Device **500** may include one or more tuners **522**. Tuner **522** may be configured to selectively receive media content carried on a particular media content channel such that the media content may be processed by device **500**. In some examples, media content received by tuner **522** may be temporarily buffered, or stored, in the live cache buffer **516**. If there are multiple tuners **522**, there may be a live cache buffer **516** corresponding to each of the tuners **522**.

While tuner **522** may be used to receive certain media content-carrying signals transmitted by delivery subsystem **202**, device **500** may be configured to receive other types of content signals (including media content signals and/or program guide data signals) from delivery subsystem **202** and/or one or more other sources without using a tuner. For example, delivery subsystem **202** may transmit digital streams of data packets (e.g., Internet Protocol ("IP") based data packets) that can be received without using a tuner. For such types of content signals, communication interface **502** may receive and forward the signals directly to other components of device **500** (e.g., processor **524** or signal processing unit **526**, described in more detail below) without the signals going through tuner **522**. For an IP-based signal, for example, signal processing unit **526** may function as an IP receiver.

Device **500** may include at least one processor, such as processor **524**, configured to control and/or perform one or more operations of device **500**. Device **500** may also include a signal processing unit **526** configured to process incoming media content. Signal processing unit **526** may be configured,

for example, to demodulate and parse encoded digital media content. In some examples, device **500** may include one or more signal processing units **526** corresponding to each of the tuners **522**.

As mentioned, system **100** may generate and launch a GUI for display to a user. Exemplary views of GUIs that may be provided by system **100** for display will now be described in more detail in reference to FIGS. **7-18**.

FIG. **7** illustrates an exemplary view of a channel guide GUI **700** (or simply "GUI **700**"). GUI **700** may include a graphical representation of a channel guide **702** and one or more graphical representations of one or more advertisements **704** (e.g., advertisements **704-1** and **704-2**) displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**. As shown in FIG. **7**, channel guide **702** may include a two-dimensional grid matrix view of a plurality of channel icons, which are associated with a plurality of media content channels. For example, channel icon **706-1** is associated with a media content channel known as "CNN," and channel icon **706-2** is associated with a media content channel known as "Cartoon Network." In FIG. **7**, channel icons are arranged by rows and columns to form the two-dimensional grid matrix view.

In addition to being associated with a media content channel, each channel icon in channel guide **702** may be associated with and configured to function as a launching point for an interactive portal associated with the corresponding media content channel. Accordingly, a user selection of a channel icon in channel guide **702** may cause system **100** to access an interactive portal associated with the selected channel icon.

As an example, when a user provides input indicating a selection of channel icon **706-1** associated with the HBO media content channel, system **100** may detect the selection and access an interactive portal associated with the "HBO" media content channel. One or more GUIs associated with the interactive portal may be displayed to the user. The interactive portal and/or GUIs associated with the interactive portal may include any of the content disclosed above, including content that is controlled by the media content provider providing content for distribution via the HBO media content channel.

Advertisements **704** displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700** may include any of the advertisement content described above. In certain examples, advertisements **704** may be personalized to a user as described above. In certain embodiments, system **100** may be configured to automatically select and insert one or more advertisements **704** in GUI **700** when the GUI **700** is launched. Accordingly, when a user provides user input configured to trigger a launch of GUI **700**, upon launch of GUI **700** the user may be provided with and able to view advertisements **704** displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**.

As shown in FIG. **7**, GUI **700** may include one or more visual prompts **708** (e.g., visual prompts **708-1** and **708-2**), which may be associated with advertisements **704** and/or with a virtual store through which products and/or services may be acquired by a user. As an example, visual prompt **708-1** may be configured to inform a user of a specific input that may be provided by the user to access a virtual store through which products and/or services may be acquired by a user. In FIG. **7**, the specific input configured to initiate access to the virtual store comprises a specific button on a user input device such as remote control device **600** (e.g., a button labeled "1" on remote control device **600**). The virtual store may include one or more tools that may be utilized by the user to acquire (e.g., purchase, rent, subscribe to) media content such as videos, music, and games, or to acquire any other product or service offered in the virtual store. Exemplary GUI views that are related to a purchase of a media content program in a virtual store are described further below.

As another example, visual prompt **708-2** may be configured to inform a user of a specific input that may be provided by the user to access more advertisements **704**. In FIG. **7**, the specific input configured to initiate access to additional advertisements **704** comprises a specific button on a user input device such as remote control device **600** (e.g., a button labeled "2" on remote control device **600**). In response to a user selection of the specific button, system **100** may display additional advertisements **704** in GUI **700**. This may include scrolling a strip of advertisements **704** such that one or more of the currently displayed advertisements **704** is moved off-screen out of the display view and one or more other advertisements **704** is moved on-screen within the display view. FIG. **8** illustrates GUI **700** with a different advertisement **704-3** displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**. As shown, advertisement **704-3** is configured to promote a bundled service subscription offering (e.g., a bundled subscription package including television, internet access, and telephone subscriber services). A visual prompt **708-3** is also displayed in conjunction with advertisement **704-3**. As shown, visual prompt **708-3** may be configured to inform a user of a specific input that may be provided by the user to access more information about the offer specified by advertisement **704-3**. In FIG. **8**, the specific input configured to initiate access to more information related to advertisement **704-3** comprises a specific button on a user input device such as remote control device **600** (e.g., a button labeled "1" on remote control device **600**).

In certain embodiments, the advertisement content shown in FIGS. **8** and **9** may represent advertisement content that may be displayed in GUI **700** during operation in a "launch mode," which may be the mode of operation associated with GUI **700** immediately following a launch of GUI **700** for display. In "launch mode," a first category of advertisement content may be displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**. In certain examples, the first category of content may include advertisements that are selected from a general pool of advertisements without restriction to advertisements that are specific to a particular media content channel. In some examples, the first category of advertisement content may be provided by an entity operating delivery subsystem **202** (e.g., a service carrier).

System **100** may be configure to transition from "launch mode" to another mode of operation in response to an occurrence of a predefined event. For example, system **100** may transition from "launch mode" to a "navigation mode" in response to a user navigation event within channel guide **702**. To illustrate, during "launch mode" user navigation input may be received indicating a desire of a user to navigate within channel guide **702**. The navigation may include activating a selector within channel guide **702** and/or moving a graphical representation of the selector within channel guide **702**. As shown in FIGS. **7** and **8**, for example, a graphical representation of a selector **710** may be positioned at channel icon **706-1**. Selector **710** may indicate one or more navigational commands that may be input by a user to navigate selector **710** within channel guide **710**. In FIGS. **7** and **8**, for instance, selector **710** includes directional arrows indicating directions in which selector **710** may be moved in channel guide **702** in response to user input associated with the directional arrows. In the illustrated example, selector **701** may be moved left when left arrow button **604** of remote control device **600** is selected, right when right arrow button **606** of remote control device **600** is selected, and down when down arrow button **610** of remote control device **600** is selected.

In certain embodiments, selector **710** may be in an inactive state when GUI **700** is operating in "launch mode." In FIGS. **7** and **8**, for example, selector **710** is inactive and includes a visual indicator indicating a specific input that may be input by a user to activate selector **710** for navigation within channel guide **702**. In the illustrated example, the specific input comprises a specific button on a user input device such as remote control device **600** (e.g., the "OK" button **612** on remote control device **600**).

When a user inputs the specific input to activate selector **710**, system **100** may activate selector **710** such that it becomes navigable within channel guide **702**. In addition, system **100** may detect the activation of selector **710** as an occurrence of a user navigation event within channel guide **702** in GUI **700** and respond by transitioning GUI **700** from operation in "launch mode" to operation in "navigation mode." In "navigation mode," a second category of content may be displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**. In certain examples, the second category of content may include content that is selected from a pool of content that is specific to a particular media content channel, such as information, advertisements, and/or other content specific to the media content channel and/or the media content provider associated with the media content channel. In some examples, the second category of content may be provided by the media content provider providing media content for distribution via the media content channel represented by a channel icon that is selected by selector **710** in channel guide **702**.

To illustrate, FIG. **9** illustrates a view of GUI **900** after selector **710** has been activated and operation has been transitioned from "launch mode" to "navigation mode." Selector **710** is now navigable and positioned at channel icon **706-1**. Accordingly, content specific to the HBO media content channel associated with channel icon **706-1** has been selected and displayed together with channel guide **702** in GUI **700**. In FIG. **9**, the content is labeled as channel content **902** and includes information (e.g., an image, cast information, director information, and a description) about a media content program that is or will be accessible via the HBO media content channel. Channel content **902** may include other information and/or content specific to the media content channel associated with the selected channel icon in other embodiments.

In the above-described transition from "launch mode" to "navigation mode" in response to a detection of a user navigation event such as an activation of selector **710** in channel guide **702**, advertisements **704** displayed together with channel guide **702** during "launch mode" may be replaced with channel content **902** displayed together with channel guide **702** during "navigation mode." The replacement may be accomplished in any suitable way, including actual replacement of visual content data in rendering GUI **700**, overlaying or adjusting layers of visual content in GUI **700**, resizing of visual content in GUI **700**, and/or any other operations that may effectuate a full or partial and visually discernible replacement of visual content in a display of GUI **700**.

As shown in FIG. **9**, GUI **700** may include a visual prompt **904** displayed in association with channel content **902**. Visual prompt **904** may be configured to inform a user of a specific input that may be provided to initiate access to information about one or more deals associated with the channel content **902**, the media content channel corresponding to the selected channel icon **706-1**, and/or the media content provider providing content for distribution via the media content channel. For example, the deals may include, without limitation, deals for purchasing media content and/or service packages from the media content provider. In FIG. **9**, the specific input configured to initiate access to information about the deals comprises a specific button on a user input device such as remote control device **600** (e.g., a button labeled "2" on remote control device **600**).

In "navigation mode," when a user navigates selector **710** to another channel icon in channel guide **702**, channel content **902** may be updated to include content that is specific to the media content channel associated with the newly selected channel icon. For example, when a user navigation event causes selector **710** to be moved from channel icon **706-1** to channel icon **706-2**, channel content **902** specific to the HBO media content channel associated with channel icon **706-1** may be replaced with channel content **902** specific to the Cartoon Network media content channel associated with channel icon **706-2**.

In "navigation mode," a user may select the "OK" button **612** of remote control device **600**, or provide another specified input in other embodiments, to direct system **100** to access an interactive portal associated with the media content channel corresponding to the channel icon selected by selector **710**. For example, while selector **710** is at channel icon **706-1** as shown in FIG. **9**, the user may select the "OK" button **612** of remote control device **600**, and system **100** may respond by accessing the interactive portal for the HBO media content channel associated with channel icon **706-1**.

Returning now to FIG. **7**, when a user inputs the user input specified by visual prompt **708-1**, system **100** may detect the user input and access a virtual store, which may include generating and providing one or more virtual store GUIs for display to the user. FIGS. **10-15** illustrate exemplary views of virtual store GUIs that may be displayed.

FIG. **10** illustrates an exemplary virtual store GUI **1000** in which a plurality of selectable options are presented to a user. As shown in FIG. **10**, the options may be associated with categories of products and/or services that are available for acquisition by the user in the virtual store. As shown, GUI **1000** may include a set of options **1002** that includes a "games" option, a "music" option, a "video" option, a "channels" option, and a "hardware & accessories" option from which the user may select. As shown in FIG. **10**, a selector **1004** may be positioned at the "video" option. In response, a set of sub-options **1006** to the "video" option may be displayed in GUI **1000**.

In response to a user selection of the "video" option in FIG. **10**, a GUI **1100** shown in FIG. **11** may be displayed. As shown in FIG. **11**, GUI **1100** may include a plurality of selectable options **1102**, which may include a "purchased" option for accessing videos that have been purchased by the user, a "watch list" option for accessing videos that are included in a user's media content watch list, a "featured" option for accessing "featured" videos, a "new arrivals" option for accessing "new arrival" videos, a "what's hot" option for accessing popular videos, and any "categories" option for accessing videos by category. As shown in FIG. **11**, selector **1004** may be positioned at the "featured" option. Accordingly, a set of graphical representations **1104** of featured media content programs such as videos may be displayed in GUI **1100**. The graphical representations may include images representative of the videos (e.g., movies).

When the "featured" option is selected in FIG. **11**, a GUI **1200** shown in FIG. **12** may be displayed. As shown in FIG. **12**, GUI **1200** may include graphical representations **1202** of "featured" media content from which a user may select one or more media content programs. In the illustrated example, the graphical representations **1202** of media content depict physical objects associated with videos such as movies. For

example, the graphical representations may depict a video disc (e.g., a DVD or Blu-Ray disc), a video disc case (e.g., a DVD or Blu-Ray disc case), and/or any other tangible media on which video content is stored. GUI **1200** may also include graphical representations of information about the featured media content.

When a media content program represented in FIG. **1200** is selected, GUI **1300** shown in FIG. **13** may be displayed. As shown in FIG. **13**, GUI may include additional information **1302** about the selected media content program. In addition, GUI **1300** may include a set of selectable options **1304** associated with the selected media content program. In the illustrated example, the set of options **1304** includes a "rate this" option for providing a rating of the selected media content program, a "more like this" option for accessing information about media content that is similar to the selected media content program, a rental option for renting the media content program, a purchase option for purchasing the media content program, a "bundle deals" option for accessing information about bundle deals that include the media content program and one or more other media content programs, and an "add to watch list" option for adding and selected media content program to a media content watch list.

In response to a user selection of the "purchase" option shown in FIG. **13**, a GUI **1400** shown in FIG. **14** may be displayed. As shown in FIG. **14**, GUI **1400** may be configured to provide the user with an opportunity to confirm a purchase of the selected media content program or to cancel a purchase of the selected media content program.

If the user confirms the purchase of the selected media content program in FIG. **14**, a GUI **1500** shown in FIG. **15** may be displayed. As shown in FIG. **15**, GUI **1500** may provide the user with an opportunity to confirm the purchase of the selected media content program and/or to continue shopping in the virtual store.

The examples of GUIs associated with a virtual store described above are illustrative only. Other virtual store GUIs may be displayed to facilitate user acquisition of one or more products and/or services via the virtual store. The virtual store may be conveniently accessed by the user from a launching point within channel guide GUI **700** as described above or from a launching point within another channel guide GUI.

FIG. **16** illustrates another exemplary channel guide GUI **1600** (or simply "GUI **1600**") that may be provided for display to a user. As shown in FIG. **16**, GUI **1600** may include an exemplary graphical representation of a channel guide **1602** that includes a three-dimensional grid matrix view of a plurality of channel icons associated with a plurality of media content channels. The channel icons may be arranged in the three-dimensional gird matrix in a manner that depicts channel icons at various depths away from a display screen surface. For example, channel icons may be arranged by rows and columns to form the three-dimensional grid matrix view in which the rows are depicted at different depths from the display screen surface. The rows may include generally horizontal rows of channel icons with a foremost horizontal row positioned at a forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix and one or more other horizontal rows positioned at progressively increasing depths from the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix. The horizontal rows of channel icons arranged in the three-dimensional grid matrix may visually taper in width with increased depth from the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix.

In certain embodiments, GUI **1600** may further include a graphical representation of a stage **1604** positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix. In FIG. **16**, the graphical representation of stage **1604** comprises a graphical representation of a three-dimensional stage or stage surface positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons.

As shown in FIG. **16**, in certain examples, the first horizontal row of channel icons that is positioned foremost in the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons may be positioned and depicted as being "on-stage" (i.e., positioned on stage **1604**). The one or more other horizontal rows of channel icons may be positioned and depicted as being "off-stage" (i.e., positioned off of stage **1604**).

In certain embodiments, GUI **1600** may further include a visual depiction of a spotlight effect on stage **1604**. To illustrate, FIG. **17** shows an exemplary view of GUI **1600** with a stage spotlight effect depicted therein. The spotlight effect may be configured to visually accentuate the channel icons positioned on stage **1604** as compared to the channel icons positioned off of stage **1604**. For example, the on-stage channel icons may be "spotlighted" by increasing the brightness and/or other visual attribute(s) of the on-stage attributes as compared to the visual attributes of other channel icons positioned off-stage.

In certain examples, GUI **1600** may include one or more graphical representations of one or more reflections of one or more channel icons positioned on-stage. FIG. **17** illustrates exemplary graphical representations of reflections **1702** of the on-stage channel icons. The reflections may help to further accentuate the on-stage channel icons.

In addition to being associated with a media content channel, each channel icon in channel guide **1602** may be associated with and configured to function as a launching point for an interactive portal associated with the corresponding media content channel, as described above. Accordingly, a user selection of a channel icon in channel guide **1602** may cause system **100** to access an interactive portal associated with the selected channel icon. System **100** may detect the user selection of the channel icon and respond by accessing the interactive portal.

GUI **1600** may provide one or more navigation tools that may be utilized by a user to navigation within channel guide **1602**. For example, a user may utilize directional arrow buttons of remote control device **600** or other input device to browse from channel icon to channel icon in channel guide **1602**. In addition, the user may utilize a selection button of remote control device **600** or other input device to select a channel icon and thereby access an interactive portal associated with the media content channel corresponding to the selected channel icon.

Channel icons may be visually moved within channel guide **1602** in response to a user navigation event in channel guide **1602**. To illustrate, FIG. **16** shows a selector **1610** positioned at a channel icon associated with a media content channel known as "ABC." A user may select down arrow button **610** of remote control device **600** to navigate away from the channel icon associated with the "ABC" media content channel. System **100** may detect the user navigation event and respond by directionally scrolling the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to stage **1604**. For example, each horizontal row of channel icons may be moved away from the display screen in depth-wise direction, the backmost horizontal row of channel icons may be moved out of the display, the second backmost horizontal row of channel icons may replace the backmost horizontal row of channel icons, and so on. The first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix may be moved off of state **1604**. A new horizontal row of channel icons may be introduced into the display as the

foremost horizontal row of channel icons at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix and moved onto stage **1604**.

In any of the ways described above in reference to GUI **700**, content may be displayed together with channel guide **1602** in a GUI. To illustrate, FIG. **18** shows an exemplary channel guide GUI **1800** (or simply "GUI **1800**") that includes a graphical representation of channel guide **1602** and a graphical representation of advertisement **704-3** displayed together with channel guide **1604** in GUI **1800**. This is illustrative only. Any advertisement content described herein may be displayed together with channel guide **1602** in GUI **1800**. As shown in FIG. **18**, GUI **1800** may include visual prompts **708-2** and **708-3**, which may be configured to function as described above in reference to GUI **700**.

In any of the ways described above, in certain embodiments, system **100** may be configured to automatically select and insert one or more advertisements **704** in GUI **1800** when GUI **1800** is launched. Accordingly, upon launch of GUI **1800** after a user provides user input configured to trigger the launch of GUI **1800**, the user may be able to view advertisements **704**, such as advertisement **704-3**, displayed together with channel guide **1602** in GUI **1800**.

In certain embodiments, the advertisement content shown in FIG. **18** (e.g., advertisement **704-3**) may represent advertisement content that may be displayed in GUI **1800** during operation in a "launch mode," which may be the mode of operation associated with GUI **1800** immediately following a launch of GUI **1800** for display. In "launch mode," a first category of advertisement content may be displayed together with channel guide **1602** in GUI **1800**. As described above, the first category of content may include advertisements that are selected from a general pool of advertisements without restriction to advertisements that are specific to a particular media content channel.

System **100** may be configure to transition from "launch mode" to another mode of operation in response to an occurrence of a predefined event. For example, system **100** may transition from "launch mode" to a "navigation mode" in response to a user navigation event within channel guide **1602**. To illustrate, during "launch mode" user navigation input may be received indicating a desire of a user to navigate within channel guide **1602**. The navigation may include activating a selector within channel guide **1602**, moving channel icons within channel guide **1602**, and/or moving a graphical representation of the selector within channel guide **1602**.

System **100** may detect an occurrence of a user navigation event within channel guide **1602** in GUI **1800** and respond by transitioning GUI **1800** from operation in "launch mode" to operation in "navigation mode." In "navigation mode," a second category of content may be displayed together with channel guide **1602** in GUI **1800**. As described above, the second category of content may include content that is selected from a pool of content that is specific to a particular media content channel, such as information, advertisements, and/or other content specific to the media content channel and/or the media content provider associated with the media content channel.

In the above-described transition from "launch mode" to "navigation mode" in response to a detection of a user navigation event in channel guide **1602**, advertisements **704** displayed together with channel guide **1602** during "launch mode" may be replaced with channel-specific content displayed together with channel guide **1602** during "navigation mode." The replacement may be accomplished in any suitable way, including in any of the ways described herein.

FIG. **19** illustrates an exemplary channel guide user interface advertising method **1900** according to principles described herein. While FIG. **19** illustrates exemplary steps according to one embodiment, other embodiments may omit, add to, reorder, and/or modify any of the steps shown in FIG. **19**. In certain embodiments, one or more of the steps shown in FIG. **19** may be performed by system **100**, delivery subsystem **202**, access subsystem **204**, and/or device **500**.

In step **1902**, a channel guide GUI is launched for display. Step **1902** may be performed in any of the ways described herein. The GUI may include a graphical representation of a channel guide and a graphical representation of an advertisement displayed together with the graphical representation of the channel guide in the GUI. Exemplary views of such a GUI are illustrated in FIGS. **7**, **8**, and **18**.

In step **1904**, a user navigation event is detected within the channel guide displayed in the GUI. Step **1904** may be performed in any of the ways described herein, and the user navigation event may include any of the exemplary user navigation events described herein.

In step **1906**, the graphical representation of the advertisement is replaced with a graphical representation of content specific to a media content channel for display together with the channel guide in the GUI. Step **1906** may be performed in any of the ways described herein, and the content specific to the media content channel may include any of the channel-specific content described herein. An exemplary view of such a GUI is illustrated in FIG. **9**. In certain examples, the replacement of the advertisement may be associated with a transition from a "launch mode" of the GUI to a "navigation mode" of the GUI as described above.

In step **1908**, a user selection of a channel icon in the channel guide is detected. Step **1908** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.

In step **1910**, an interactive portal associated with a media content channel corresponding to the selected channel icon is accessed in response to the detected user selection. Step **1910** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.

In the preceding description, various exemplary embodiments have been described with reference to the accompanying drawings. It will, however, be evident that various modifications and changes may be made thereto, and additional embodiments may be implemented, without departing from the scope of the invention as set forth in the claims that follow. For example, certain features of one embodiment described herein may be combined with or substituted for features of another embodiment described herein. The description and drawings are accordingly to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

launching, by a media content access system, a graphical user interface for display, the graphical user interface initially including

a graphical representation of a channel guide presented relative to a graphical representation of a stage, the graphical representation of the channel guide comprising a three-dimensional grid matrix of a plurality of channel icons, the plurality of channel icons arranged in both a plurality of horizontal rows and a plurality of columns perpendicular to the horizontal rows, the plurality of channel icons representing a plurality of media content channels through which media content is accessible by the media content access system and arranged in the plurality of horizontal rows in the three-dimensional grid matrix with a first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at a

forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix and a plurality of other horizontal rows of channel icons positioned at progressively increasing depths from the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix, and

detecting, by the media content access system, a user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface, the user navigation event comprising a command to scroll the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage; and

replacing, by the media content access system in response to the user navigation event, the first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix by directionally scrolling the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage.

2. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

transitioning, by the media content access system in response to another user navigation event, from a launch mode of operation to a navigation mode of operation for the graphical user interface.

3. The method of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of horizontal rows of channel icons visually tapers with increased depth in the three-dimensional grid matrix.

4. The method of claim **1**, wherein:

the stage is positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix;

the first horizontal row of channel icons is initially positioned on the stage; and

the plurality of other horizontal rows of channel icons are initially positioned off of the stage.

5. The method of claim **4**, wherein the graphical representation of the stage includes a reflection of at least one of the channel icons positioned on the stage.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the directionally scrolling comprises:

moving the first horizontal row of channel icons off of the stage; and

moving a new horizontal row of channel icons onto the stage.

7. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

detecting, by the media content access system, a user selection of a channel icon within the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons displayed in the graphical user interface; and

accessing, by the media content access system, an interactive portal associated with a media content channel within the plurality of content channels and corresponding to the selected channel icon.

8. The method of claim **1**, wherein:

the graphical user interface further includes a graphical representation of an advertisement displayed together with the channel guide in the graphical user interface;

the advertisement is selected for display from a pool of advertisements without restriction to a media content channel within the plurality of media content channels; and

content specific to the media content channel within the plurality of media content channels is selected from a pool of content with restriction to content that is specific to the media content channel within the plurality of media content channels.

9. The method of claim **1**, embodied as computer-executable instructions on at least one tangible computer-readable medium.

10. The method of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of channel icons are arranged in the plurality of horizontal rows in the three-dimensional grid matrix such that each horizontal row in the plurality of horizontal rows contains multiple channel icons.

11. The method of claim **1**, wherein a channel icon included in the plurality of channel icons comprises at least one of a media content provider logo and a media content channel logo.

12. A system comprising:

a media content access facility configured to access media content distributed over one or more of a plurality of media content channels;

a channel guide facility configured to maintain channel data representing the plurality of media content channels;

and

a user interface facility communicatively coupled to the media content access facility and the channel guide facility, the user interface facility configured to

access and utilize the channel data to generate and launch a graphical user interface for display, the graphical user interface including

a graphical representation of a channel guide presented relative to a graphical representation of a stage, the graphical representation of the channel guide comprising a three-dimensional grid matrix of a plurality of channel icons arranged in both a plurality of horizontal rows and a plurality of columns perpendicular to the horizontal rows, the plurality of channel icons representing the plurality of media content channels and arranged in the plurality of horizontal rows in the three-dimensional grid matrix with a first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at a forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix and a plurality of other horizontal rows of channel icons positioned at progressively increasing depths from the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix, and

detect a user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface, the user navigation event comprising a command to scroll the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage, and

replace, in response to the user navigation event, the first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix by directionally scrolling the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage.

13. The system of claim **12**, further comprising an interactive portal access facility communicatively coupled to the user interface facility and configured to access an interactive portal associated with a media content channel within the plurality of media content channels.

14. The system of claim **13**, wherein:

the user interface facility detects a user selection of a channel icon within the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons displayed in the graphical user interface; and

the interactive portal facility accesses the interactive portal associated with the media content channel within the plurality of media content channels, the media content channel corresponding to the selected channel icon.

15. The system of claim **12**, wherein the user interface facility is further configured to transition from a launch mode of operation to a navigation mode of operation for the graphical user interface in response to another user navigation event.

16. The system of claim **12**, wherein:

the stage is positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix;

the first horizontal row of channel icons is initially positioned on the stage; and

the plurality of other horizontal rows of channel icons is initially positioned off of the stage.

17. The system of claim **12**, implemented on a set-top box device configured to access a subscriber television service.

18. A system comprising:

a media content access facility configured to access media content distributed over one or more of a plurality of media content channels;

a channel guide facility configured to maintain channel data representing the plurality of media content channels;

a user interface facility communicatively coupled to the media content access facility and the channel guide facility, the user interface facility configured to access and utilize the channel data to generate and launch a graphical user interface for display, the graphical user interface including

a graphical representation of a channel guide presented relative to a graphical representation of a stage, the graphical representation of the channel guide comprising channel icons representing the plurality of media content channels, the channel icons arranged to form a three-dimensional grid matrix view of the channel icons in both a plurality of horizontal rows and a plurality of columns perpendicular to the horizontal rows, the plurality of horizontal rows of channel icons comprising a first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at a forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix view and a plurality of other horizontal rows of channel icons positioned at progressively increasing depths from the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix view;

wherein the user interface facility is further configured to:

detect a user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface, the user navigation event comprising a command to scroll the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage, and

replace, in response to the user navigation event, the first horizontal row of channel icons positioned at the forefront of the three-dimensional grid matrix by directionally scrolling the three-dimensional grid matrix of channel icons relative to the stage.

19. The system of claim **18**, wherein:

the graphical user interface further includes a graphical representation of an advertisement displayed together with the channel guide in the graphical user interface; and

the user interface facility

detects another user navigation event within the channel guide displayed in the graphical user interface, and

replaces, in response to the another user navigation event, the graphical representation of the advertisement with a graphical representation of content specific to a media content channel within the plurality of media content channels.

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