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(54) PROGRAM SUBSTITUTION

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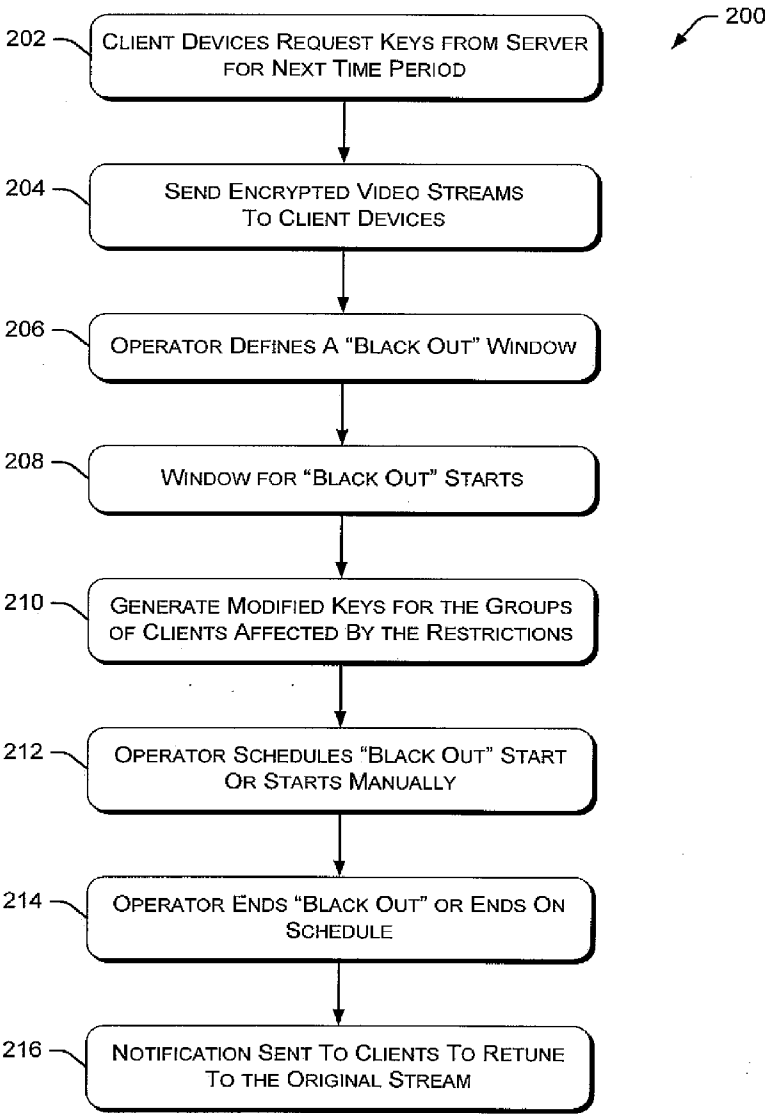
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Multiple keys are distributed to multiple clients. The keys provide access to media content. A group of clients are identified to receive substituted media content during a predetermined time period. Modified keys are generated that identify the substituted media content and the predetermined time period. The modified keys are distributed to the group of clients. The modified keys cause the group of clients to receive the substituted media content during the predetermined time period.



GOOGLE EXHIBIT 1006

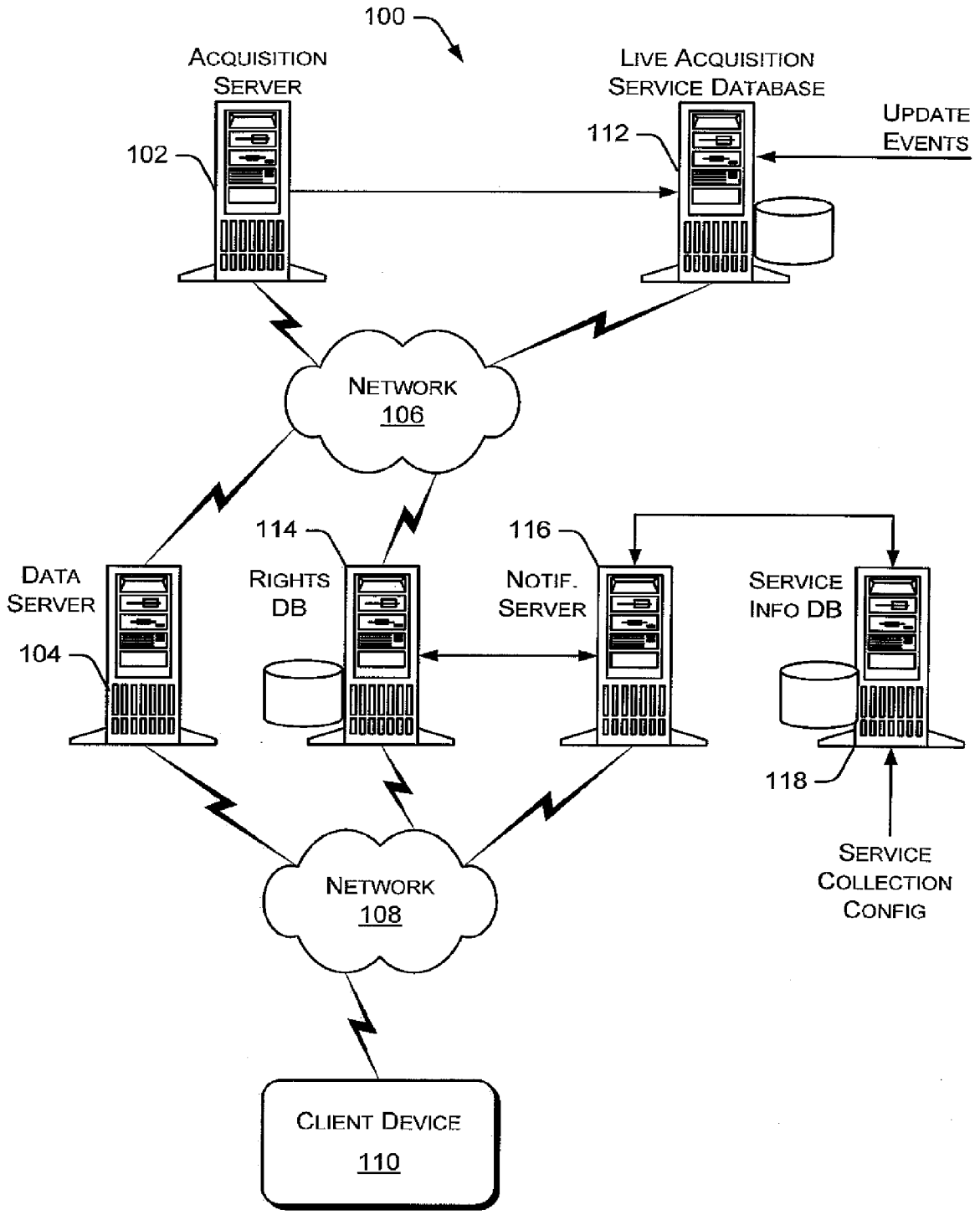

100
ACQUISITION SERVER
102
LIVE ACQUISITION SERVICE DATABASE
112
UPDATE EVENTS
NETWORK 106
DATA SERVER
104
114
RIGHTS DB
116
NOTIF. SERVER
SERVICE INFO DB
118
SERVICE COLLECTION CONFIG
NETWORK 108
CLIENT DEVICE 110

Fig. 1

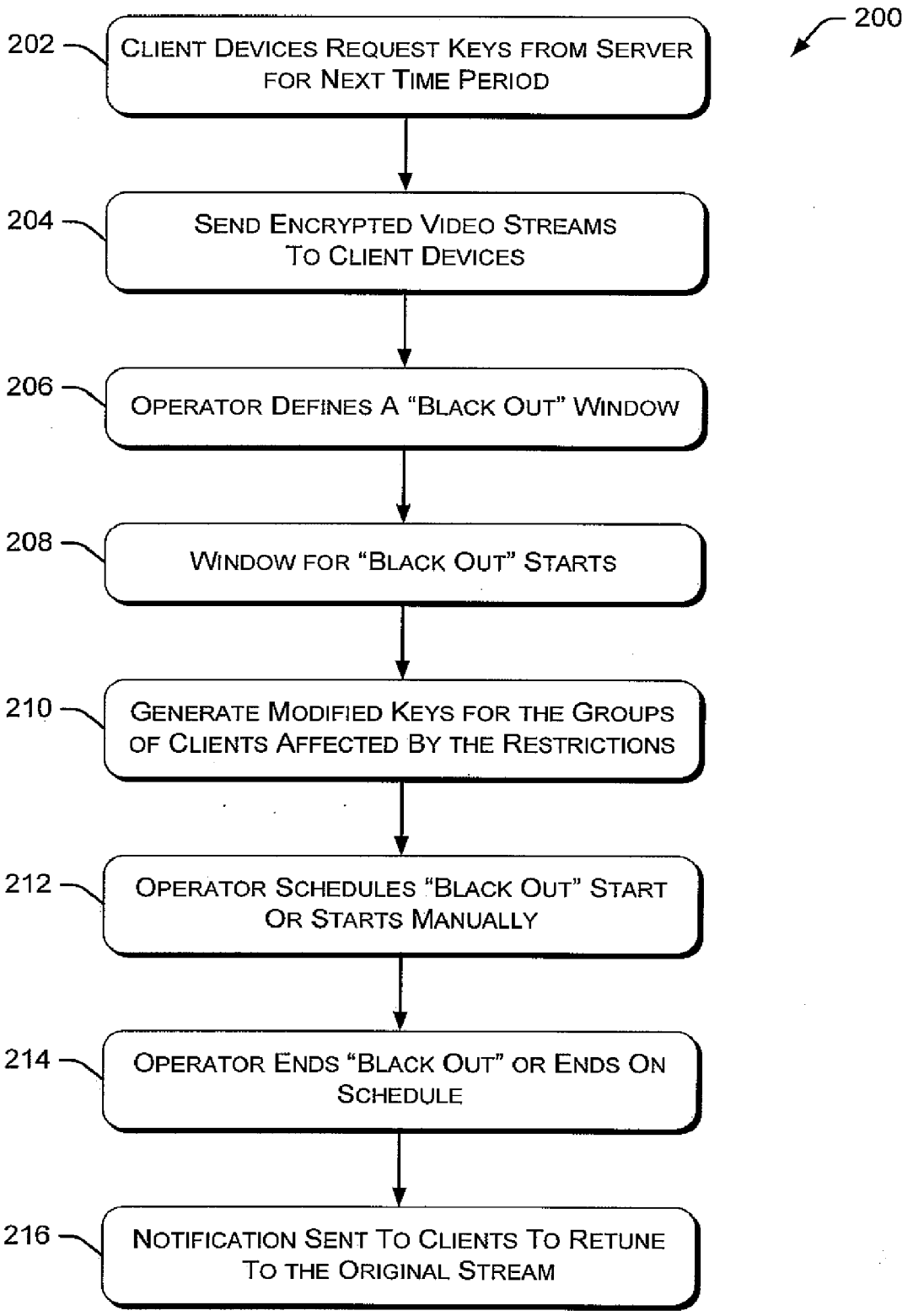

200
202
CLIENT DEVICES REQUEST KEYS FROM SERVER FOR NEXT TIME PERIOD
204
SEND ENCRYPTED VIDEO STREAMS TO CLIENT DEVICES
206
OPERATOR DEFINES A "BLACK OUT" WINDOW
208
WINDOW FOR "BLACK OUT" STARTS
210
GENERATE MODIFIED KEYS FOR THE GROUPS OF CLIENTS AFFECTED BY THE RESTRICTIONS
212
OPERATOR SCHEDULES "BLACK OUT" START OR STARTS MANUALLY
214
OPERATOR ENDS "BLACK OUT" OR ENDS ON SCHEDULE
216
NOTIFICATION SENT TO CLIENTS TO RETUNE TO THE ORIGINAL STREAM

Fig. 2

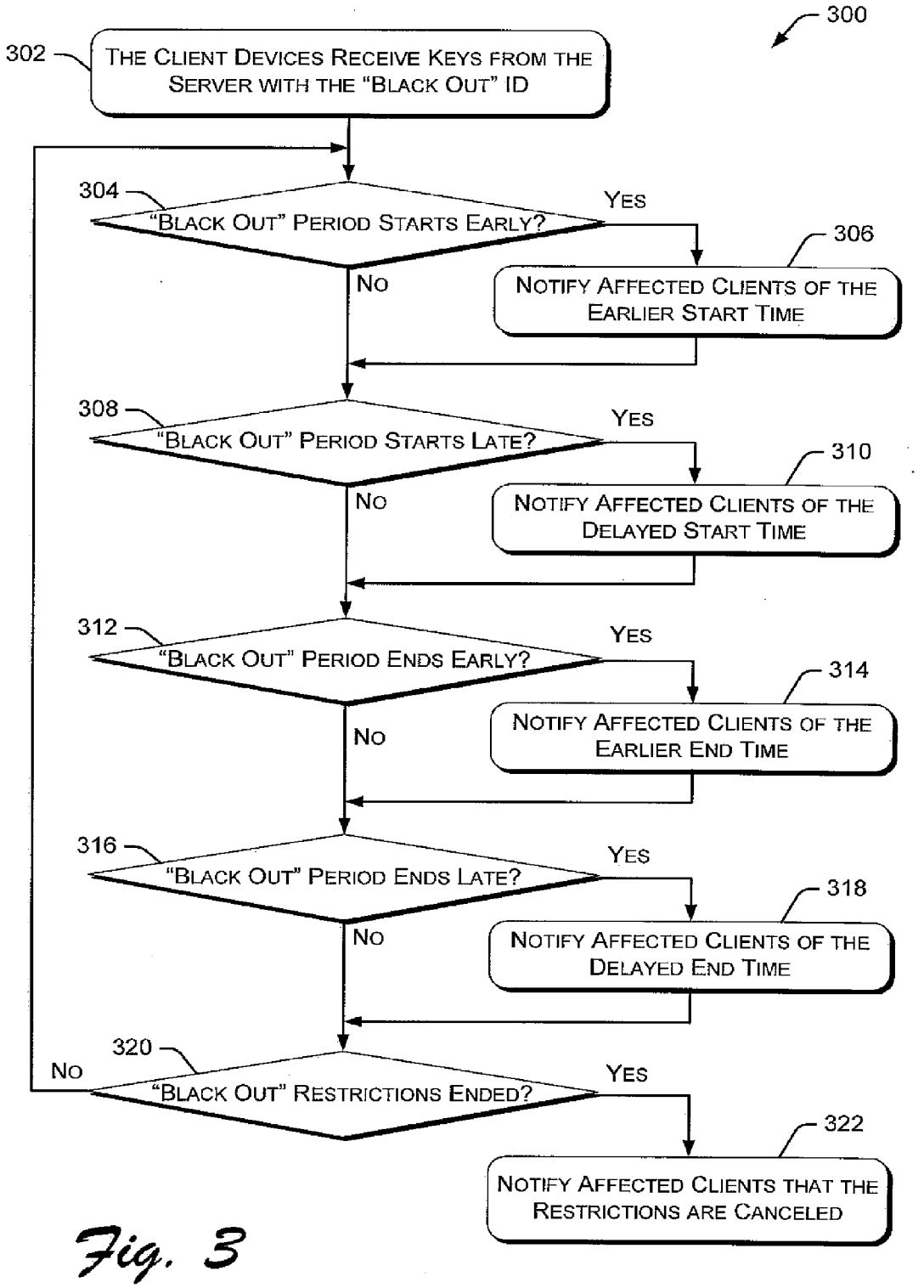

300
302
THE CLIENT DEVICES RECEIVE KEYS FROM THE SERVER WITH THE "BLACK OUT" ID
304
"BLACK OUT" PERIOD STARTS EARLY?
YES
NO
306
NOTIFY AFFECTED CLIENTS OF THE EARLIER START TIME
308
"BLACK OUT" PERIOD STARTS LATE?
YES
NO
310
NOTIFY AFFECTED CLIENTS OF THE DELAYED START TIME
312
"BLACK OUT" PERIOD ENDS EARLY?
YES
NO
314
NOTIFY AFFECTED CLIENTS OF THE EARLIER END TIME
316
"BLACK OUT" PERIOD ENDS LATE?
YES
NO
318
NOTIFY AFFECTED CLIENTS OF THE DELAYED END TIME
320
"BLACK OUT" RESTRICTIONS ENDED?
NO
YES
322
NOTIFY AFFECTED CLIENTS THAT THE RESTRICTIONS ARE CANCELED

Fig. 3

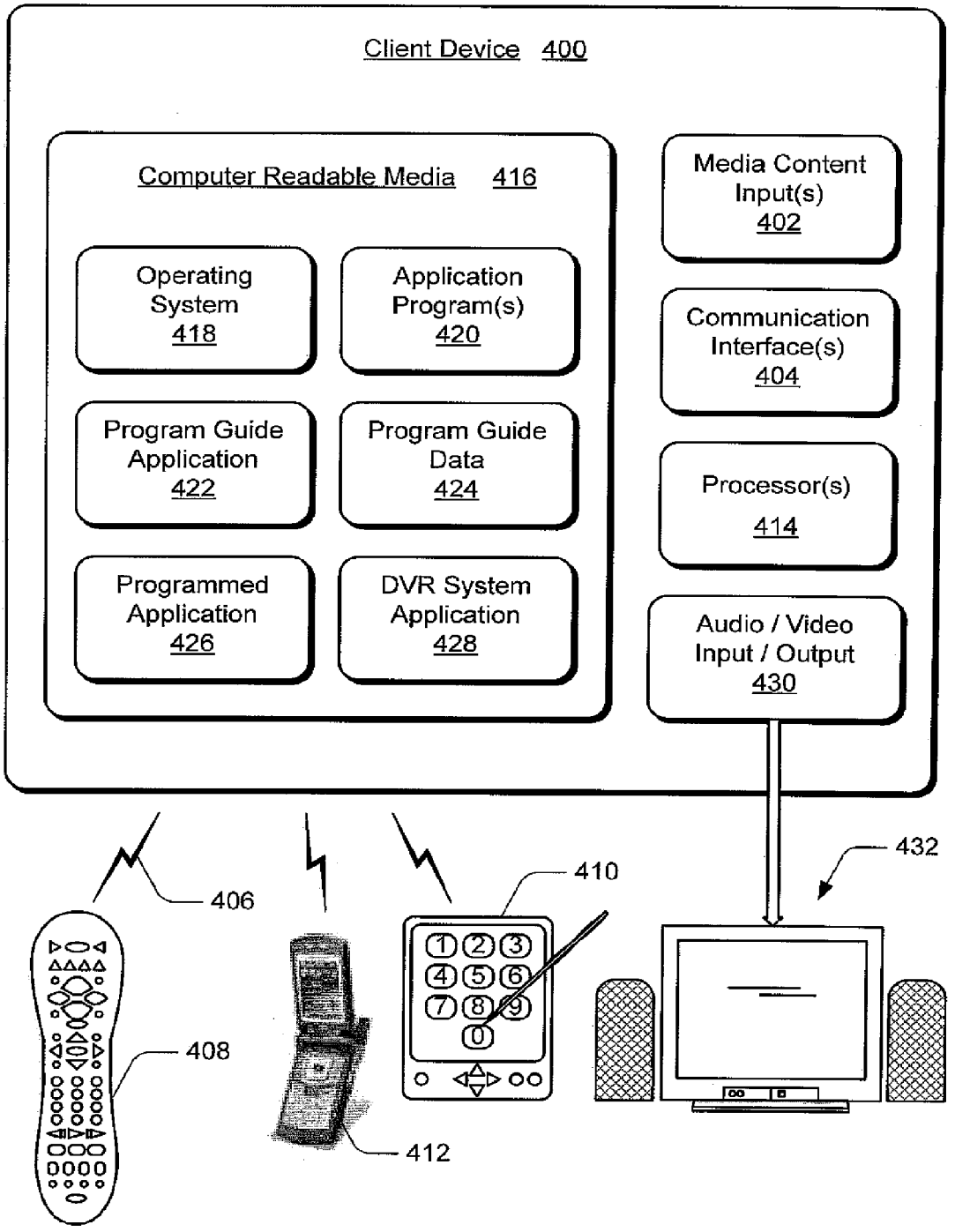

Client Device 400
Computer Readable Media 416
Operating System 418
Application Program(s) 420
Program Guide Application 422
Program Guide Data 424
Programmed Application 426
DVR System Application 428
Media Content Input(s) 402
Communication Interface(s) 404
Processor(s) 414
Audio / Video Input / Output 430
406
408
410
412
432

Fig. 4

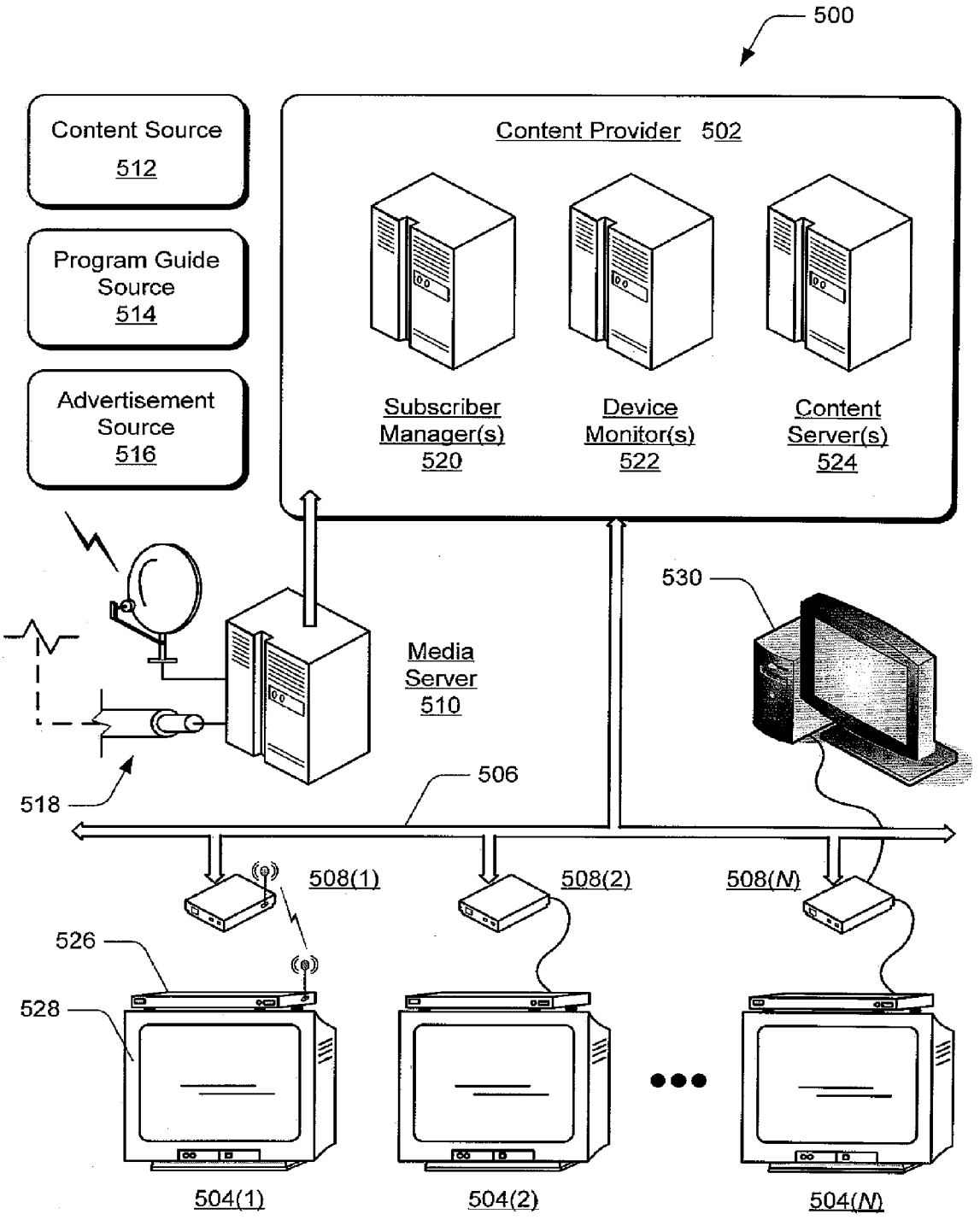

500
Content Source
512
Program Guide
Source
514
Advertisement
Source
516
Content Provider 502
Subscriber
Manager(s)
520
Device
Monitor(s)
522
Content
Server(s)
524
Media
Server
510
530
506
518
508(1)
508(2)
508(N)
526
528
504(1)
504(2)
504(N)

Fig. 5

PROGRAM SUBSTITUTION

BACKGROUND

[0001] Certain types of television content occasionally needs to be "blacked out" in locales for which rights to that content are withheld. For example, certain sporting events are "blacked out" in the geographic region of the event if the sports team doesn't sell all the tickets for the event. In this situation, content providers must not show the local game in the local geographic region. Instead, content providers may show nothing (e.g., a blank screen), a message indicating the program is "blacked out ", an advertisement, or substitute video content.

[0002] Program substitution occurs when content that is supplied in a particular region must be either removed and replaced by a static message or substitute video content for a limited period of time (e.g., for the duration of a particular sporting event). Existing systems in the cable television industry perform program substitution by switching the physical encoders that provide the content. Since there are hundreds of different locales that might be subject to program "black out" restrictions, cable companies need to dedicate hundreds of special-purpose receiver-decoders to support this functionality. This use of many special-purpose receiver-decoders is expensive and adds to the complexity of the system.

[0003] Therefore, it would be desirable to provide a system that is capable of substituting content without requiring the use of many expensive, special-purpose receiver-decoders.

SUMMARY

[0004] The systems and methods described herein distribute keys to multiple clients. The keys are used by the clients to gain access to media content. A group of clients is identified that are to receive substituted media content (instead of regularly scheduled content) during a predetermined time period, such as during the scheduled time of a live event. Modified keys are generated that identify the substituted media content and the predetermined time period. These modified keys are distributed to the group of clients, which causes the group of clients to receive the substituted media content during the predetermined time period.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] Similar reference numbers are used throughout the figures to reference like components and/or features.

[0006] FIG. **1** illustrates an example environment in which the systems and methods discussed herein can be applied.

[0007] FIG. **2** is a flow diagram illustrating an embodiment of a procedure for preparing to "black out" specific content at specific client devices.

[0008] FIG. **3** is a flow diagram illustrating an embodiment of a procedure for handling changes to a scheduled "black out" time period.

[0009] FIG. **4** illustrates various components of an example client device in which the systems and methods discussed herein can be implemented.

[0010] FIG. **5** illustrates various devices and components in an example entertainment and information system in which the systems and methods discussed herein can be implemented.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0011] The systems and methods described herein are capable of performing software-based program substitution without requiring large numbers of special-purpose receiver-decoders. As discussed herein, client devices are capable of switching to substituted content based on received instructions, thereby eliminating the need for dedicated hardware to perform such program substitution. Program substitution may also be referred to as "content substitution" or "service substitution". The described systems and methods utilize various groupings of clients based on, for example, geographic region, content to which the clients are subscribed, and the like. Keys are distributed to clients based on groupings and other factors. These keys control client access to various content. These keys also handle "blacking out" of specific content for particular clients or groups of clients for a specific time period.

[0012] Particular examples discussed herein refer to specific components in an Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) environment. An IPTV environment includes one or more systems or methods related to, for example, processing video data, image data, audio data, or other entertainment-related data. However, the systems and methods discussed herein may be utilized with other components contained in similar or different operating environments.

[0013] FIG. **1** illustrates an example environment **100** in which the systems and methods discussed herein can be applied. An acquisition server **102** provides encrypted video streams to a data server **104** via a data communication network **106**. In a particular embodiment, data communication network **106** is the Internet. Data server **104** provides the encrypted video streams to one or more client devices **110** via a data communication network **108**. In a particular embodiment, data communication network **108** is the Internet. In a specific implementation, data communication network **108** is the same as (or is part of) data communication network **106**. Although only one acquisition server **102** is shown in FIG. **1**, particular embodiments may include any number of acquisition servers **102** handling any number of video streams.

[0014] Acquisition server **102** is also coupled to a live acquisition service database **112**, which receives various update events and manages keys and rights associated with particular clients and with groups of clients. Clients may be grouped based on geographic location, types of services to which they arc subscribed, and so forth. Live acquisition service database **112** distributes keys and rights data via network **106** to a rights database **114**, which is also coupled to network **106**. Rights database **114** and a notification server **116** provide various keys and rights information to any number of client devices **110**. A service information database **118** receives service collection configuration information and is coupled to notification server **116**. In alternate embodiments, service information database **118** is also coupled to rights database **114**. Service information database **118** receives information regarding changes in service from, for example, an administrator or other user.

[0015] Acquisition server **102** and live acquisition service database **112** may collectively be referred to as an "acquisition point". The acquisition point is the location where the content is acquired prior to distributing the content to the clients. The acquisition point may include, for example, satellite receiving equipment and other receiving equipment for receiving content from any number of different sources. The received content may be immediately distributed to one or more client devices, or may be stored for future distribution.

[0016] Data server **104**, rights database **114**, notification server **116**, and service information database **118** may collectively be referred to as a "branch". A particular environment **100** may include any number of branches coupled to an acquisition point. For example, each of the multiple branches is responsible for a particular geographic region or a particular type of client device.

[0017] The various servers, databases, and other components shown in FIG. **1** manage and schedule various program substitution events, and use the rights system to control the manner in which client devices are "blacked out". For example, during a "black out " period, client devices may be instructed to display a blank screen or a message indicating that the program is not available. Alternatively, during a "black out" period, client devices may be instructed to display an advertisement or display a different program (e.g., from a different channel). Program substitutions are implemented using a combination of digital rights management (DRM) and notifications to affect the rights and service information for one or more groups of clients. These program substitution events are handled using specific keys for blocking access to certain content during a "black out" period, as discussed in greater detail below.

[0018] FIG. **1** illustrates a particular arrangement of various servers, databases, and other components. Alternate embodiments may contain additional components, may delete one or more components, and may arrange components in a different manner, while still maintaining the functionality discussed herein.

[0019] There are two types of program substitutions: standard substitution and reverse substitution. Using standard substitution, all client devices within a region are restricted from viewing an event. For example, viewers in Ottawa, Canada cannot watch an Ottawa Senator's home game. Using reverse substitution, all client devices outside of a region are forbidden from viewing an event. For example, only viewers in Ottawa can watch the Ottawa Senators hockey game.

[0020] There are two possible results of a substitution: alternate content and a message screen. In the case of alternate content, the viewer is given an alternate content stream for the duration of the program substitution. The alternate content stream will appear in the same guide location as the original content stream. The channel will simply appear to have an alternate show for users in a given geographic area. In the case of a message screen, the viewer in an affected region sees only a static screen that says the subscriber does not have rights to view the specific program.

[0021] The schedule for a program substitution may be known in advance, may be known in advance but with variable start and end times, or may not be known in advance with a variable end time. For example, a content provider may know, for example, that from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm some viewers will see a local game while others will watch the national feed. In another situation, a content provider may know that they intend to start a program substitution around 6:00 pm and end it around 8:00 pm, but the time may vary by several minutes to an hour or more, or is may not happen at all. This is particularly true for service substitutions involving live events like sporting events that can run long or may be rain-delayed.

[0022] In another example, a content provider may have a predetermined schedule that needs to be changed at the last minute because a game did not start or finish on time. This can happen, for example, if the start time for a sporting event is delayed due to rain, and the content provider wants to substitute alternate content until the game begins. If the content provider can make these changes in the national feed (without switching to an alternate feed), then no substitution is required.

[0023] Program substitution can be handled by scheduled program substitutions or by manual input. In the case of scheduled program substitutions, the IPTV system is notified via a management interface hours or days in advance of a program substitution. The TPTV system then executes the program substitution at the scheduled time. In the case of manual input, a management interface is provided s to allow for the manual creation and modification of program substitutions. This interface is typically used at the direction of the affected content provider.

[0024] In one embodiment, a Geographic Region Code (GRC) is used to determine the location of a client device for the purposes of substitutions. Alternately, clients can be specified by any "subscriber group". In this embodiment, the affected geographic region for a substitution can be: Single ZIP, FIPS/SAME, or other geographic code, or a Group of ZIP, FIPS/SAME or other geographic codes (typically this is a Geographic Region Code). U.S. operators may use a region code tied to a group of U.S. ZIP Codes as the GRC for substitution regions. The U.S. Zip Code is a 5 digit number. The first three digits represent the Sectional Center or Large City. The final two indicate the post office facility or delivery area. Canadian operators use the Canadian Postal Code as the GRC for substitution regions. The postal code is a six-character alpha-numeric code in the format "ANA NAN", where "A" represents an alphabetic character and "N" represents a numeric character. A postal code is made up of two segments: "Forward Sortation Area" (FSA) and "Local Delivery Unit" (LDU).

[0025] FIG. **2** is a flow diagram illustrating an embodiment of a procedure **200** for preparing to "black out" specific content at specific client devices. Initially, client devices request keys from a server for the next time period (block **202**). At the same time, encrypted video streams are being sent to the client devices (block **204**). The keys are used by the client devices to gain access to the encrypted video streams provided to the client devices by various servers. Particular keys (or sets of keys) may be distributed to clients based on client groupings. Clients may be grouped based on geographic location, client type, client subscriptions, and the like.

[0026] Procedure **200** continues as an operator defines a "black out" window (block **206**). The "black out" window

defines the clients or group of clients that are not permitted to access the restricted content. The "black out" starts at a particular time (block **208**). The procedure then generates modified keys for the groups of clients affected by the "black out" restrictions (block **210**). These modified keys prevent particular clients from accessing the restricted content during the restricted time period. Next, the operator schedules the "black out" to start or it starts manually (block **212**). A notification is sent to the client about the "black out". At the same time, the acquisition server starts putting the blackout ID in the encrypted video stream. Each client receives its first packet encrypted with the blackout ID. The client checks to see if its key has the blackout ID. If so, it continues as normal. If not, the client retunes to the alternate content.

[**0027**] The operator then ends the "black out" or it ends on schedule (block **214**). At this point, the acquisition server stops putting the blackout ID in the video stream. Notification is then sent to the clients to retune to the original video stream (block **216**). This procedure is repeated for future "blackout" windows.

[**0028**] FIG. **3** is a flow diagram illustrating an embodiment of a procedure **300** for handling changes to a scheduled "black out" time period. Initially, the client devices receive keys from the server that contain the "blackout" ID (block **302**). These modified keys identify the content to be restricted and the time period during which the restriction is scheduled to occur (e.g., during the scheduled time of a particular sporting event). At block **304**, the procedure determines whether the "black out" period started early (e.g., the sporting event started earlier than scheduled). If so, the procedure branches to block **306** to notify the affected clients of the earlier start time, thereby causing the affected clients to begin restricting access to the content at the new time. In a particular embodiment, the restricted event may have already started. In this situation, client devices are notified to begin restricting content immediately.

[**0029**] Procedure **300** continues at block **308** by determining whether the "black out" period will be starting late (e.g., the sporting event will start later than scheduled). If so, the procedure branches to block **310** to notify the affected clients of the delayed start time, thereby causing the affected clients to delay restricting access to the content until the delayed start time. This notice avoids disruption of the display of the content that precedes the restricted content.

[**0030**] At block **312**, the procedure determines whether the "black out" period will be ending early (e.g., the sporting event will finish earlier than scheduled). If so, the procedure branches to block **314** to notify the affected clients of the earlier end time, thereby causing the affected clients to stop restricting access to the content at the earlier end time. This notice avoids disruption of the display of the content that follows the restricted content.

[**0031**] At block **316**, the procedure determines whether the "black out" period will be ending late (e.g., the sporting event will finish later than scheduled). If so, the procedure branches to block **318** to notify the affected clients of the delayed end time, thereby causing the affected clients to stop restricting access to the content at the later time.

[**0032**] Finally, at block **320**, procedure **300** determines whether the "black out" restrictions have ended. If the "black out" restrictions have not ended, the procedure branches back to block **304** to watch for any changes to the time period associated with the "black out" restrictions. If the "black out" restrictions have ended, the procedure notifies clients that the restrictions are canceled (block **322**). Thus, the client device can again gain access to the previously restricted channel or content.

[**0033**] The program substitution systems and methods described herein make use of rights management data structures to communicate service substitution events to client devices. In one embodiment, a boundary key and key identifier data structures are utilized. Boundary keys are used to encrypt the streaming video content. When client devices obtain boundary keys from the rights management system, the keys are encapsulated in a data structure that includes the keys themselves as well as rights and metadata about the keys. This includes such information as the key ID, the key expiration, and the signature of the key. Example elements associated with the boundary key data structure are summarized in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Element Name	Description
Blackout Present	Indicates if Service Substitutionblackout fields are included in this structure
SessionKeyID	Key Identifier GUID of the session key that protects this key
KeyID	Key Identifier GUID
E(Key)	Encrypted boundary key
BlackoutIDs	Client has rights to decrypt this service when this Blackout ID is active
Signature	Signature of this structure formed using the session key

[**0034**] Key identifier structures are contained within the encrypted video streams. The key identifier structures point to the boundary keys that were used to encrypt the video. Example members of the key identifier data structure are summarized in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2

Element Name	Description
StartSampleID	ID of first sample for which this key is valid
SampleIDlength	Number of samples over which this key can be used
KeyID	Key Identifier GUID
BlackoutID	Samples in the Sample ID range have this blackout ID associated with them (0 => no blackout is active)
Signature	Signature of this structure formed using the key specified by the KeyID

[**0035**] To signal a program substitution event, the encryption system in acquisition server **102** (FIG. **1**) sets the BlackoutID field in the key identifier data structure that's encapsulated with the video stream to the appropriate value. This informs all devices that are tuned to that video stream that the program substitution is active starting with the indicated sample ID. Client devices tuned to the service evaluate their rights whenever the KeyID or the BlackoutID changes in the key identifier data structure. If the client device detects a non-zero BlackoutID in the s key identifier data structure but does not have the corresponding Black-

outID in its boundary key data structure, then the client won't decode the video stream. Instead, the client will attempt to tune to the next secondary stream that's part of the service collection. The BlackoutID in the key identifier data structure continues to signal the program substitution for the entire duration of the program substitution event. Thus, the client device will be informed of the active program substitution, regardless of when a client device tunes to the blacked out stream.

[0036] Client devices get their keys and associated rights information by polling rights database **114** (FIG. **1**). To improve system security, the keys themselves are periodically rotated, normally every 30 minutes. So, in addition to the keys that are currently in force, the client also gets (normally) three sets of keys that it can use in the future. Having multiple sets of keys stored on the client reduces the real-time requirements placed on the overall system.

[0037] The phrase "getting the keys" means that the client obtains the boundary key data structures to the services for which the client is provisioned. Rights database **114** and/or notification server **116** (FIG. **1**) generates encrypted sets of keys and rights for the client whenever the client requests them. When keys are generated for a device, rights database **114** checks to see if there are any program substitution events defined within the time period for which the key is generated. If a program substitution has been prescheduled on the service, and the client device is not part of a subscriber group that will be included in the program substitution, then the BlackoutID is included in the boundary key data structure. Since there could be multiple BlackoutIDs associated with a service over any key rotation period, there may be several BlackoutIDs included in the boundary key data structure.

[0038] To ensure that no devices are blacked-out that shouldn't be, every key that could potentially be used during a program substitution period needs to have the correct rights information. Since keys are distributed to client devices several key rotations before they're used, program substitutions must be pre-scheduled at least that far in advance of the anticipated program substitution. This way, the first time the client gets a key it will have the correct rights included in the boundary key data structure.

[0039] BlackoutIDs within the IPTV system are unique within a key rotation time and within a service. Identical BlackoutIDs can exist at the same time on different services per branch. As program substitution events are added for a service to the acquisition point database the system generates a database sequence number, which is the BlackoutID. The internal BlackoutID is an 8-bit number, with 0 reserved for the no-service substitution case. As a result, Blackout IDs on a service roll over every 255 program substitution events. So, the full description of a program substitution includes the BlackoutID, the ServiceID, and a date/time stamp.

[0040] To minimize the complexity of supporting program substitutions within the client device, the number of unique BlackoutIDs for any individual service is limited to 16 per key rotation period. If more than 16 program substitution events are needed on a service within the nominal key rotation period, the key rotation period is decreased for time period in question.

[0041] Since program substitution events aren't aligned precisely to key rotation periods, only 14 BlackoutIDs are unique to one key rotation period. The other 2 of the 16 possible IDs are shared with the preceding and subsequent period. Note that within any key rotation period, the total number of possible program substitution events is 16 times the total number of services supported by the system.

[0042] While program substitutions must be prescheduled at least (key rotation period) times (key look-ahead number) in advance, the actual signal to start or stop the program substitution happens in (near) real-time. There are two mechanisms for signaling the start or stop of a program substitution—in-band with the video signal using SCTE-35 (Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers) signaling, or out-of-band via the management web service interface. Typically, each video stream has only one program substitution active at any one time, so a "program substitution stop" signal for a stream turns off any program substitution on that stream. Program substitution start and stop signals can be carried out-of-band with respect to the video stream. The entry point into the IPTV system for these signals is through the management web service.

[0043] Scheduled program substitutions and prescheduled program substitutions with variable start and end times start and stop in a similar manner. The start and stop events are posted in the live acquisition service database **112** (FIG. **1**). Acquisition server **102** periodically polls the database to get configuration information, rights, and boundary keys. When the blackoutID is posted in the key identifier data structure, acquisition server **102** uses the key and associated rights information as part of applying rights management to the video stream. This action starts the program substitution. Similarly, when the key identifier data structure changes back to clear the blackoutID, the primary video stream is no longer blacked out.

[0044] Since acquisition server **102** only changes the key identifier data at polling intervals, the polling intervals for those acquisition servers carrying primary streams that can be blacked out needs to be very small. The polling interval for the acquisition server is configurable per server. In order to maintain overall performance of the system, acquisition servers that do not service program substitution-able primary streams are configured for the nominal polling interval.

[0045] Program substitutions involve replacing a primary video stream with an alternate video stream based on the location of the client device. The program substitution system supports a flexible method of defining the relationship between these video streams, and allows the network operator or content provider to make last-minute decisions about the best video stream to use as an alternate. Video streams are grouped together into "service collections" that are used to associate various video streams together for a variety of purposes.

[0046] A service collection may include a primary video stream and one or more secondary video streams. In the case of a program substitution, there will be one primary video stream, one secondary video stream used as alternate content during the program substitution, and an optional secondary video stream used as a barker channel for those subscribers who aren't provisioned for viewing the video streams.

[0047] For many applications, a static relationship may exist between the primary video stream and the alternate

video stream substituted in the case of a program substitution, it's sometimes advantageous for this relationship to be more flexible. To provide more flexibility, the program substitution system provides for having different secondary video streams in different locales, and for switching between secondary video streams. The SubstitutionEvent object contains an ordered list of subscriber groups with associated blacked out video streams and substituted video streams. In this manner, different subscriber groups (which map to locales) can, in general substitute different primary video streams with different alternate video streams.

[0048] To allow for flexibility in selecting alternate content, the program substitution system pushes notifications to the subscriber groups to incrementally update their SI tables with new information. In one embodiment, the SI updates are multicast to subscriber groups every 15 seconds If there are no updates, the message is null. However, if there are updates, the multicast message includes the ID of the affected subscriber groups, the primary service ID, the ID of the new, preferred alternate (or secondary) program, and the program substitution ID associate with this SI change. The change remains in effect until either the program substitution is ended or the streams get updated with a new incremental SI message.

[0049] To ensure that the SI updates cannot be hacked (by, for example, blocking the multicast notifications), the notifications are signed and sent repeatedly for the duration of the program substitution. Additionally, if the client device doesn't receive a multicast SI update message (including null messages), then the client will detune, set the video output to black, and go to a "dead" state.

Program Substitution Event

[0050] An example program substitution event is described below and defined by the following attributes:

```
public class SubstitutionEvent {
        public System.Guid SubstitutionEventId;
        public string ExternalSubstitutionId;
        public bool DisableICC;
        public SubscriberGroup[ ] SubscriberGroupIDs;
        public System.DateTime WindowStart;
        public System.DateTime WindowEnd;
        public System.DateTime Start;
        public System.DateTime End;
        public System.DateTime ActualStart;          // read only
        public System.DateTime ActualEnd;            // read only
        public ServiceInfo PrimaryMain;
        public short MainBlackoutId;                 // read only
        public ServiceInfo PrimaryPip;
        public short PipBlackoutId;                  // read only
        public SubscriberServiceId[ ] Alternates;
        public SubstitutionState Status;
            public System.DateTime                   // read only
            LastStatusChange;
        public System.DateTime CreateDate;
        public System.DateTime UpdateDate;
    }
```

SubstitutionEventId

[0051] GUID representing the identifier of the substitution event. This value is returned from the CreateSubstitution call.

ExternalSubstitutionID

[0052] String representing a unique name for the blackout.

Disable ICC

[0053] Disables Instant Channel Change for switching between primary and alternate video streams as part of the service substitution.

SubscriberGroupIds[]

[0054] An array of Subscriber Group Id's:

```
public class SubscriberGroup {
    public string GroupName;
    public System.Guid GroupId;
}
```

Window Start Date & Time

[0055] Identifies the start of the window in which the service must maintain rights information for a substitution event. This is at least (key rotation period) times (the length of the key rotation list), normally two hours, before the earliest time that the substitution event can start. Format is UTC, GMT time.

Window End Date & Time

[0056] Identifies the end of the window in which the service must maintain rights information for a substitution event. This is at least (key rotation period) times (the length of the key rotation list), normally two hours, after the latest time that the substitution event can end. This is particularly important for events that may last longer than the scheduled end time, for example a game that goes into overtime. Format is UTC, GMT time.

Start Date & Time

[0057] Scheduled start of substitution. This is updateable inside the two hour window. This value can be left blank to support a completely manual substitution scenario. UpdateSubstitution can then pass in a start/end datetime at the time execution (See SLA for start/end of substitution). Format is UTC, GMT time.

End Date & Time

[0058] Scheduled end time. This value is used to send the end notification to end the substitution. It is updateable up to the end of the substitution window. This value can be left blank to support a completely manual substitution scenario. UpdateSubstitution can then pass in a actual start/end datetime at the time execution (See SLA for start/end of substitution). Format is UTC, GMT time.

Actual Start Date & Time

[0059] This is the time at which the substitution event actually started. Format is UTC, GMT time.

Actual End Date & Time

[0060] This is the time at which the substitution event actually ended. Format is UTC, GMT time.

PrimaryMain

[0061] Id of the primary service to blackout.

MainBlackoutID

[0062] The 8-bit ID that's used internally to the rights management system to identify the blackout of the main service.

PrimaryPIP

[0063] Id of the primary PIP

PIPBlackoutID

[0064] The 8-bit ID that's used internally to the rights management system to identify the blackout of the PIP service.

Alternates[]

[0065] Mapping of alternate service IDs to service groups:

```
public class Subscriber ServiceId {
        public SubscriberGroup[ ] SGroups;
        public ServiceInfo MainService;
        public ServiceInfo PIPService;
    }
```

Status

[0066] The current state of the substitution event.

[0067] The following states are supported within the service substitution system to provide callers to the management API with status for a blackout event.

[0068] Scheduled—This status is the value that's set when the SubstitutionEvent is created.

[0069] Executing—This is the value that's set on the back-end when the A server is currently including the blackoutID in the PrimaryMain service or on the branch when the blackout start notification has been sent.

[0070] Complete—This is the value that's set on the back-end when the A server is no longer including the blackoutID in the PrimaryMain service or on the branch when the blackout end notification has been sent.

[0071] ErroredStart—Past the scheduled start time but the start event hasn't happened.

[0072] ErroredFinish—Past the scheduled start time but the end event hasn't happened.

[0073] Calls to the DeleteSubstitutionEvent method removes the event from the system. There's no record maintained in the blackout database of the event after deletion (however the OSS WS does log calls to this method).

LastStatusChange

[0074] The date and time at which the Status value was last changed. Format is UTC, GMT time.

CreateDate

[0075] The date and time at which the substitution event was created via the CreateSubstitution method. Format is UTC, GMT time.

UpdateDate

[0076] The date and time at which the substitution event was last updated via the UpdateSubstitution method. Format is UTC, GMT time.

[0077] The program substitution system also supports reporting, monitoring, and auditing of program substitution-related events.

Server logs

[0078] The Service Substitution system logs calls made to the management APIs and the results of those calls. Server logs may include information such as: database errors, SubstitutionEvent is null, No Subscriber Groups defined, No PrimaryMain defined, No StartTime defined, Externalsubstitution ID is empty, No Id in SubstitutionEvent, SubstitutionEventID, and ExternalsubstitutionID. Events will include the time of the event and the ID of the substitution event (where available).

Client Logs

[0079] Clients affected by a program substitution log into client activity logs when the client device acts upon a program substitution and when the program substitution is discarded (either by tuning to another channel or by the program substitution system lifting the program substitution).

[0080] Client activity logs include various event information, such as information related to Blackout Start, Blackout_End, and Blackout_Service_Change.

Auditing Support

[0081] The network operator obtains audit information by data-mining both the server logs and the client activity logs for events applicable to the service substitution ID of interest. Archived service substitutions are normally retained by the substitution system for a minimum of 13 months.

Program Substitution Monitoring

[0082] The management API provides the ability monitor the state of program substitutions. The following Read APIs can be used to pull status change:

[0083] ReadSubstitutionEventsByDateRange

[0084] ReadSubstitutionEventsByExternalId

[0085] ReadSubstitutionEventsForSubscriberGroup

[0086] ReadSubstitutionEventsForSubscriberGroupByDateRange

[0087] ReadAllSubstitutionEvents

[0088] The Read web services scale to allow a poll interval as small as one second for all blackout events in the 24 hour period surrounding the current time.

Troubleshooting

[0089] The program substitution system provides a management interface that lists all devices within a substitution region, and all substitution regions for a device. Customer-specific solutions engineers are able use this interface to implement to the specific access method of the customer For example, one network operator may reference client devices through the MAC address, while another may reference

client devices by their Device ID. The ability to list all substitution regions and all GRCs within each region is provided.

Management API Authentication

[0090] The program substitution system ensures that only authenticated machines can make program substitution calls to the OSS APIs.

Program Substitution Enforcement

[0091] The program substitution system enforces service substitutions such that a subscriber cannot defeat or override the service substitution by manipulating, blocking, or otherwise modifying the content stream or control messages that come over the network to the client device.

Service Substitution Event Control

[0092] Service substitutions can be defined and scheduled through web service calls to the management API.

Substitution Content Source

[0093] The IPTVE system supports two sources of substitute content used during a program substitution, replacing the content with a standard channel and replacing the content with a secondary or alternate content source.

Standard Channel Source

[0094] A standard channel is an existing channel available to client devices in its channel map. For example, during a simultaneous service substitution the original channel, WDIV-TV NBC (Detroit, Mich.), will be replaced for the duration of a substitution by CTV (Windsor, Ontario); and both WDIV and CTV are available as channels to which the subscriber can channel surf.

Alternate Content Source

[0095] The source content for a program substitution can also be made up of one or more streams of video that the subscriber wouldn't normally be able to view. This alternate content may be defined at preschedule time, or it may be determined at the start of or even during the program substitution duration.

Reliability

[0096] The Service Substitution system ensures that no device within a program substitution group can access blacked-out content for more that five seconds.

Scheduled Events

[0097] The program substitution system begins and ends scheduled program substitutions within five seconds of the scheduled time relative to the content stream at the video acquisition point.

Prescheduled Events with Variable Start/Stop Times

[0098] The program substitution system starts and stops pre-scheduled program substitution events having manual start and/or stop times within 25 seconds of the corresponding call to the management API or the management GUI.

Non-preseheduled Events

[0099] The program substitution system does not support program substitution events that aren't prescheduled at least 2 hours (nominally) before the start of the program substitution. The actual time is variable per IPTV system and is the product of the key rotation period and the key update backlog, both of which are configurable. This only applies to the scheduling and not actual start/end of the event.

[0100] FIG. **4** illustrates various components of an exemplary client device **400** which can be implemented as any form of a computing, electronic, and/or television-based client device, and in which the systems and methods discussed herein can be implemented.

[0101] Client device **400** includes one or more media content inputs **402** which may include Internet Protocol (IP) inputs over which streams of media content are received via an IP-based network. Device **400** further includes communication interface(s) **404** which can be implemented as any one or more of a serial and/or parallel interface, a wireless interface, any type of network interface, a modem, and as any other type of communication interface. A wireless interface enables client device **400** to receive control input commands **406** and other information from an input device, such as from remote control device **408**, PDA (personal digital assistant) **410**, cellular phone **412**, or from another infrared (IR), 802.11, Bluetooth, or similar RF input device.

[0102] A network interface provides a connection between the client device **400** and a communication network by which other electronic and computing devices can communicate data with device **400**. Similarly, a serial and/or parallel interface provides for data communication directly between client device **400** and the other electronic or computing devices. A modem facilitates client device **400** communication with other electronic and computing devices via a conventional telephone line, a DSL connection, cable, and/or other type of connection.

[0103] Client device **400** also includes one or more processors **414** (e.g., any of microprocessors, controllers, and the like) which process various computer executable instructions to control the operation of device **400**, to communicate with other electronic and computing devices, and to implement the embodiments described herein. Client device **400** can be implemented with computer readable media **416**, such as one or more memory components, examples of which include random access memory (RAM), non-volatile memory (e.g., any one or more of a read-only memory (ROM), flash memory, EPROM, EEPROM, etc.), and a disk storage device. A disk storage device can include any type of magnetic or optical storage device, such as a hard disk drive, a recordable and/or rewriteable compact disc (CD), a DVD, a DVD+RW, and the like.

[0104] Computer readable media **416** provides data storage mechanisms to store various information and/or data such as software applications and any other types of information and data related to operational aspects of client device **400**. For example, an operating system **418** and/or other application programs **420** can be maintained as software applications with the computer readable media **416** and executed on processor(s) **414** to implement the systems and methods discussed herein.

[0105] For example, client device **400** can be implemented to include a program guide application **422** that is implemented to process program guide data **424** and generate program guides for display which enable a user to navigate through an onscreen display and locate broadcast programs,

recorded programs, video on-demand programs and movies, interactive game selections, network-based applications, and other media access information or content of interest to the user. The computer readable media **416** can also include a programmed application **426** to implement features and embodiments described herein. The computer readable media **416** can also include a DVR system application **428** to maintain and playback recorded media content.

[**0106**] Although the programmed application **426** is illustrated and described as a single application configured to implement embodiments described herein, the programmed application **426** can be implemented as several component applications distributed to each perform one or more functions in a client device in a television-based entertainment and information system. Further, the program guide application **422** may include the programmed application **426** as an integrated module or component.

[**0107**] The client device **400** also includes an audio and/or video output **430** that provides audio and video to an audio rendering and/or display system **432**, or to other devices that process, display, and/or otherwise render audio, video, and display data. Video signals and audio signals can be communicated from device **400** to a television (or to other types of display devices) via an RF (radio frequency) link, S-video link, composite video link, component video link, analog audio connection, or other similar communication link.

[**0108**] FIG. **5** illustrates an exemplary entertainment and information system **500** in which an IP-based television environment can be implemented, and in which embodiments discussed herein can be implemented. System **500** facilitates the distribution of program content, program guide data, and advertising content to multiple users. System **500** includes a content provider **502** and television-based client systems **504**(**1**-N) each configured for communication via an IP-based network **506**.

[**0109**] The network **506** can be implemented as a wide area network (e.g., the Internet), an intranet, a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) network infrastructure, or as a point-to-point coupling infrastructure. Additionally, network **506** can be implemented using any type of network topology and any network communication protocol, and can be represented or otherwise implemented as a combination of two or more networks. A digital network can include various hard-wired and/or wireless links **508**(**1**-N), routers, gateways, and so on to facilitate communication between content provider **502** and the client systems **504**(**1**-N). The television-based client systems **504**(**1**-N) receive program content, program guide data, advertising content, closed captions data, and the like from content server(s) of the content provider **502** via the IP-based network **506**.

[**0110**] System **500** includes a media server **510** that receives program content from a content source **512**, program guide data from a program guide source **514**, and advertising content from an advertisement source **516**. In an embodiment, the media server **510** represents an acquisition server that receives the audio and video program content from content source **512**, an EPG server that receives the program guide data from program guide source **514**, and/or an advertising management server that receives the advertising content from the advertisement source **516**.

[**0111**] The content source **512**, the program guide source **514**, and the advertisement source **516** control distribution of the program content, the program guide data, and the advertising content to the media server **510** and/or to other television-based servers. The program content, program guide data, and advertising content is distributed via various transmission media **518**, such as satellite transmission, radio frequency transmission, cable transmission, and/or via any number of other wired or wireless transmission media. In this example, media server **510** is shown as an independent component of system **500** that communicates the program content, program guide data, and advertising content to content provider **502**. In an alternate implementation, media server **510** can be implemented as a component of content provider **502**.

[**0112**] Content provider **502** is representative of a headend service in a television-based content distribution system, for example, that provides the program content, program guide data, and advertising content to multiple subscribers (e.g., the television-based client systems **504**(**1**-N)). The content provider **502** can be implemented as a satellite operator, a network television operator, a cable operator, and the like to control distribution of program and advertising content, such as movies, television programs, commercials, music, and other audio, video, and/or image content to the client systems **504**(**1**-N).

[**0113**] Content provider **502** includes various components to facilitate media data processing and content distribution, such as a subscriber manager **520**, a device monitor **522**, and a content server **524**. The subscriber manager **520** manages subscriber data, and the device monitor **522** monitors the client systems **504**(**1**-N) (e.g., and the subscribers), and maintains monitored client state information.

[**0114**] Although the various managers, servers, and monitors of content provider **502** (to include the media server **510** in one embodiment) are illustrated and described as distributed, independent components of content provider **502**, any one or more of the managers, servers, and monitors can be implemented together as a multi-functional component of content provider **502**. Additionally, any one or more of the managers, servers, and monitors described with reference to system **500** can implement the features and embodiments discussed herein.

[**0115**] The television-based client systems **504**(**1**-N) can be implemented to include a client device **526** and a display device **528** (e.g., a television). A client device **526** of a television-based client system **504** can be implemented in any number of embodiments, such as a set-top box, a digital video recorder (DVR) and playback system, a personal video recorder (PVR), an appliance device, a gaming system, and as any other type of client device that may be implemented in a television-based entertainment and information system. In an alternate embodiment, client system **504**(N) is implemented with a computing device **530** as well as a client device **526**. Additionally, any of the client devices **526** of a client system **504** can implement the features and embodiments described herein.

[**0116**] Although the description above uses language that is specific to structural features and/or methodological acts, it is to be understood that the invention defined in the appended claims is not limited to the specific features or acts described. Rather, the specific features and acts are disclosed as exemplary forms of implementing the invention.

1. A method comprising:

distributing a plurality of keys to a plurality of clients, wherein the keys provide access to media content;

identifying a group of clients that are to receive substituted media content during a predetermined time period;

generating modified keys that identify the substituted media content and the predetermined time period; and

distributing the modified keys to clients in the identified group, wherein the modified keys cause the group of clients to receive the substituted media content during the predetermined time period.

2. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the group of clients are in a common geographic area.

3. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the predetermined time period is associated with the scheduled time of a live event.

4. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the predetermined time period is associated with the scheduled time of a sporting event.

5. A method as recited in claim 4 further comprising notifying clients in the identified group to stop receiving substituted media content if the sporting event ends prior to the end of the predetermined time period.

6. A method as recited in claim 4 further comprising notifying clients in the identified group to continue receiving substituted media content after the predetermined time period if the sporting event extends past the predetermined time period.

7. A method as recited in claim 4 further comprising notifying clients in the identified group to begin receiving substituted media content prior to the predetermined time period if the sporting events starts prior to the predetermined time period.

8. A method as recited in claim 4 further comprising notifying clients in the identified group to delay receiving substituted media content after the start of the predetermined time period if the sporting event is delayed past the start of the predetermined time period.

9. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the group of clients are in a common geographic area, and the predetermined time period is associated with the scheduled time of a live sporting event being played in the geographic area.

10. A method comprising:

identifying an event that restricts distribution of particular content in a geographic region during the time of the event;

identifying a group of clients associated with the geographic region;

generating keys that restrict distribution of the particular content in the geographic region during the time of the event; and

distributing the keys to the identified group of clients, wherein the keys cause the identified group of clients to receive substituted content during the time of the event.

11. A method as recited in claim 10 wherein the event occurs within the geographic region.

12. A method as recited in claim 10 wherein the event is a live sporting event.

13. A method as recited in claim 10 further comprising:

generating a second set of keys at a conclusion of the event; and

distributing the second set of keys to the identified group of clients,

wherein the second set of keys cause the identified group of clients to begin receiving regular content.

14. A method as recited in claim 10 further comprising notifying the identified group of clients to continue receiving substituted content if the event extends past an expected end time associated with the event.

15. One or more computer readable media having stored thereon a plurality of instructions that, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to:

identify an event having a scheduled start time and a scheduled end time;

identify a group of clients that are to receive substituted media content between the scheduled start time and scheduled end time of the event;

generate keys that cause clients to receive substituted media instead of regularly scheduled media; and

distribute the keys to the group of clients that are to receive substituted media content.

16. One or more computer readable media as recited in claim 15, wherein the group of clients are located in a common geographic area.

17. One or more computer readable media as recited in claim 15, wherein the group of clients and the event are located in a common geographic area.

18. One or more computer readable media as recited in claim 15, wherein the substituted media content is provided to the group of clients instead of the regularly scheduled content, and wherein the regularly scheduled content is associated with the event.

19. One or more computer readable media as recited in claim 15, wherein the one or more processors further:

generate second keys at a conclusion of the event; and

distribute the second keys to the group of clients, wherein the second keys cause the group of clients to begin receiving regular content.

20. One or more computer readable media as recited in claim 15, wherein the event is a sporting event.

* * * * *