

meric characters **12** need not be displayed at any one time. Rather, the graphical user interface may be adapted to present a subset of the selectable alphanumeric characters **12** provided that a mechanism is available to allow the user to access those alphanumeric characters **12** not currently displayed. Such a mechanism may be provided by using a scroll bar within the graphical user interface, by adapting the touch screen to be responsive to dragging motions, or the like.

[0013] For illustrative purposes, the present invention is described in the context of a electronic device which executes a search function, by selecting the “go” button, according to an alphanumeric character string entered by the user. To select one of the displayed alphanumeric characters **12** for entry into the device, for example, to be ultimately used in the performance of a search executed by an electronic device, the graphical user interface **10** is adapted to be responsive to a pointer **14**. For example, when implemented in connection with a touch screen, the graphical user interface **10** will be responsive to the positioning and/or movements of a pointer **14** such as a stylus or a finger. In the case of a touch screen where the pointer **14** is of a size relative to the selectable alphanumeric characters such that the pointer **14** may overlap multiple alphanumeric characters, the graphical user interface **10** may determine an approximate center location of the pointer **14** and use that location to determine which of the alphanumeric characters **12** is being targeted for selection by the user.

[0014] To identify to the user which of the displayed alphanumeric characters **12** is presently being indicated by the graphical user interface as being the target of the pointer **14**, the graphical user interface **10** is adapted to highlight the target alphanumeric character. By way of example, the target alphanumeric character may be provided with an appearance that is distinct from the remaining displayed alphanumeric characters, as illustrated in **FIG. 1**. Such an appearance may be provided through the use of colors, font sizes or stylizations, or the like. Still further, the target character can be highlighted by being presented within a temporary field **18** of the graphical user interface **10** which is a field that is separate and distinct from the displayed alphanumeric characters **12**. A size for the highlighted, target alphanumeric character and/or the location for the temporary field **16** are preferably chosen so as to allow the displayed, highlighted, target alphanumeric character to avoid being obscured from the view of a user, for example, by a finger overlaying the alphanumeric characters **12** displayed in a touch screen display, should the system require the user to maintain physical contact with the graphical user interface during the process of identifying target alphanumeric characters.

[0015] Once an alphanumeric character has been selected by a user, the user may further indicate that the user desires the target alphanumeric character to be placed into a field of interest, such as the search field **18**, used immediately in the performance of an action by an electronic device, or the like. Such user indication may be provided by action of the user breaking physical contact with the surface of the touch screen display. It will also be appreciated that the target alphanumeric character may be highlighted to the user by being displayed directly in an action field, such as search field **18**, as illustrated in **FIGS. 2 and 4**.

[0016] To draw the focus of the user to a target alphanumeric character, especially in the case where the target

alphanumeric character is not separated from the remaining, non-targeted, displayed alphanumeric characters **12**, the graphical user interface **10** may be adapted to change the appearance of certain of the non-targeted alphanumeric characters **12** that are adjacent to or in the proximate vicinity of the target alphanumeric character. Preferably, in this case, the appearance of the alphanumeric characters adjacent to or in the vicinity of the target alphanumeric character is made to be distinct from the remainder of the non-targeted alphanumeric characters as well as the target alphanumeric character. By way of example, **FIG. 1** illustrates the alphanumeric characters adjacent to the target alphanumeric “J” as having a font size that is larger than the remaining, non-targeted alphanumeric characters while having a font size that is smaller than the font size that is provided to the target alphanumeric “J.” In this manner, the graphical user interface **10** provides a view of the alphanumeric characters **12** that might be considered to be similar to a view seen through a magnifying glass with the target alphanumeric character as the point of focus. It may again be preferable to select font sizes that allow any highlighted alphanumeric characters to be visible should the system require the user to maintain contact with the graphical user interface during the process of identifying target alphanumeric characters. It may also be desirable to adapt the graphical user interface such that each of the alphanumeric characters that a pointer **14** overlays is highlighted to some degree.

[0017] For allowing a user to select a target alphanumeric character as being of interest in the further performance of an action by the electronic device, the user may perform an action as simple as removing the pointer **14** from the graphical user interface **10**. The selection of a target alphanumeric character may also involve a two step process, namely, requiring the user to remove the pointer **14** from the graphical user interface **10** and then requiring the user to retouch some portion of the pointer **14** to the graphical user interface, preferably at a designated location that would not be confused with a desire to change which of the alphanumeric characters **12** is intended to be the target. In such a two step process, since the pointer **14** would be removed from the graphical user interface, it is preferred to continue to highlight for the user the alphanumeric character that was last targeted by the user as being of interest. In either process, it may also be desirable to adapt the graphical user interface **10** such that alphanumeric characters are highlighted in an order that follows the pointer is it may be dragged or moved along the displayed alphanumeric characters **12**. Furthermore, once the user indicates a desire to use the targeted alphanumeric character (or not use the targeted alphanumeric character either by affirmative action, a time-out, or the like) it may be desired to return the graphical user interface **10** to its initial state where no alphanumeric characters are highlighted.

[0018] While specific embodiments of the invention have been described in detail, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various modifications and alternatives to those details could be developed in light of the overall teachings of the disclosure. Accordingly, the particular arrangement disclosed is meant to be illustrative only and not limiting as to the scope of the invention which is to be given the full breadth of the appended claims and any equivalents thereof.