

[0022] With this invention, images displayed on the screen furthest from the view (background screen), will appear at some depth behind the images displayed on the screen closest to the viewer (foreground screen). The transparent portions on the foreground screen will allow viewers to see images displayed on the background screen.

[0023] This arrangement of layering multiple screens allows images to be presented at multiple levels giving the viewer true depth without use of glass or lens.

[0024] The present invention shall now refer to use with a multi-level screen as described above although this should not be seen as limiting.

[0025] It should be appreciated that although reference shall be made throughout this specification now to only background and foreground screens, other aspects of the present invention may utilize more than two screens. For example, with drawing packages all of the readily useable software functions may be on the foreground while various layers of the drawing may be on the multiple screens behind the foreground screen.

[0026] With the present invention, a screen designation code may be used to place all of the standard software functions, templates, tool bars and the like on the foreground screen. However, the image being worked upon may be placed on the background screen. This arrangement allows the user of the software to effectively look behind the foreground components to view the image being manipulated.

[0027] This ability may be enhanced if the traditional opaque background to the functions has varying shades of transparency. This feature may be imparted by a version of software in accordance with the present invention.

[0028] Thus, there is now no requirement for the user to move around on screen various toolbars and the like so as to get a full view of the image.

[0029] Further, if the package is for example, a drawing package, the foreground and background components may actually be on different screens, again allowing the viewer to view and possibly select the drawing components without one obscuring the other.

[0030] To allow the drawings components to be readily and/or manipulated, the components themselves may have different transparencies. Further, the traditional white palette may be fully transparent.

[0031] There are a number of methods by which the present invention can be implemented.

[0032] In some embodiments of the present invention it may be that existing software is coded to identify screen functions which are normally "always on top" or "always at back". If this is the case, one embodiment of the present invention will be an interface that identifies the coding on existing software with these identifiers and assign the various software components (e.g. a toolbar) to the appropriate foreground or background screen.

[0033] The interface maybe a patch for existing software, a display driver, a library file or a new front end for multiple existing software packages or a completely new operating system. Instead of software, graphic cards may be used to divide the images appropriately. This will increase the speed of operation considerably.

[0034] Further aspects of the present inventions provide a media which can contain instructions for the operation of method as described.

[0035] The background fill of "always on top" functions can be made fully or partially transparent by the present invention.

[0036] With existing software that does not have such coding, it may be necessary to implement the present invention by having customized software in which the software developer specifies the software routines which cause the appropriate components and images to go on the appropriate screens.

[0037] Other aspects of the present invention include not just interface programs which enable existing software to be used on multi-level displays, but original software programs which likewise utilize the concept of having a screen for the file or image being worked upon and other screens for more standard software functions, templates and the like.

[0038] There is software available which can be used with multiple monitors placed side by side. This software has screen designation codes as such, in that the x-axis coordinate determines on which of the monitors the information is to be displayed. It is envisaged that this software could be used in the present invention with a code which normally would assign an image to a particular monitor will now assign that image or data pixel to one of the screens in a multi-level display.

[0039] Other aspects of the present invention include an operating system which incorporates the principles of the present invention as previously described and also a web browser which also incorporates the principles as previously described.

[0040] It can be seen that the present invention adds a new dimension, literally and figuratively to existing software and potential for new software.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0041] The present invention is illustrated by way of example, and not by way of limitation, in the figures of the accompanying drawings and in which like reference numerals refer to similar elements.

[0042] FIG. 1 shows a conventional screen display.

[0043] FIG. 2 illustrates a foreground screen display in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0044] FIG. 3 illustrates a background screen display in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0045] With respect to FIG. 1, there is illustrated a typical screen display found in commercial software, in this case, the commercial software is Microsoft Powerpoint™.

[0046] On this display there is an external template (1), two toolbars (2, 3), a drop down menu (4) and an image to be manipulated (5) on a palette (6).

[0047] It can be seen that the toolbars (2, 3) and drop down menu (4) obscure the image (5) and palette (6).

[0048] With the present invention, the common components of the software can be placed on the foreground screen of a multi-level screen display as illustrated in FIG. 2. It should be noted that the palette (6) and the image (5) are not displayed on the foreground screen.

[0049] Instead, the image (5) is displayed on a background screen as illustrated in FIG. 3. With the present invention there is no need to display a palette.

[0050] The separation of the image (5) from the standard software components (1, 2, 3 and 4) is achieved by the present