

www.google.com, the input entered into the search field **512** may be used to automatically create partial search strings submitted to a search engine located at www.example.com.

[**0064**] Some web pages include script (e.g. JavaScript) to automatically place focus on a designated text input field on the web page as soon the web page is loaded. The “focus” refers to an onscreen element (e.g. a text input field) to which user-generated input (e.g. keyboard input) is directed. For example, if a text input field has focus (or is focused), the text input field will react when the user next types text input; i.e. the typed characters will be inserted into the text field. Directing the focus is often implemented to allow a user to directly input text into a form field, without having to direct a mouse cursor to the field. In certain embodiments of the present invention, since a user may be presented with a web page of results as the user continues to type search terms into a search field, it is important to maintain focus within the designated search field, despite contradictory commands that may be received from a web page that is loaded. For example, it may interfere with or slow down a user’s interaction if each time a results page is loaded the user is required to manually redirect the focus from a form on the web page back to the browser application’s integrated search field (e.g. field **504** of **FIG. 5A**). As such, in one embodiment, the present invention automatically maintains focus on the integrated search field **504** by preventing a web page from redirecting the focus from the desired search field **504**, until the user manually redirects the focus, for example by clicking the mouse cursor onto some other field or object.

[**0065**] In one embodiment, maintaining focus on the search field **504** despite commands received from a retrieved web page may be limited only to the search engine results web page itself, to avoid interference with the operation of substantive, non-search results pages, such as individual pages referenced by the search results page. For example, in the context of using the Google™ search engine, in one embodiment, the browser application may prevent focus from being redirected from the search field **504** while conducting searches on http://www.google.com; however, once the user selects a returned search result, or visits a page other than http://www.google.com (e.g. a non-search engine page), control of the focus reverts back to the visited web page, thereby preserving the function of any focus-control script on the visited (non-search engine) page. In another embodiment, if a web page, including a search page such as that located at http://www.google.com, directs the focus to a field in the page (e.g. field **512**), the browser application may momentarily permit this redirection of the focus from the search field **504**; however, once the focus is redirected from the search field **504**, if the user does not interact with the targeted web page field (e.g. by inputting text) within a specified period of time (e.g. ten seconds), the focus is returned to the search field **504**. In another embodiment, if the user does not interact with the search field **504** within a specified period of time, the focus dictated by the loaded web page, if any, is allowed to occur. Additionally, in an embodiment where a search field having immediate feedback capability is presented as part of a web page, such as field **512** of **FIG. 5A**, the focus may be maintained on the web page search field **512**.

[**0066**] Many web browser applications include a history feature, which records the URLs of web pages that have been recently visited. Web browser applications typically

allow you to view the history and click on any URL therein to revisit the respective web page. Many browsers also allow users to specify how many days of history to keep and provide the ability to delete the history record. The immediate search feedback method **300** of the present invention may be used in conjunction with a web browser’s history function. In one embodiment, during the course of typing a search term, a plurality of URLs for search results pages may be “visited” by the user. By way of example, as illustrated by the sequence of **FIGS. 5A-5E**, in one embodiment, if a user types ipod into the search field, four distinct results pages may be presented to the user during the course of the input—one displaying results for a query based on the string consisting of i, another with results for ip, another displaying results for ipo, and another for the full query ipod. The first three results pages (i.e. those for the i, ip, and ipo queries) may be referred to as intermediate search results pages, since they represent results of queries using intermediate or partial search strings; partial meaning they typically include fewer characters than the final, complete, search string entered by the user. The cumulative input string prior to a user selecting one of the results presented by the results web page (or otherwise navigating away from the results page) may be referred to as a final or complete query string.

[**0067**] **FIG. 6A** illustrates an embodiment of a GUI **600** for a web browser application implementing the immediate search feedback method **300**, such as that described above with respect to **FIGS. 5A-5E**. In one embodiment, illustrated in **FIG. 6A** using the exemplary search term ipod, the URLs of all intermediate search results pages **602** (e.g. the i, ip, and ipo results pages of the previous example) are stored as part of the browser’s history record **606**, in addition to the URL of the final search results page **604** (e.g. the ipod results page). In another embodiment, illustrated in **FIG. 6B**, only the URL for the results page of the final/complete search term **604** (e.g. the ipod results page). In one embodiment, all result page URLs for intermediate searches as well as the final search results URL are stored together in a folder. For example, in one embodiment, in the case of the ipod search, a folder accessible under the browser’s history menu may be titled ipod (to reflect the final search string), and may include within it the URLs of results pages for all of the intermediate searches as well as the final results URL. A URL within the folder may be highlighted to indicate the final search results page presented to the user before the user selected one of the results from the page. In another embodiment, as a user types, a URL of a results page is periodically (e.g. once every 3 seconds or every other intermediate URL accessed) stored in the history associated with that particular search. In another embodiment, where a user inputs a plurality of words into a search field, only the URLs of results pages for the queries that included complete words are stored in for the history associated with that particular search.

[**0068**] In another embodiment, intermediate results pages are not stored as part of the history, but only the most recently displayed results page presented to a user just prior to selecting one of the displayed results (this page may be referred to as the final results page) is stored in the history. For example, consider the situation of a user typing in the two consecutive search terms cat dog into a search field. After being presented with the results of the “cat dog” search, the user revises the search by backspacing over dog and typing canine. After being presented with the results of