

images having a higher number of letters per key, and therefore fewer keys may be used with aspects of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A user-interface system for entering an alphanumeric string for identifying information content, the system comprising:

presentation logic for displaying on a presentation device an image of a virtual user alphanumeric interface, the virtual user alphanumeric interface including an image of an overloaded keypad that has a two dimensional configuration of alphanumeric clusters, each cluster corresponding to a set of selectable alphanumeric symbols including alphanumeric characters and alphanumeric numerals, the virtual user alphanumeric interface further including a string field for displaying the alphanumeric string of alphanumeric symbols selected by a user; and

selection logic for receiving user actions from an input device with a five button interface, said interface including four navigation-direction controls and a selection control, said selection logic including logic, cooperative with the presentation logic, to present visual cues to aid in the navigation of the virtual user alphanumeric interface and the selection of an alphanumeric symbol, said logic to present visual cues including logic to signify on the image of the virtual user alphanumeric interface the user selection of an alphanumeric cluster and including logic to aid in the selection of a symbol from the set of symbols associated with the selected cluster to cause the selected character to be displayed in the string field of the virtual user alphanumeric interface.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein each symbol of a cluster is selectable by acting only on the corresponding cluster.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the presentation device is separate from the input device so that the user can enter the alphanumeric string while focusing on the presentation device.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein an alphanumeric cluster is selectable via a cluster selection action and a cluster-symbol selection action selects one of the alphanumeric symbols of the selected cluster.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the set of selectable alphanumeric characters is presented in alphabetical order.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the set of selectable alphanumeric characters of at least one cluster is presented in an order according to an alphabet occurrence frequency of a predetermined language.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the set of selectable alphanumeric characters of at least one cluster is presented in an order according to an alphabet occurrence frequency of characters in words that describe items in a searchable collection of information content.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein a presentation order of the set of selectable alphanumeric characters of at least one cluster is changed from an initial presentation order based on the received user actions.

9. A user-interface system for entering an alphanumeric string for identifying information content, the system comprising:

presentation logic for displaying on a presentation device an image of a virtual user alphanumeric interface, the virtual user alphanumeric interface including an image of an overloaded keypad that has a two dimensional configuration of alphanumeric clusters, each cluster corresponding to a set of selectable alphanumeric symbols including alphanumeric characters and alphanumeric numerals, the virtual user alphanumeric interface further including a string field for displaying the alphanumeric string of alphanumeric symbols selected by a user; and

selection logic for receiving user actions from an input device, said selection logic including logic, cooperative with the presentation logic, to present visual cues to aid in the navigation of the virtual user alphanumeric interface and the selection of an alphanumeric cluster to cause the selected cluster to be displayed in the string field of the virtual user alphanumeric interface;

disambiguation logic to receive the selected clusters and to disambiguate the selection to a probable user selection.

10. A user-interface system for entering an alphanumeric string for identifying information content, the system comprising:

presentation logic for displaying on a presentation device an image of a virtual user alphanumeric interface, the virtual user alphanumeric interface including an image of an overloaded keypad that has a two dimensional configuration of alphanumeric clusters, each cluster corresponding to a set of selectable alphanumeric symbols including alphanumeric characters and alphanumeric numerals, the virtual user alphanumeric interface further including a string field for displaying the alphanumeric string of alphanumeric symbols selected by a user, wherein the alphanumeric characters are presented in a non-alphabetic order to facilitate selection of a probable string via reduced user selection actions; and

selection logic for receiving user actions from an input device, said selection logic including logic, cooperative with the presentation logic, to present visual cues to aid in the navigation of the virtual user alphanumeric interface and the selection of an alphanumeric symbol, said logic to present visual cues including logic to signify on the image of the virtual user alphanumeric interface the user selection of an alphanumeric cluster and including logic to aid in the selection of a symbol from the set of symbols associated with the selected cluster to cause the selected character to be displayed in the string field of the virtual user alphanumeric interface.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the alphanumeric characters are presented in an order according to an alphabet occurrence frequency of a predetermined language.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the alphanumeric characters are presented in an order according to an alphabet occurrence frequency of characters in words that describe items in a searchable collection of information content.

13. A user-interface method for entering an alphanumeric string for identifying information content, the method comprising: