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Murphy et al.

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(54) **APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AUTOMATED PRIVACY PROTECTION IN DISTRIBUTED IMAGES**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(60) Provisional application No. 62/004,168, filed on May 28, 2014.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

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G06F 21/10	(2013.01)
G06Q 50/00	(2012.01)
G06K 9/00	(2006.01)
H04L 12/58	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***G06F 21/6245*** (2013.01); ***G06F 21/10*** (2013.01); ***G06K 9/00288*** (2013.01); ***G06Q 50/01*** (2013.01); ***H04L 51/10*** (2013.01); *G06F 2221/0724* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC .. G06F 21/6245; G06F 21/10; G06K 9/00268

See application file for complete search history.

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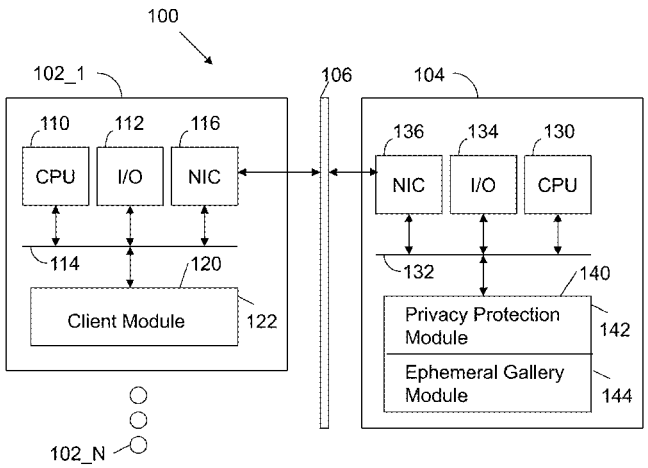
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method executed by a computer includes receiving an image from a client device. A facial recognition technique is executed against an individual face within the image to obtain a recognized face. Privacy rules are applied to the image, where the privacy rules are associated with privacy settings for a user associated with the recognized face. A privacy protected version of the image is distributed, where the privacy protected version of the image has an altered image feature.

14 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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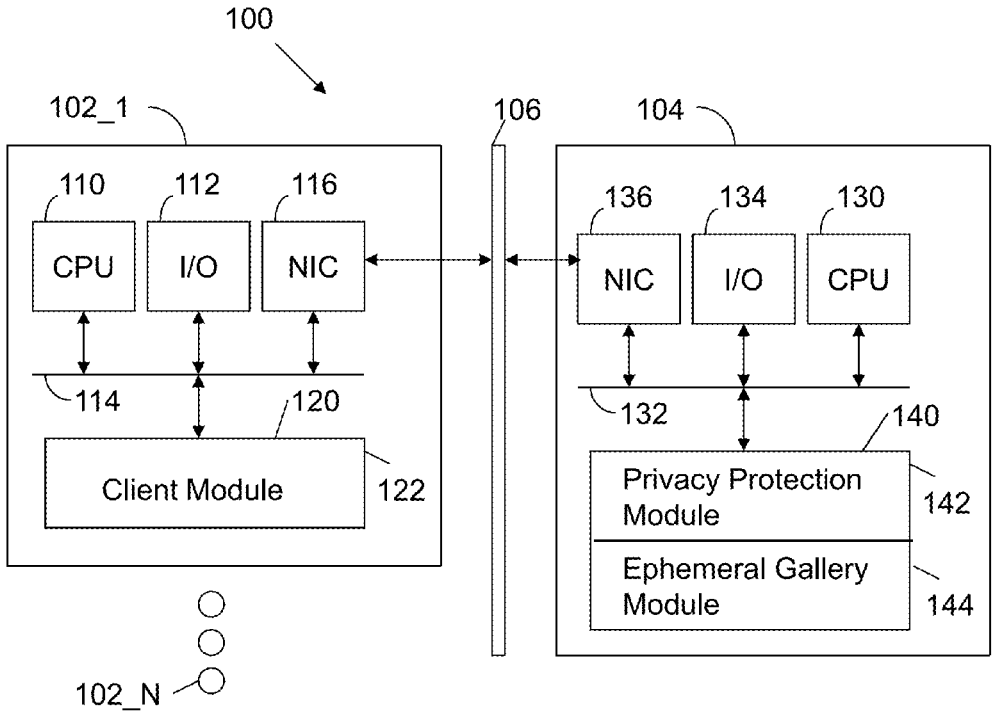
100
102_1
106
104
110
112
116
CPU
I/O
NIC
114
120
Client Module
122
102_N
136
134
130
NIC
I/O
CPU
132
140
Privacy Protection Module
142
Ephemeral Gallery Module
144

FIG. 1

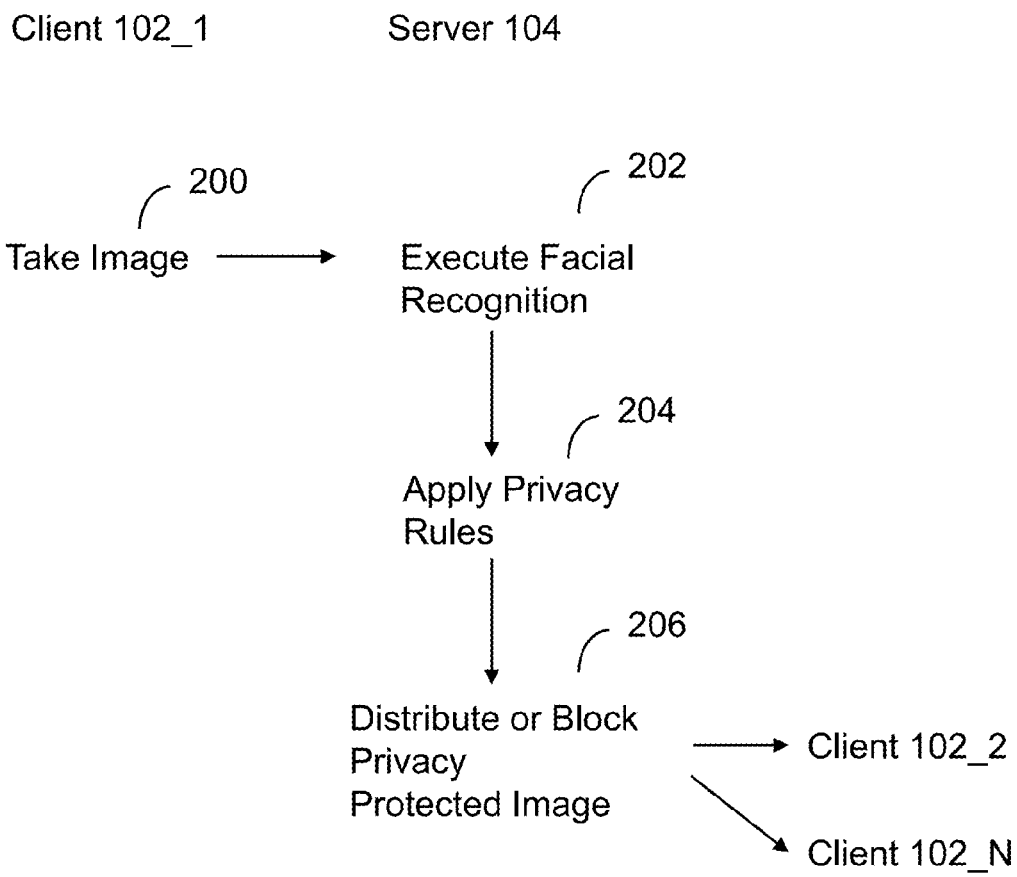
Client 102_1
Server 104
200
Take Image
202
Execute Facial Recognition
204
Apply Privacy Rules
206
Distribute or Block Privacy Protected Image
Client 102_2
Client 102_N

FIG. 2

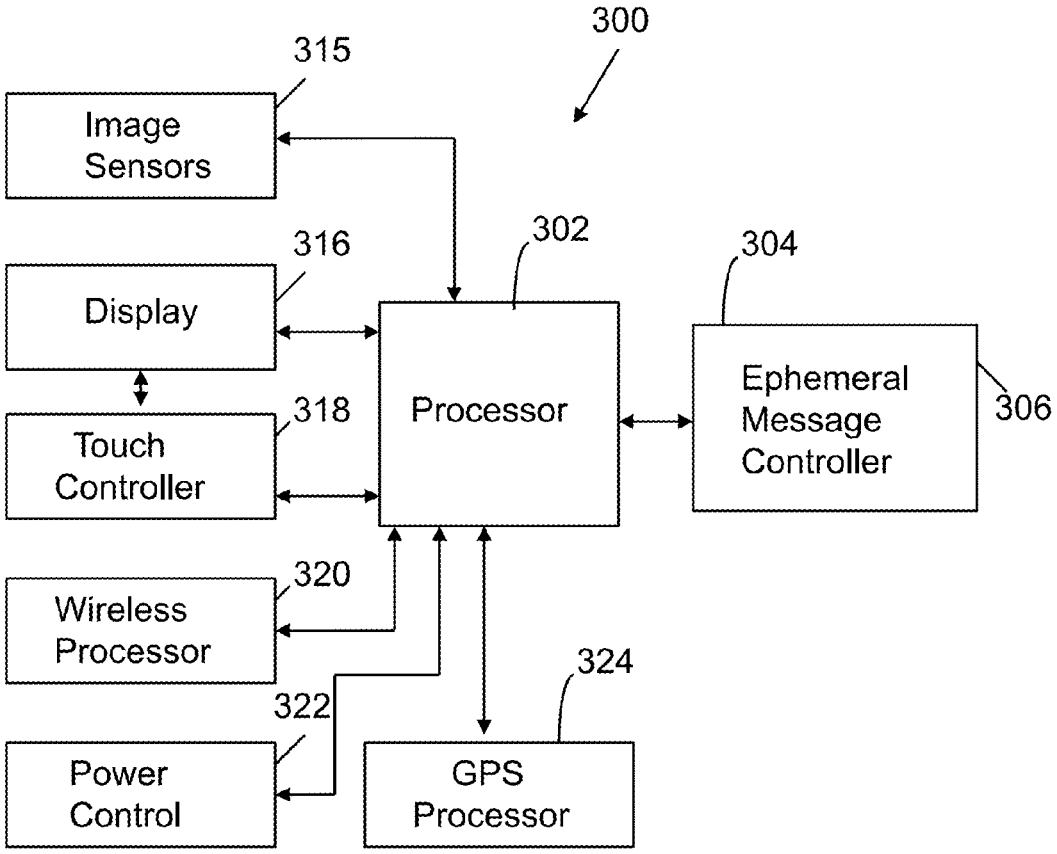
300
315
Image Sensors
316
Display
318
Touch Controller
302
Processor
304
Ephemeral Message Controller
306
320
Wireless Processor
322
Power Control
324
GPS Processor

FIG. 3

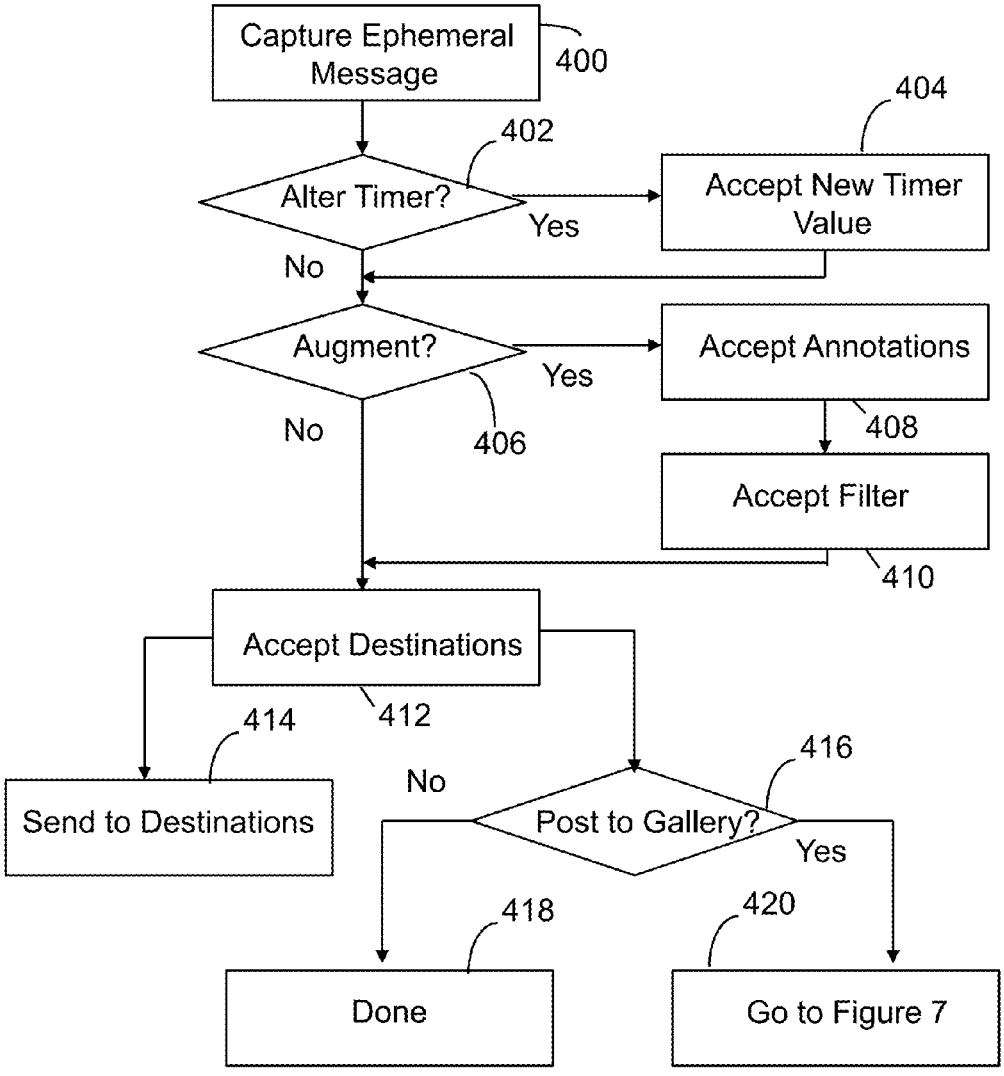
Capture Ephemeral Message
400
Alter Timer?
402
Yes
No
Accept New Timer Value
404
Augment?
406
Yes
No
Accept Annotations
408
Accept Filter
410
Accept Destinations
412
Send to Destinations
414
No
Post to Gallery?
416
Yes
Done
418
Go to Figure 7
420

FIG. 4

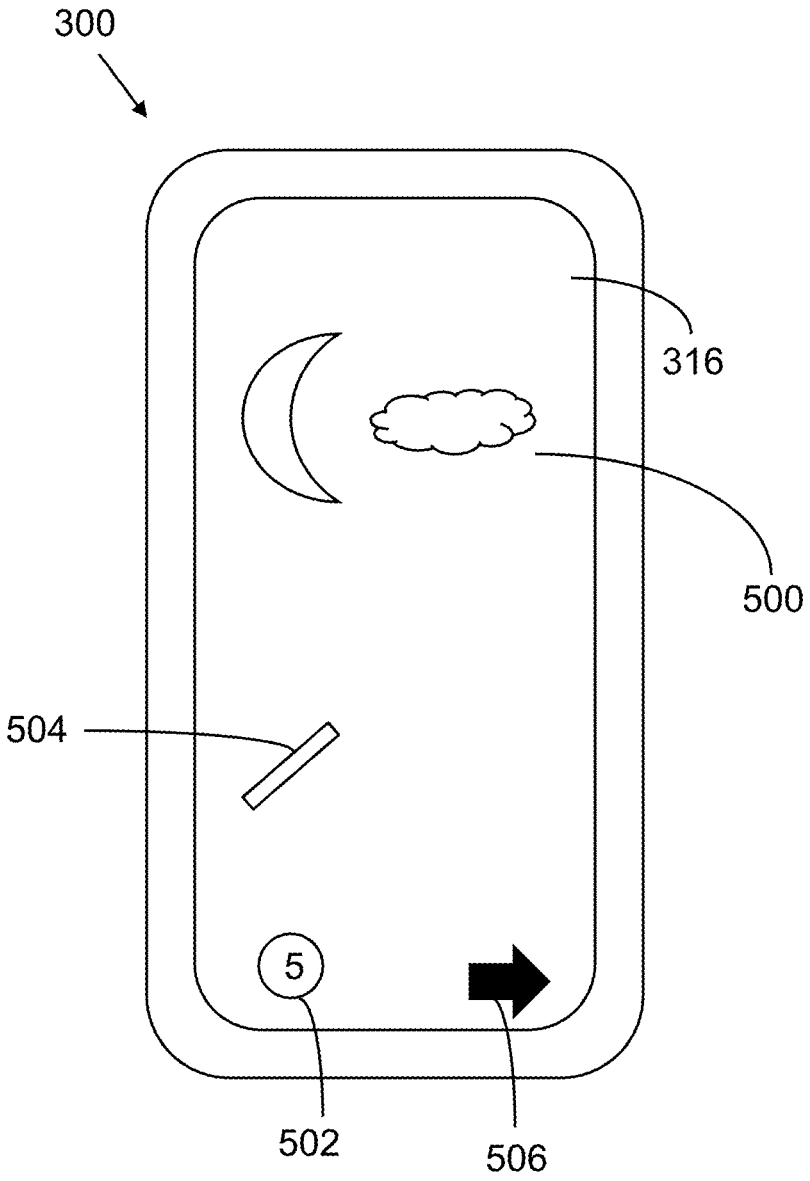

FIG. 5

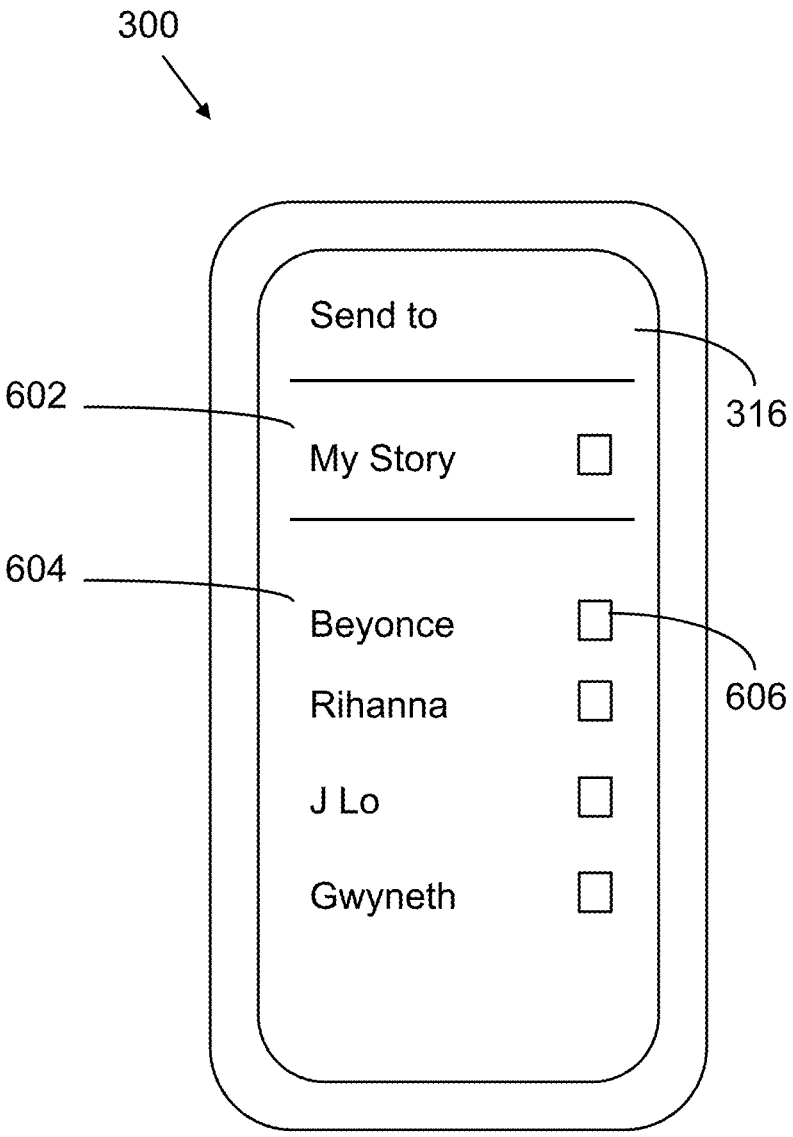
300
Send to
316
602
My Story
604
Beyonce
606
Rihanna
J Lo
Gwyneth

FIG. 6

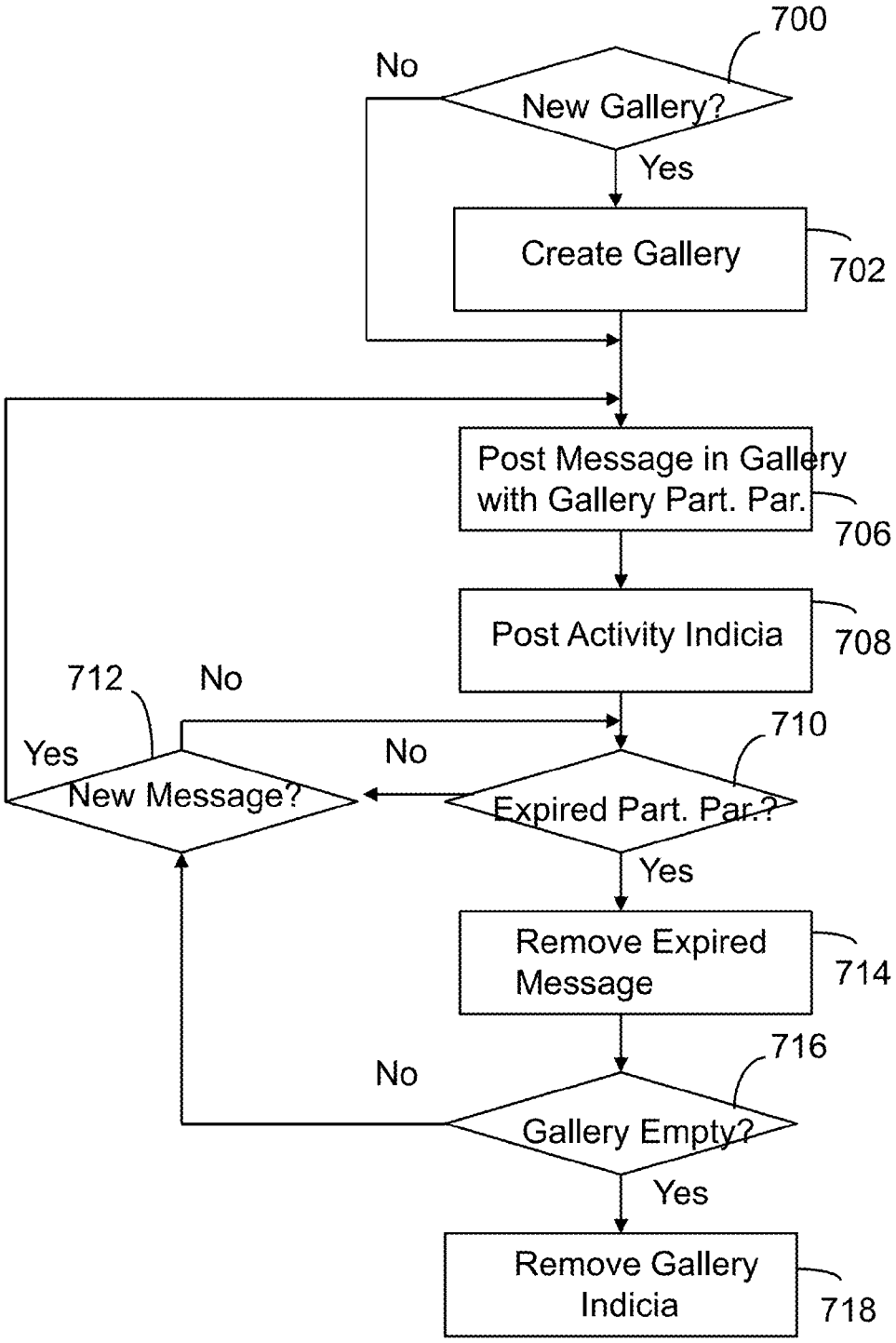
700
No
New Gallery?
Yes
Create Gallery
702
Post Message in Gallery with Gallery Part. Par.
706
Post Activity Indicia
708
712
No
710
Yes
No
New Message?
Expired Part. Par.?
Yes
Remove Expired Message
714
716
No
Gallery Empty?
Yes
Remove Gallery Indicia
718

FIG. 7

800	802	804
Message_1	10 Seconds	120 Minutes Left
Message_2	5 Seconds	360 Minutes Left
Message_3	5 Seconds	1200 Minutes Left
Message_4	10 Seconds	1320 Minutes Left

FIG. 8

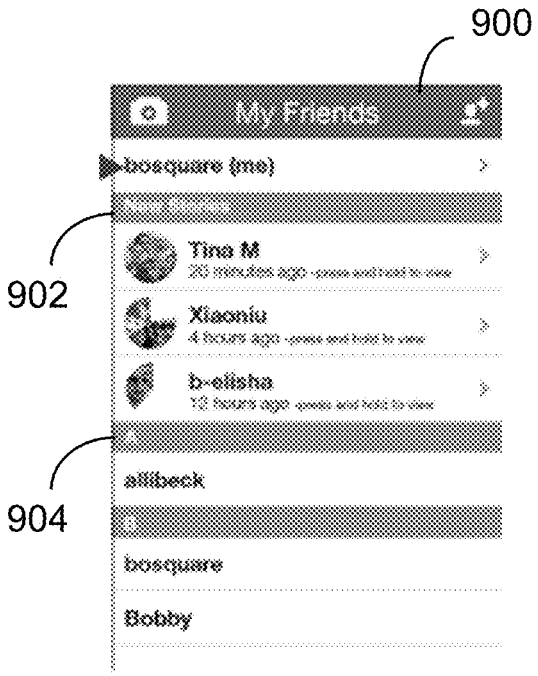

FIG. 9

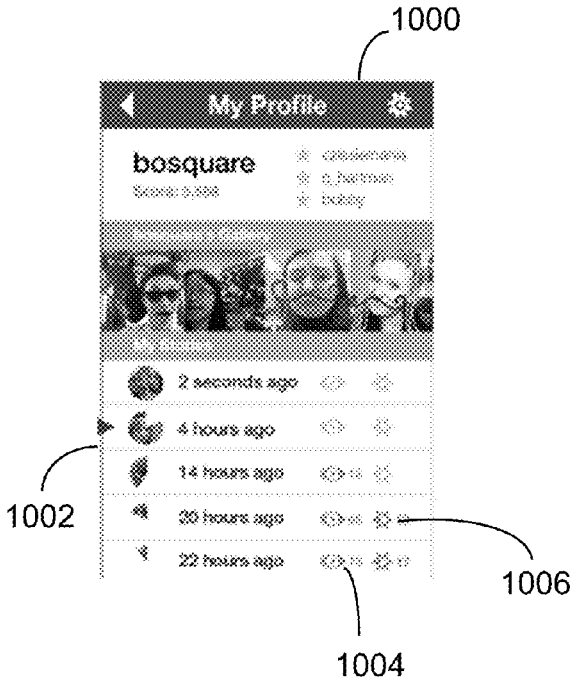
1000
My Profile
bosquare
2 seconds ago
4 hours ago
14 hours ago
1002
1006
1004

FIG. 10

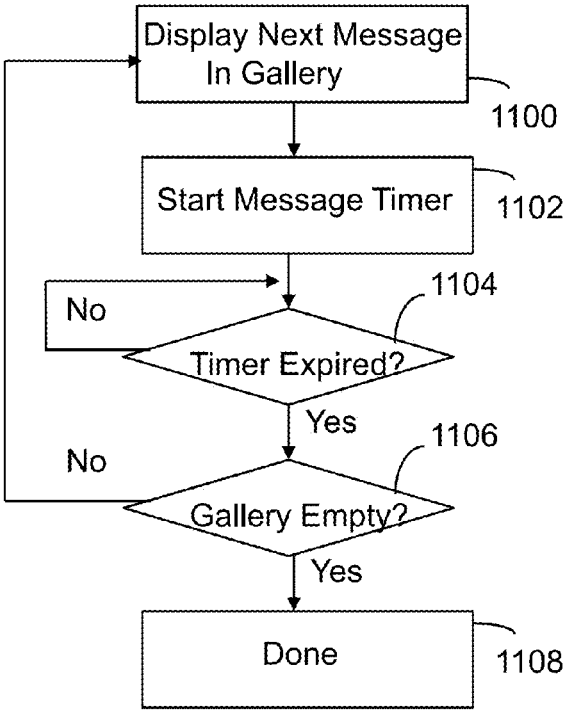
Display Next Message In Gallery
1100
Start Message Timer
1102
1104
No
Timer Expired?
Yes
1106
No
Gallery Empty?
Yes
Done
1108

FIG. 11

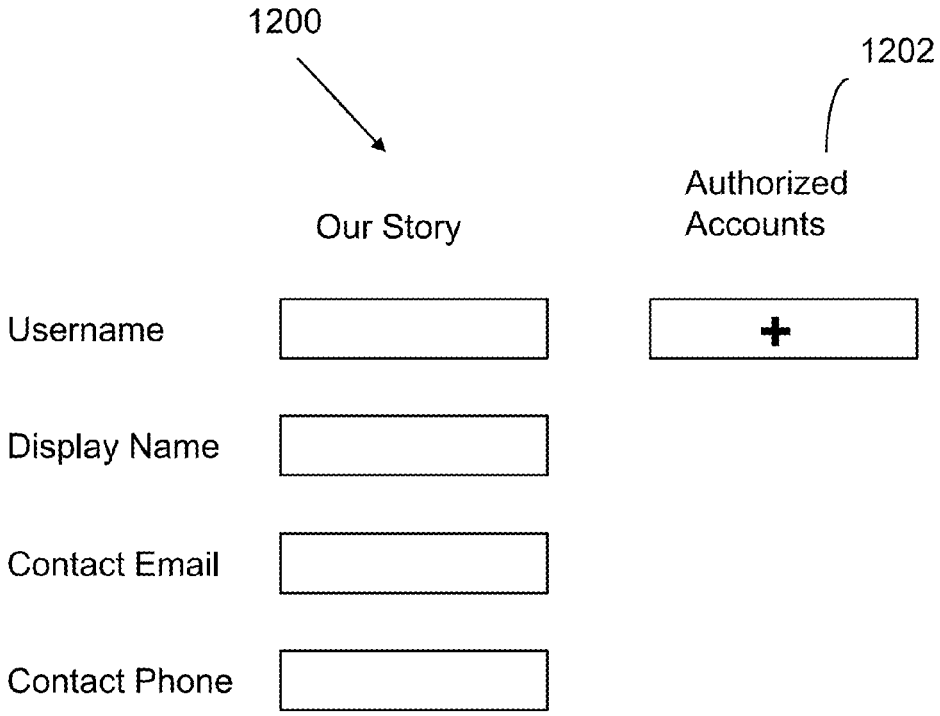
1200
1202
Authorized Accounts
Our Story
Username
+
Display Name
Contact Email
Contact Phone

FIG. 12

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AUTOMATED PRIVACY PROTECTION IN DISTRIBUTED IMAGES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED INVENTION

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/723,400 filed May 27, 2015 which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/004,168, filed May 28, 2014, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to digital images (e.g., digital photographs and videos). More particularly, this invention relates to techniques for automated privacy protection in distributed images.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The ubiquity of digital equipment, such as smartphones and wearable technology, has created privacy concerns. In particular, large numbers of individuals are in a position to take and distribute images of another individual without the consent of the photographed or videoed individual. Accordingly, it would be desirable to provide techniques for automated privacy protection in digital image distribution.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A method executed by a computer includes receiving an image from a client device. A facial recognition technique is executed against an individual face within the image to obtain a recognized face. Privacy rules are applied to the image, where the privacy rules are associated with privacy settings for a user associated with the recognized face. A privacy protected version of the image is distributed, where the privacy protected version of the image has an altered image feature.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

The invention is more fully appreciated in connection with the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** illustrates a system configured in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **2** illustrates processing operations associated with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **3** illustrates components of an electronic device utilized in accordance with the invention.

FIG. **4** illustrates processing operations associated with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **5** illustrates an electronic device for capturing and augmenting an ephemeral message.

FIG. **6** illustrates an ephemeral message destination routing interface that may be used in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **7** illustrates ephemeral gallery processing operations associated with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **8** illustrates an ephemeral gallery data structure associated with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **9** illustrates ephemeral gallery indicia associated with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **10** illustrates ephemeral gallery indicia associated with another embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **11** illustrates operations performed in response to an ephemeral gallery view request.

FIG. **12** illustrates an account administration interface to establish an ephemeral gallery that receives ephemeral messages from multiple users.

Like reference numerals refer to corresponding parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIG. **1** illustrates a system **100** configured in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The system includes a set of client devices **102_1** through **102_N** connected to a server **104** via a network **106**, which may be any wired and/or wireless network. Each client device **102** includes standard components, such as a central processing unit **110** and input/output devices **112** connected via a bus **114**. The input/output devices **112** may include a touch display, a keyboard, camera, individual input buttons and the like associated with a smartphone or wearable technology (e.g., eye glasses or a watch with processing power and a wireless network communication module). A network interface circuit **116** is also connected to the bus **114** to provide connectivity to network **106**. A memory **120** is also connected to the bus **114**. The memory **120** stores a client module **122** with executable instructions to implement image capture and distribution operations. In particular, the client module **122** coordinates image capture operations and communicates with server **104**, which coordinates image distribution operations. The image may be a digital photograph or video.

The server **104** also includes standard components, such as a central processing unit **130**, a bus **132**, input/output devices **134** and a network interface circuit **136**. A memory **140** is also connected to the bus **132**. The memory **140** stores a privacy protection module **142**, which includes executable instructions to implement operations of the invention, as discussed in connection with FIG. **2**. The memory **140** also stores an ephemeral gallery module **144**, which will be discussed below.

As shown in FIG. **2**, a client device **102_1** executing a client module **122** takes an image **200**. The client module **122** coordinates the delivery of the image to the server **104**. The server **104** receives the image. The server **104** may also receive an image from another service, such as a gallery of photographs or videos. The privacy protection module **142** executes facial recognition **202** for any faces present in the image. Automated facial recognition techniques in images are known in the art. In one embodiment, the privacy protection module **142** processes a set of images of a user and generates a facial signature that is associated with a user name. Facial signatures and associated user names may be maintained for all users within a photograph sharing or video sharing application. These operations may be performed on server **104**. Alternately, the privacy protection module **142** coordinates calls to another networked server (not shown), which provides facial recognition services.

The next processing operation of FIG. **2** is to apply privacy rules **204**. The privacy rules are associated with privacy settings for a user associated with a recognized face. For example, the privacy rules and/or privacy settings may specify that a facial image of user A may only be distributed from images taken by user A's device. Another rule may specify that images that include A's face may only be distributed from or to devices or accounts previously

approved by A. For example, only usernames identified by user A may be allowed to distribute images that include user A (without the application of privacy rules). Similarly, images that include A's face may be distributed, without the privacy rules, to previously approved accounts or devices. Another rule may specify that a facial image of user B may only be distributed to friends in user B's social network. Another rule may specify that permission be obtained to distribute an image of a user that has privacy settings blocking such image distribution. For example, the privacy protection module **142** may automatically send a message on behalf of the user taking the image that seeks permission from the user that has privacy settings blocking such image distribution. The message may include the image and information on the user that took the image. Passwords or codes may be required for access to the image. That is, the viewer or message recipient may be required to obtain a password or code from the person in the image. In yet another embodiment, before being able to receive an image, the recipient may be prompted to send a request to the subject (i.e., the person in the picture) for permission to view the image. In response, a message is transmitted to the subject indicating that the recipient has requested access to view the image. The subject may then grant or deny access.

The final processing operation of FIG. **2** is to distribute or block privacy images **206** to various client devices, such as client **102_2** through **102**_N. The privacy protected images have an altered image feature. The altered image feature may be a blurring of the facial image of a user that has requested privacy protection. Alternately, an emoticon, icon or brand may be placed over the face of the user that has requested privacy protection. The altered image may include a complete blocking of the face and body of the protected individual that has specified such privacy settings. Another embodiment restricts transmission or receipt of the privacy protected image (as opposed to transmitting or receiving a blurred image).

The privacy protected image may also be saved in a privacy protected format. In this case, the client **102_1** can only access a privacy protected image. Thus, if the user of client **102_1** has taken an image of an individual with privacy settings limiting which users can see such an image and such users do not include the user of client **102_1**, then the user of client **102_1** only has access to a privacy protected format. This limits the user of client **102_1**, but it allows individuals with privacy settings to control how other users capture them.

In an alternate embodiment, the facial recognition operation is used not for privacy purposes, but for enhancing the digital photograph in some specified manner. For example, the facial recognition operation may be used to add content, such as a sticker, text or an advertisement, which do not necessarily protect privacy or hide identity, but do provide an enhanced image.

In one embodiment, the image is ephemeral. That is, the image is configured for purposeful, and automatic, deletion after a certain period of time or after a certain action has been taken, such as viewing the image once. Thus, in these embodiments, privacy protected ephemeral images may be transmitted and distributed via any manner of communication, including, e.g., chat and other mobile application client, instant messenger, email, text/SMS, etc. The criteria for deleting the image are typically set by the individual taking the image. However, default criteria may be used (e.g., a single five second viewing period available for a twenty-four hour period).

The ephemeral images may be combined in an ephemeral gallery curated by the ephemeral gallery module **144**. FIG. **3** illustrates an electronic device **300**. In one embodiment, the electronic device **300** is a smartphone with a processor **302** in communication with a memory **304**. The processor **302** may be a central processing unit and/or a graphics processing unit. The memory **304** is a combination of flash memory and random access memory. The memory **304** stores an ephemeral message controller **306** to implement operations of the invention. The ephemeral message controller **306** may include executable instructions to access a server which coordinates operations disclosed herein. Alternately, the ephemeral message controller **306** may include executable instructions to coordinate some of the operations disclosed herein, while the server implements other operations.

The display time for the ephemeral message is typically set by the message sender. However, the display time may be a default setting or a setting specified by the recipient. Regardless of the setting technique, the message is transitory (i.e., the message is deleted or otherwise made inaccessible after a certain period of time or after a certain action has been taken).

The processor **302** is also coupled to image sensors **315**. The image sensors **315** may be known digital image sensors, such as charge coupled devices. The image sensors capture visual media, which is presented on display **316**.

A touch controller **318** is connected to the display **316** and the processor **302**. The touch controller **318** is responsive to haptic signals applied to the display **316**. In one embodiment, the ephemeral message controller **306** monitors signals from the touch controller **318**. If haptic contact is observed by the touch controller **318** in connection with indicia of an ephemeral gallery, then the ephemeral gallery is displayed to the user as a sequence of ephemeral messages.

The electronic device **300** may also include other components commonly associated with a smartphone, such as a wireless signal processor **320** to provide connectivity to a wireless network. A power control circuit **322** and a global positioning system processor **324** may also be utilized. While many of the components of FIG. **3** are known in the art, new functionality is achieved through the ephemeral message controller **306** operating in conjunction with a server (e.g., server **104**).

FIG. **4** illustrates processing operations associated with the ephemeral message controller **306**. Initially, an ephemeral message is captured **400**. FIG. **5** illustrates electronic device **300** and touch display **316** with a photograph **500** operative as an ephemeral message.

The next processing operation of FIG. **4** is to determine whether to alter a timer or a message duration parameter **402**. FIG. **5** illustrates an example of indicia **502** of a message duration parameter. In this example, the indicion indicates a default of 5 seconds as the message duration parameter. If the indicia is engaged (e.g., through haptic contact), then a prompt may be supplied for a new message duration parameter (e.g., 10 seconds). Such activity (**402**—Yes) results in the acceptance of the new timer value **404**. If a new timer value is specified or no alteration of a timer transpires (**402**—No) control proceeds to block **406**. The user may be prompted to augment the ephemeral message. As shown in FIG. **5**, a drawing tool **504** may be supplied to allow a user to add a hand drawn message. The drawing tool **504** may be manipulated by haptic contact to enter a message or annotation of visual media. Alternately or in addition, a keyboard may be used to type augment a mes-

sage. For example, a tap on the touch display **316** may result in a keyboard being displayed, which allows a user to enter a typed message.

As shown in FIG. **4**, annotations may be accepted **408** in this manner. Augmentation may also be in the form of photograph filters. That is, photograph filters may be accepted **410**. For example, a first right-to-left swipe motion on the touch display **316** may drag a first filter on top of the photograph. A second right-to-left swipe motion on the touch display **316** may drag a second filter on top of the photograph. Filter processing of this type is described in commonly owned U.S. Ser. No. 14/325,270, filed Jul. 7, 2014, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

The next operation of FIG. **4** is to accept destinations **412**. As more fully described below, a destination may be used to identify intended recipients of a message or a location or "gallery" where one or more messages may be accessed. FIG. **5** illustrates an icon **506** to invoke a destination list. Haptic contact on the icon may result in a destination list of the type shown in FIG. **6**. FIG. **6** illustrates an electronic device **300** displaying a destination list. The destination list may include a destination of "My Story" **602**, where "My Story" is a reference to an ephemeral gallery of ephemeral messages. The destination list may also include friends or contacts section **604** listing various friends that may be ephemeral message recipients. Haptic contact with a box **606** associated with a listed individual or story places the corresponding individual or story on a destination list.

Returning to FIG. **4**, after the destination list is specified, the ephemeral message is sent to the specified destinations **414**. For example, the ephemeral message is sent to friends selected from section **604**, if any. A check is also made to determine whether the message should be posted to an ephemeral gallery **416**. If not (**416**—No), processing is completed. If so (**416**—Yes), the processing of FIG. **7** is performed **420**. Thus, it is possible to send a message to one or more friends and/or post to an ephemeral gallery.

The ephemeral gallery module **144** may include instructions to coordinate the processing operations of FIG. **4**. These operations may be controlled by the ephemeral gallery module **144** or they may be performed in conjunction with selective operations performed by the ephemeral message controller **306**.

FIG. **7** illustrates ephemeral gallery module **144** operations performed in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The first operation of FIG. **7** is to determine whether a new gallery is needed **700**. As discussed in connection with FIG. **6**, designating "My Story" **602** as a message recipient results in a post of an ephemeral message to an ephemeral gallery. If a gallery does not exist (**700**—Yes), then a new gallery is created **702**. Alternately, if a gallery does exist and a user wants to create a new gallery, then the new gallery is created **702**. The user may be supplied a prompt to indicate whether an existing gallery should be used or a new gallery should be designated.

The message is then posted in the gallery with a gallery participation parameter **706**. The gallery participation parameter is an ephemeral period of time that the ephemeral message will continue to exist in the gallery. For example, a first ephemeral message posted to the gallery may have a default gallery participation parameter of 24 hours. In other instances, the gallery participation parameter may be set by a user. The gallery participation parameter value decreases with the passage of time. Thus, in this embodiment, an ephemeral message gallery subsists for as long as the gallery participation parameter of the last message posed to the gallery.

In another embodiment, a gallery timer may be assigned to a gallery by a user. The gallery timer may be used to establish a lifespan of an associated gallery and messages posted to this gallery subsist for no longer than the life of the gallery. Thus, in some embodiments, all messages posted to such a gallery will subsist for the duration of the life of the gallery (regardless of posting time). In other embodiments, messages may be submitted with a gallery participation parameter. In these embodiments, messages expire and become inaccessible at the earlier of the gallery participation parameter or the remaining life of the gallery.

The next processing operation of FIG. **7** is to post activity indicia **708**. Examples of activity indicia are provided below. A check is then made to determine whether there is an expired participation parameter **710**. If so (**710**—Yes), the ephemeral message associated with the expired participation parameter is removed from the ephemeral gallery **714**. If as a result of this removed message the gallery is empty (**716**—Yes), then the ephemeral gallery ephemeral gallery terminates and indicia of the gallery is removed **718**. If the gallery is not empty (**716**—No), a check is made for a new message **712**. If a new message exists (**712**—Yes), then processing returns to block **706**. If a new message does not exist (**712**—No), then processing returns to block **710**. If an expired participation parameter does not exist (**710**—No), then a check is made once again for a new message **712**.

FIG. **8** illustrates a data structure for an ephemeral message gallery. A first column **800** may have a list of messages. Another column **802** may have a list of message duration parameters for individual messages. Another column **804** may have a list of gallery participation parameters for individual messages. Observe in this example that the values in column **802** add up to 30 seconds. Thus, the ephemeral message gallery in this example has four messages that will take 30 seconds to display. Further observe that the oldest message (Message_1) is displayed first and will be removed in 120 minutes. In this example, the newest message (Message_4) will remain in the ephemeral gallery for 1320 minutes at which point the ephemeral gallery will expire, unless another message is posted. The arrival of a new message alters the gallery timer, but does not alter gallery participation parameters.

FIG. **9** illustrates an interface **900** with a section **902** that designates available ephemeral message galleries (stories) and a section **904** with a listing of friends (available destinations for an ephemeral message). Observe that section **902** has indicia of ephemeral message gallery activity. FIG. **9** provides example indicia of the time that the last message was posted to the ephemeral message gallery. FIG. **9** also provides example graphical indicia of the amount of time remaining for an ephemeral message gallery. Observe that the first entry was posted 20 minutes ago and therefore has a full circle indicative of the time remaining for that ephemeral message gallery. On the other hand, the third entry was posted 12 hours ago and has approximately half a circle to indicate the time remaining for that ephemeral message gallery. This example contemplates a 24 hour period for an ephemeral message gallery. Naturally, other time periods may be utilized in accordance with embodiments of the invention.

FIG. **10** illustrates an interface **1000** with information on a user's stories. Individual stories **1002** have indicia of the amount of time remaining. Indicium **1004** of the number of ephemeral gallery views is also provided. Indicium **1006** of

screenshots taken of an ephemeral message is also provided. This information is significant since the intent of the message was that it be ephemeral. If a message recipient overrides this intent by taking a screen shot, then the message sender is advised.

FIG. **11** illustrates processing operations performed by the ephemeral gallery module **144** in response to a request for an ephemeral message gallery. As shown in FIG. **6**, a user receives a list of **602** of available stories. Haptic contact with indicia of a story is operative as a request to view an ephemeral message gallery.

The first operation in FIG. **11** is to display the next message in the gallery **1100**. In the example of FIG. **8**, the oldest message is the first message to be displayed. A message timer is then started **1102**. The message timer expires at the end of the message duration parameter for the displayed ephemeral message. In the example of FIG. **8**, the first message (Message_1) is displayed for 10 seconds. Block **1104** checks for the timer to expire. Upon expiration of the timer (**1104**—Yes), a check is made to determine if the gallery is empty **1106**. If so (**1106**—Yes), processing is completed **1108**. If not (**1106**—No), processing returns to block **1100**. This processing loop is repeated until the gallery is empty.

FIG. **12** illustrates an account administration interface **1200** to establish an ephemeral gallery that receives ephemeral messages from multiple users. Such a feature may be used to facilitate celebrity or organizational accounts where numerous authorized users are allowed to post on behalf of a single account. In one embodiment, a username, display name, contact email and contact phone are specified by an account administrator. An authorized accounts prompt **1202** allows the account administrator to add other users to the ephemeral gallery. For example, activation of the prompt **1202** may result in prompts for a username, display name, contact email and/or contact phone. Alternately, activation of the prompt **1202** may result in an interface of the type shown in FIG. **6** through which authorized accounts may be added. Similar interfaces may be used for specifying privacy settings, such as which accounts are authorized to receive images of an individual.

Although the embodiments described in FIGS. **3-12** depict the use of privacy protection concepts in the context of an ephemeral gallery, it is to be understood that other embodiments contemplate the application of the concepts in these figures to privacy protection in any communication protocols, including, e.g., chat, SMS, IM, other mobile, email, etc.

An embodiment of the present invention relates to a computer storage product with a non-transitory computer readable storage medium having computer code thereon for performing various computer-implemented operations. The media and computer code may be those specially designed and constructed for the purposes of the present invention, or they may be of the kind well known and available to those having skill in the computer software arts. Examples of computer-readable media include, but are not limited to: magnetic media, optical media, magneto-optical media and hardware devices that are specially configured to store and execute program code, such as application-specific integrated circuits ("ASICs"), programmable logic devices ("PLDs") and ROM and RAM devices. Examples of computer code include machine code, such as produced by a compiler, and files containing higher-level code that are executed by a computer using an interpreter. For example, an embodiment of the invention may be implemented using JAVA®, C++, or other object-oriented programming language and development tools. Another embodiment of the invention may be implemented in hardwired circuitry in place of, or in combination with, machine-executable software instructions.

The foregoing description, for purposes of explanation, used specific nomenclature to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it will be apparent to one skilled in the art that specific details are not required in order to practice the invention. Thus, the foregoing descriptions of specific embodiments of the invention are presented for purposes of illustration and description. They are not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed; obviously, many modifications and variations are possible in view of the above teachings. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to best explain the principles of the invention and its practical applications, they thereby enable others skilled in the art to best utilize the invention and various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. It is intended that the following claims and their equivalents define the scope of the invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method executed by a computer, comprising:
receiving an image from a client device;
executing a facial recognition technique against an individual face within the image to obtain a recognized face;
applying privacy rules to the image; and
distributing a privacy protected version of the image, wherein the privacy protected version of the image has an altered image feature, wherein the privacy protected version of the image is distributed to an ephemeral gallery including a collection of ephemeral images shown in sequence, and wherein the ephemeral gallery is available for an ephemeral period of time, wherein each ephemeral image has an associated message duration parameter that indicates a display duration for the corresponding ephemeral image during viewing of the ephemeral gallery, and each ephemeral image has a gallery participation parameter that indicates a time value for continued availability of the corresponding ephemeral image in the ephemeral gallery, wherein a particular one of the plurality ephemeral images is removed from the ephemeral gallery in response to the identification of an expired gallery participation parameter corresponding to the particular ephemeral image, and wherein the ephemeral gallery is eliminated upon expiration of either a gallery timer or upon expiration of the gallery participation parameter of a last ephemeral image in the ephemeral gallery, the last ephemeral image being that one of the plurality of ephemeral images which was posted to the ephemeral gallery last.

2. The method of claim **1** wherein the altered image feature is a blurred image of the recognized face.

3. The method of claim **1** wherein the altered image feature is a block over the recognized face.

4. The method of claim **3** wherein the block is selected from an emoticon, an icon and a brand.

5. The method of claim **1** wherein the altered image feature is a block over the recognized face and the body associated with the recognized face.

6. The method of claim **1** wherein executing includes making network calls to a machine supplying facial recognition services.

7. A method executed by a computer, comprising:
receiving an image from a client device;

executing a facial recognition technique against an individual face within the image to obtain a recognized face;

applying privacy rules to the image; and

limiting distribution of the image in accordance with the privacy rules and selectively distributing the image to an ephemeral gallery including a collection of ephemeral images shown in sequence, wherein the ephemeral gallery is available for an ephemeral period of time, wherein each ephemeral image has an associated message duration parameter that indicates a display duration for the corresponding ephemeral image during viewing of the ephemeral gallery, and each ephemeral image has a gallery participation parameter that indicates a time value for continued availability of the corresponding ephemeral image in the ephemeral gallery, wherein a particular one of the plurality ephemeral images is removed from the ephemeral gallery in response to the identification of an expired gallery participation parameter corresponding to the particular ephemeral image, and wherein the ephemeral gallery is eliminated upon expiration of either a gallery timer or upon expiration of the gallery participation parameter of a last ephemeral image in the ephemeral gallery, the last ephemeral image being that one of the plurality of ephemeral images which was posted to the ephemeral gallery last.

8. The method of claim **7** wherein limiting distribution of the image includes blocking the distribution of the image.

9. The method of claim **7** wherein limiting distribution of the image includes limiting distribution of the image to members of the social network associated with the recognized face.

10. The method of claim **7** wherein limiting distribution of the image includes soliciting permission from the user associated with the recognized face prior to distribution of the image.

11. The method of claim **7** further comprising distributing a privacy protected version of the image, wherein the privacy protected version of the image has an altered image feature.

12. The method of claim **11** wherein the altered image feature is a blurred image of the recognized face.

13. The method of claim **11** wherein the altered image feature is a block over the recognized face, wherein the block is selected from an emoticon, an icon and a brand.

14. The method of claim **11** wherein the altered image feature is a block over the recognized face and the body associated with the recognized face.

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