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Reynolds et al.

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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COMPRESSING PORTIONS OF A MEDIA SIGNAL USING DIFFERENT CODECS**

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 10/256,866, filed on Sep. 26, 2002, now Pat. No. 7,295,608.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/325,483, filed on Sep. 26, 2001.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04N 7/12 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **375/240.01; 375/240; 375/240.12**

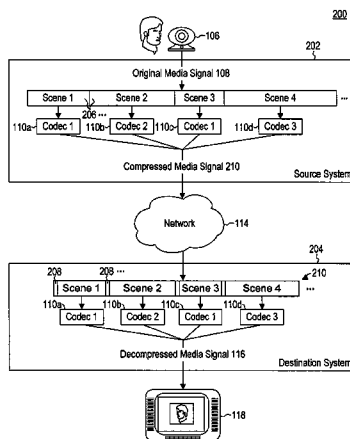
(58) **Field of Classification Search** **375/240, 375/240.01, 240.08, 240.12, 240.14, 240.2**

See application file for complete search history.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An input module obtains a media signal to be communicated to a destination system, after which an identification module identifies a plurality of scenes within the media signal. A selection module automatically selects different codecs from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes. The codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate. A compression module then compresses the scenes using the automatically selected codecs, after which an output module delivers the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

57 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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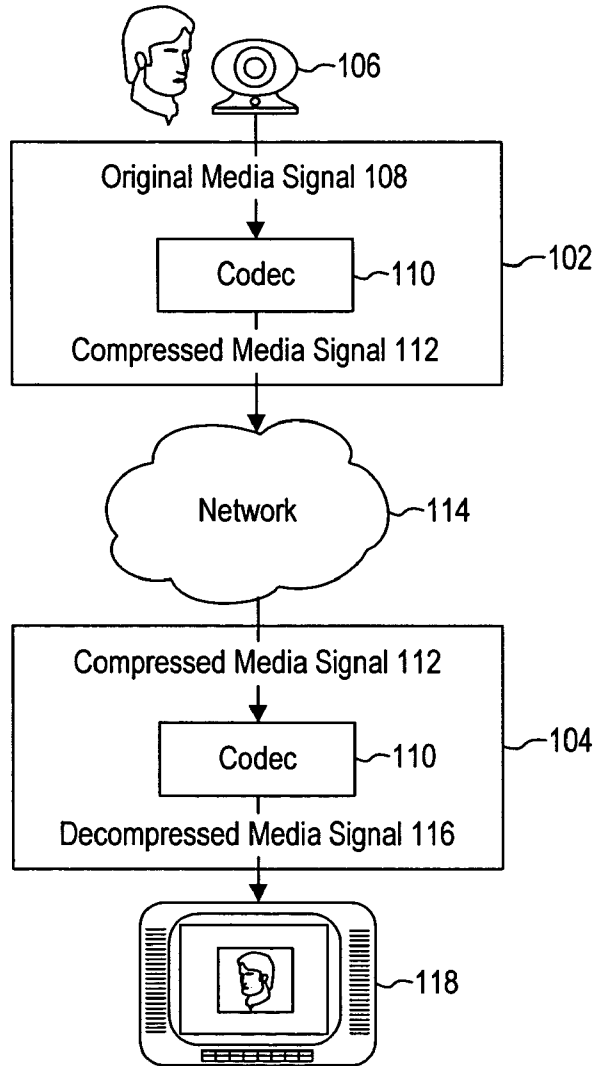


FIG. 1
(Prior Art)

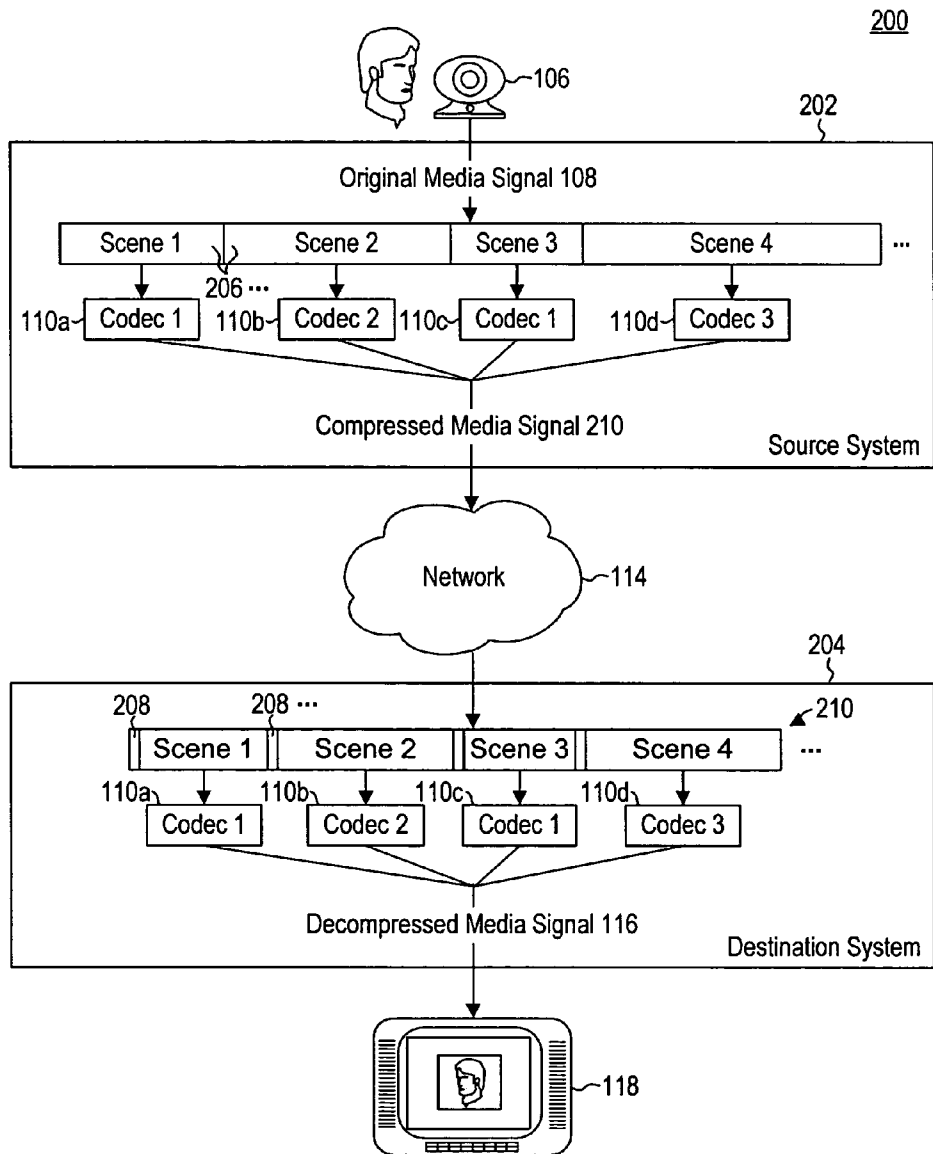


FIG. 2

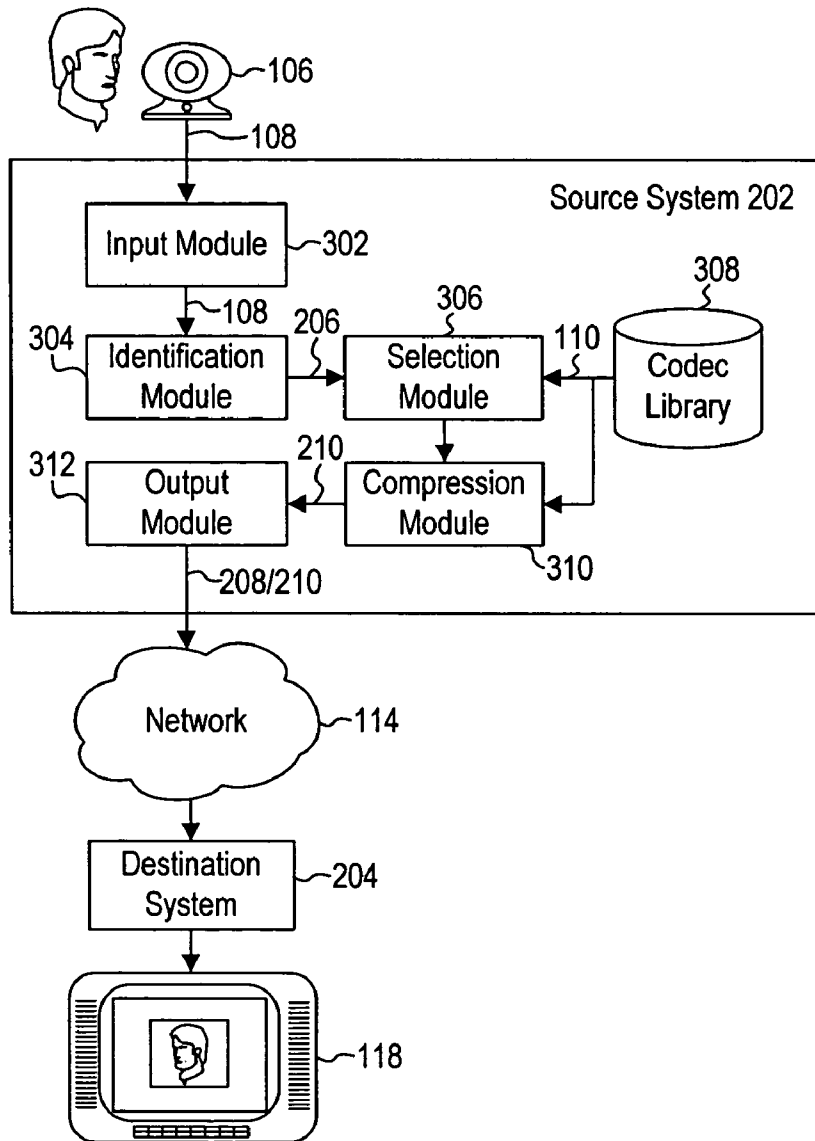


FIG. 3

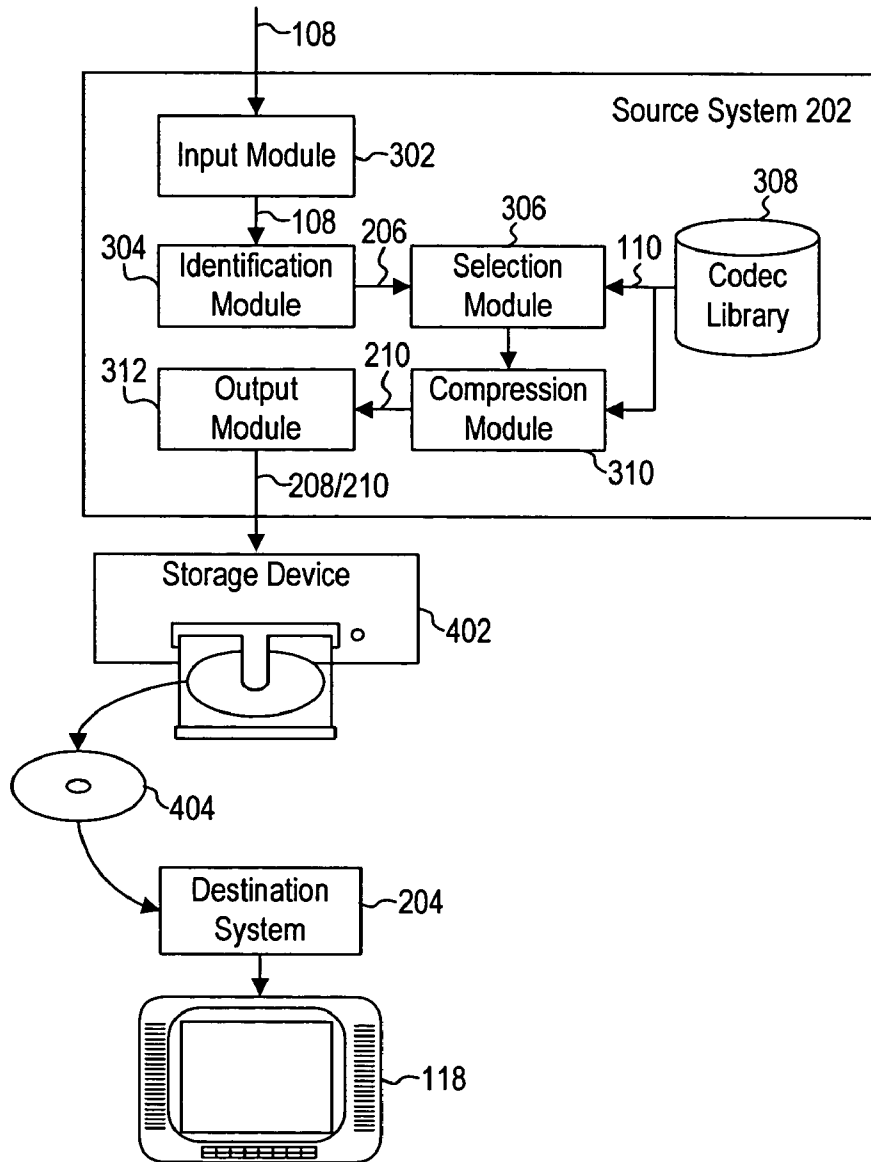


FIG. 4

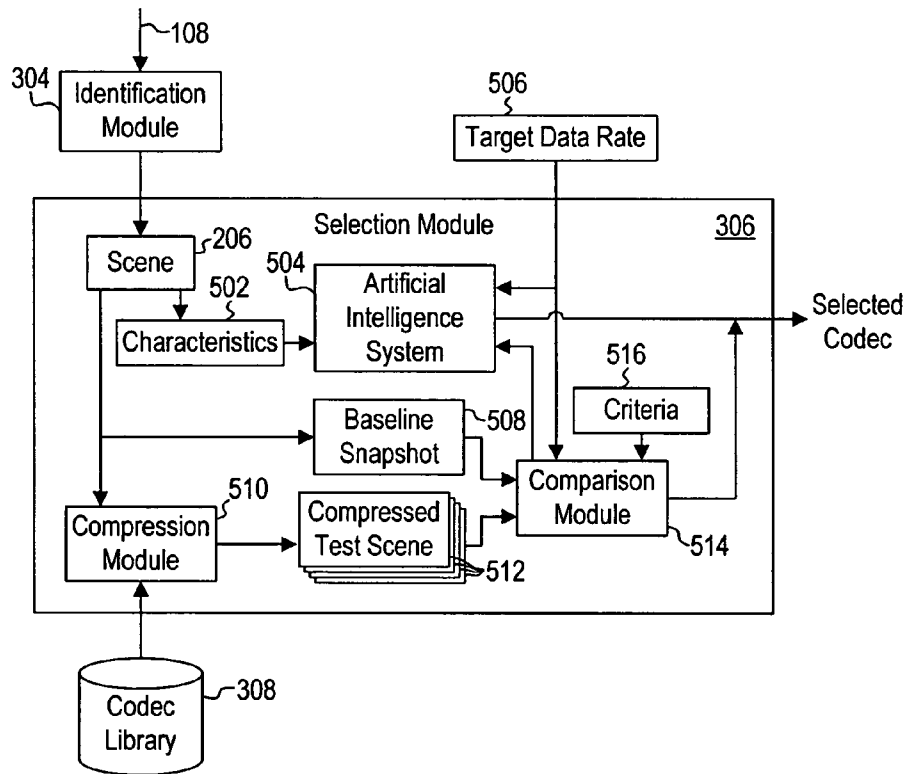


FIG. 5

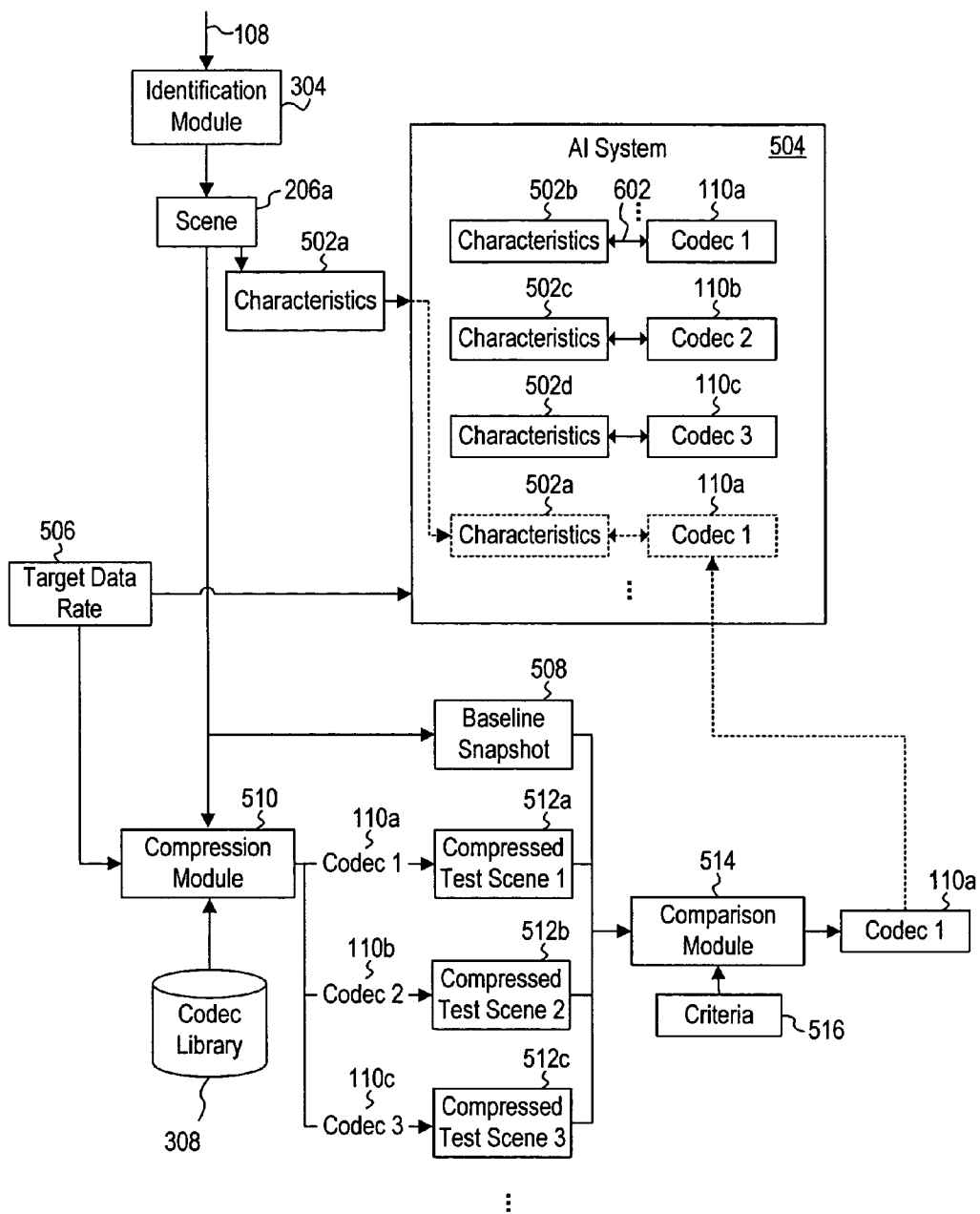


FIG. 6

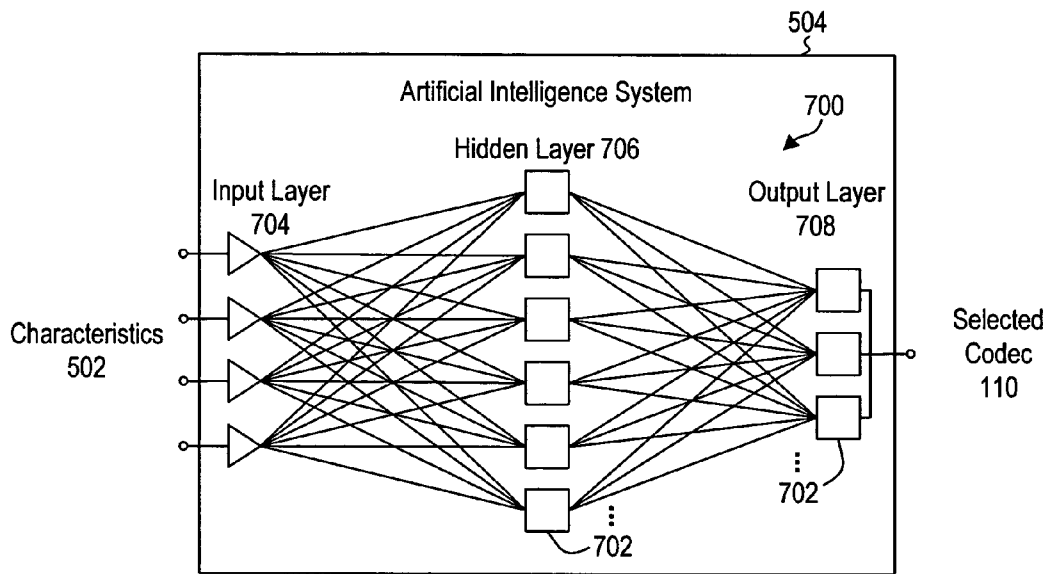


FIG. 7

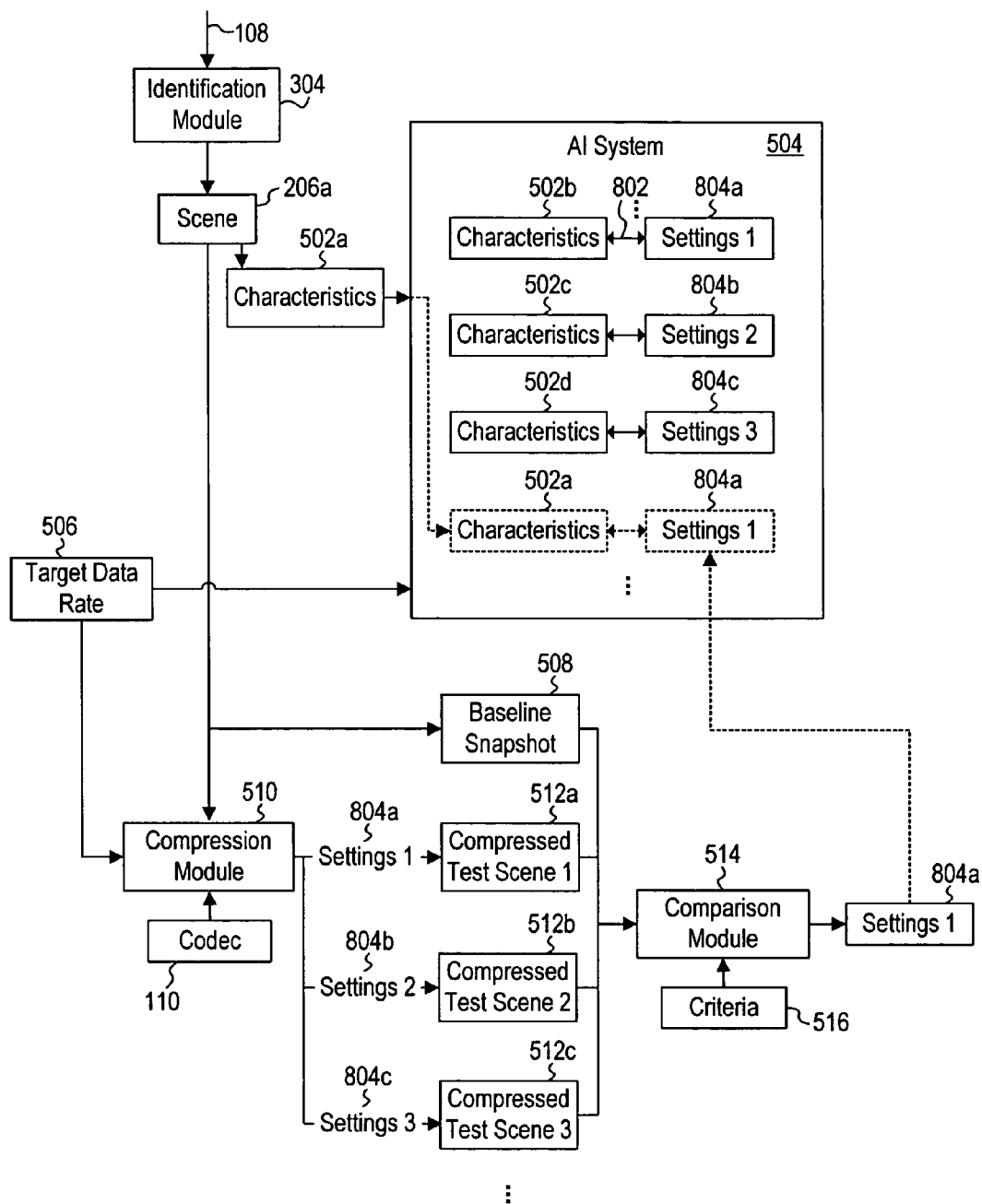


FIG. 8

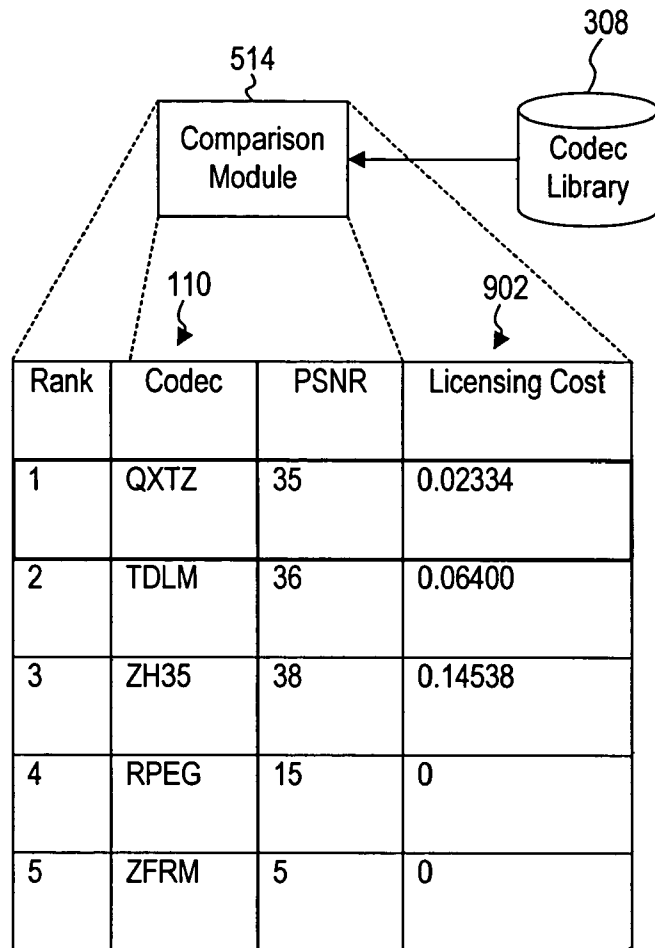


FIG. 9

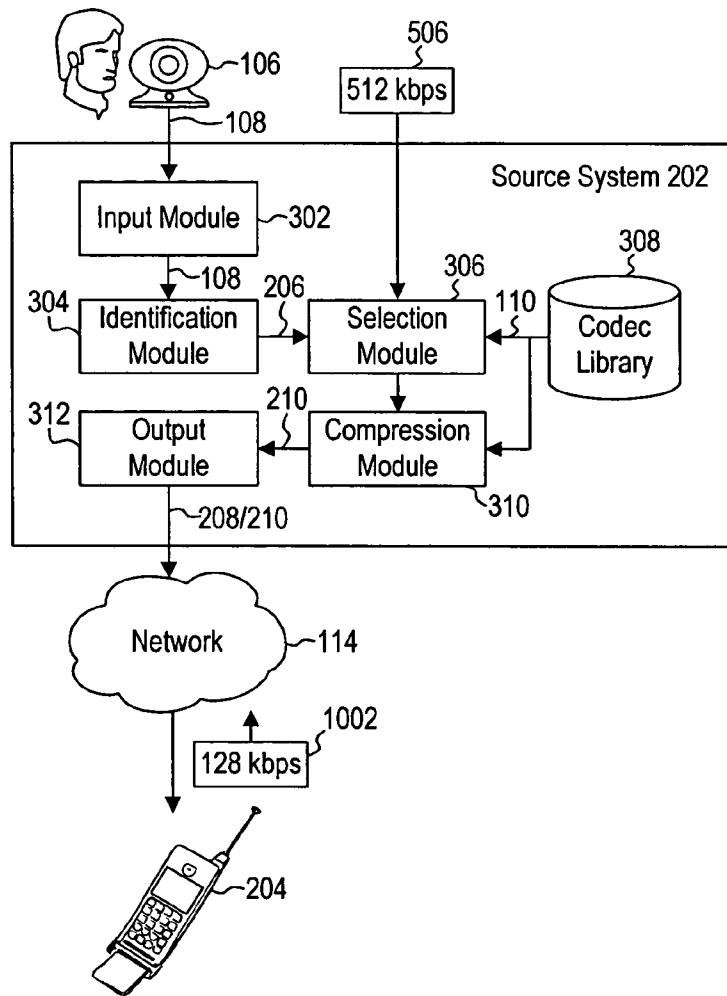


FIG. 10

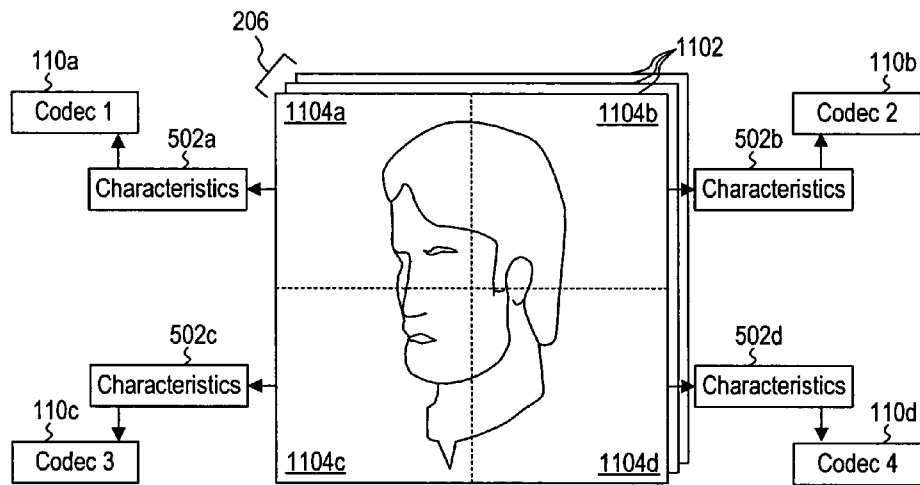


FIG. 11

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COMPRESSING PORTIONS OF A MEDIA SIGNAL USING DIFFERENT CODECS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/256,866, filed Sep. 26, 2002 now U.S. Pat. No. 7,295,608, which claims the benefit of Provisional Application No. 60/325,483, filed Sep. 26, 2001, both of which are incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates generally to the field of data compression. More specifically, the present invention relates to techniques for optimizing the compression of video and audio signals.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In the communication age, bandwidth is money. Video and audio signals (hereinafter "media signals") consume enormous amounts of bandwidth depending on the desired transmission quality. As a result, data compression is playing an increasingly important role in communication.

Conventionally, the parties to a communication decide on a particular codec (compressor/decompressor) for compressing and decompressing media signals. A wide variety of codecs are available. General classifications of codecs include discrete cosine transfer (DCT) or "block" codecs, fractal codecs, and wavelet codecs.

Some codecs are "lossless," meaning that no data is lost during the compression process. A compressed media signal, after being received and decompressed by a lossless codec, is identical to the original. However, most commercially-available codecs are "lossy" and result in some degradation of the original media signal.

For lossy codecs, compression "quality" (i.e., how similar a compressed media signal is to the original after decompression) varies substantially from codec to codec, and may depend, for instance, on the amount of available bandwidth, the quality of the communication line, characteristics of the media signal, etc. Another compression metric, i.e., performance, relates to the amount of bandwidth required to transmit the compressed signal as opposed to the original signal. Typically, lossy codecs result in better performance than lossless codecs, which is why they are preferred in most applications.

Codec designers generally attempt to fashion codecs that produce high quality compressed output across a wide range of operating parameters. Although some codecs, such as MPEG-2, have gained widespread acceptance because of their general usefulness, no codec is ideally suited to all purposes. Each codec has individual strengths and weaknesses.

Conventionally, the same codec is used to compress and decompress a media signal during the entire communication session or uniformly across a storage medium (e.g., DVD). However, a media signal is not a static quantity. A video signal, for example, may change substantially from scene to scene. Likewise, the available bandwidth or line quality may change during the course of a communication. Selecting the wrong codec at the outset can be a costly mistake in terms of the bandwidth required to transmit or store the media signal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a conventional communication system using data compression;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a communication system using multiple codecs for compressing portions of a media signal according to an embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 3 is a detailed block diagram of a source system according to a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 is a detailed block diagram of a source system according to a second embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 5 is a detailed block diagram of a selection module;

FIG. 6 is a data flow diagram of a process for automatically selecting a codec;

FIG. 7 is a detailed block diagram of an artificial intelligence system;

FIG. 8 is a data flow diagram of a process for automatically selecting settings for a codec;

FIG. 9 is a block diagram of a comparison module showing the introduction of a licensing cost factor; and

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of a process for modifying a target data rate.

FIG. 11 shows video frames within a scene subdivided into a plurality of sub-frames.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Reference is now made to the figures in which like reference numerals refer to like elements. For clarity, the first digit of a reference numeral indicates the figure number in which the corresponding element is first used.

In the following description, numerous specific details of programming, software modules, user selections, network transactions, database queries, database structures, etc., are provided for a thorough understanding of the embodiments of the invention. However, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced without one or more of the specific details, or with other methods, components, materials, etc.

In some cases, well-known structures, materials, or operations are not shown or described in detail in order to avoid obscuring aspects of the invention. Furthermore, the described features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a conventional system 100 for communicating media signals from a source system 102 to a destination system 104. The source and destination systems 102, 104 may be variously embodied, for example, as personal computers (PCs), cable or satellite set-top boxes (STBs), or video-enabled portable devices, such as personal digital assistants (PDAs) or cellular telephones.

Within the source system 102, a video camera 106 or other device captures an original media signal 108. A codec (compressor/decompressor) 110 processes the original media signal 108 to create a compressed media signal 112, which may be delivered to the destination system 104 via a network 114, such as a local area network (LAN) or the Internet. Alternatively, the compressed media signal 112 could be written to a storage medium, such as a CD, DVD, flash memory device, or the like.

At the destination system 104, the same codec 110 processes the compressed media signal 112 received through the network 114 to generate a decompressed media signal 116. The destination system 104 then presents the decompressed media signal 116 on a display device 118, such as a television or computer monitor.

Conventionally, the source system **102** uses a single codec **110** to process the entire media signal **108** during a communication session or for a particular storage medium. However, as noted above, a media signal is not a static quantity. Video signals may change substantially from scene to scene. A single codec, which may function well under certain conditions, may not fare so well under different conditions. Changes in available bandwidth, line conditions, or characteristics of the media signal, itself, may drastically change the compression quality to the point that a different codec may do much better. In certain cases, a content developer may be able to manually specify a change of codec **110** within a media signal **108** where, for instance, the content developer knows that one codec **110** may be superior to another codec **110**. However, this requires significant human effort and cannot be performed in real time.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an alternative system **200** for communicating media signals from a source system **202** to a destination system **204** according to an embodiment of the present invention. As before, the source system **202** receives an original media signal **108** captured by a video camera **106** or other suitable device.

However, unlike the system **100** of FIG. 1, the depicted system **200** is not limited to using a single codec **110** during a communication session or for a particular storage medium. Rather, as described in greater detail below, each scene **206** or segment of the original media signal **108** may be compressed using one of a plurality of codecs **110**. A scene **206** may include one or more frames of the original media signal **108**. In the case of video signals, a frame refers to a single image in a sequence of images. More generally, however, a frame refers to a packet of information used for communication.

As used herein, a scene **206** may correspond to a fixed segment of the media signal **108**, e.g., two seconds of audio/video or a fixed number of frames. In other embodiments, however, a scene **206** may be defined by characteristics of the original media signal **108**, i.e., a scene **206** may include two or more frames sharing similar characteristics. When one or more characteristics of the original media signal **108** changes beyond a preset threshold, the source system **202** may detect the beginning of a new scene **206**. Thus, while the video camera **106** focuses on a static object, a scene **206** may last until the camera **106**, the object, or both are moved.

As illustrated, two adjacent scenes **206** within the same media signal **108** may be compressed using different codecs **110**. The codecs **110** may be of the same general type, e.g., discrete cosine transform (DCT), or of different types. For example, one codec **110a** may be a DCT codec, while another codec **110b** is a fractal codec, and yet another codec **110c** is a wavelet codec.

Unlike conventional systems **100**, the system **200** of FIG. 2 automatically selects, from the available codecs **110**, a par-

ticular codec **110** best suited to compressing each scene **206**. Details of the selection process are described in greater detail below. Briefly, however, the system **200** “remembers” which codecs **110** are used for scenes **206** having particular characteristics. If a subsequent scene **206** is determined to have the same characteristics, the same codec **110** is used. However, if a scene **206** is found to have substantially different characteristics from those previously observed, the system **200** tests various codecs **110** on the scene **206** and selects the codec **110** producing the highest compression quality (i.e., how similar the compressed media signal **210** is to the original signal **108** after decompression) for a particular target data rate.

In addition, the source system **202** reports to the destination system **204** which codec **110** was used to compress each scene **206**. As illustrated, this may be accomplished by associating codec identifiers **208** with each scene **206** in the resulting compressed media signal **210**. The codec identifiers **208** may precede each scene **206**, as shown, or could be sent as a block at some point during the transmission. The precise format of the codec identifiers **208** is not crucial to the invention and may be implemented using standard data structures known to those of skill in the art.

The destination system **204** uses the codec identifiers **208** to select the appropriate codecs **110** for decompressing the respective scenes **206**. The resulting decompressed media signal **116** may then be presented on the display device **118**, as previously described.

FIG. 3 illustrates additional details of the source system **202**. In one embodiment, an input module **302** receives the original media signal **108** from the video camera **106** or other source device. An identification module **304** divides the original media signal **108** into scenes **206** and identifies various characteristics (not shown) of each scene **206**, as described in greater detail below.

Thereafter, for each scene **206**, a selection module **306** uses the characteristics (or the scene **206** itself) to select the optimal codec **110** from a codec library **308**. As used herein, “optimal” means producing the highest compression quality for the compressed media signal **210** at a particular target data rate (among those codecs **110** within the codec library **308**).

In one embodiment, a user may specify a particular target data rate, i.e., **128** kilobits per second (kbps). Alternatively, the target data rate may be determined by the available bandwidth or in light of other constraints.

The codec library **308** may include a wide variety of codecs **110**. Examples of possible video codecs **110** are provided in the following table. In addition, various audio-only codecs may be provided, such as MPEG Audio Layer 3 (MP3), MPEG-4 Structured Audio (MP4-SA), CCITT u-Law, Ogg Vorbis, and AC3. Of course, other presently-available or yet-to-be-developed codecs **110** may be used within the scope of the invention.

TABLE 1

FOURCC	Name	Owner	FOURCC	Name	Owner
3IV1	3ivx	3IVX	MPG4	MPEG-4	Microsoft
3IV2	3ivx	3IVX	MPGI	MPEG	Sigma Designs
AASC	Autodesk Animator codec	Autodesk	MRCA	Mrcodec	FAST Multimedia
ADV1	WaveCodec	Loronix	MRLE	Microsoft RLE	Microsoft
ADVJ	Avid M-JPEG	Avid Technology	MSVC	Microsoft Video 1	Microsoft
AEMI	Array VideoONE MPEG1-I Capture	Array Microsystems	MSZH	AVImshz	Kenji Oshima

TABLE 1-continued

FOURCC	Name	Owner	FOURCC	Name	Owner
AFLI	Autodesk Animator codec	Autodesk	MTX1 through MTX9		Matrox
AFLC	Autodesk Animator codec	Autodesk	MV12		
AMPG	Array VideoONE MPEG	Array Microsystems	MWV1	Aware Motion Wavelets	Aware Inc.
ANIM	RDX	Intel	nAVI		
AP41	AngelPotion Definitive	AngelPotion	NTN1	Video Compression 1	Nogatech
ASV1	Asus Video	Asus	NVDS	NVidia Texture	NVidia
ASV2	Asus Video (2)	Asus	NVHS	NVidia Texture Format	NVidia
ASVX	Asus Video 2.0	Asus	NHVU	NVidia Texture Format	NVidia
AUR2	Aura 2 Codec - YUV 422	Auravision	NVS0-422		NVidia
AURA	Aura 1 Codec - YUV 411	Auravision	NVS5 NVT0-NVT5		NVidia
AVRn	Avid M-JPEG	Avid Technology	PDVC	DVC codec	I-O Data Device, Inc.
BINK	Bink Video	RAD Game Tools	PGVV	Radius Video Vision	Radius
BT20	Prosumer Video	Conexant	PHMO	Photomotion	IBM
BTCV	Composite Video Codec	Conexant	PIM1		Pegasus Imaging
BW10	Broadway MPEG Capture/Compression	Data Translation	PIM2		Pegasus Imaging
CC12	YUV12 Codec	Intel	PIMJ	Lossless JPEG	Pegasus Imaging
CDVC	Canopus DV Codec	Canopus	PIXL	Video XL	Pinnacle Systems
CFCC	DPS Perception	Digital Processing Systems	PVEZ	PowerEZ	Horizons Technology
CGDI	Camcorder Video	Microsoft	PVMM	Packet Video Corporation	PacketVideo Corporation
CHAM	Caviara Champagne	Winnov	PVW2	MPEG-4 Pegasus Wavelet Compression	Pegasus Imaging
CMYK	Uncompressed CMYK	Colorgraph	qpeq	QPEG 1.1	Q-Team
CJPG	WebCam JPEG	Creative Labs	QPEG raw	QPEG Raw RGB	Q-Team
CPLA	YUV 4:2:0	Weitek	RGBT	32 bit support	Computer Concepts
CRAM	Microsoft Video 1	Microsoft			Microsoft
CVID	Cinepak	Providenza & Boekelheide	RLE	Run Length Encoder	Microsoft
CWLT	Color WLT DIB	Microsoft	RLE4	4bpp Run Length Encoder	Microsoft
CYUV	Creative YUV	Creative Labs	RLE8	8bpp Run Length Encoder	Microsoft
CYUY		ATI Technologies	RMP4	MPEG-4 AS Profile Codec	Sigma Designs
D261	H.261	DEC	RT21	Real Time Video 2.1	Intel
D263	H.263	DEC	rv20	Real Video G2	Real
DIV3	DivX MPEG-4	DivX	rv30	Real Video 8	Real
DIV4	DivX MPEG-4	DivX	RVX	RDX	Intel
DIV5	DivX MPEG-4	DivX	s422	VideoCap C210 YUV Codec	Tekram International
DIVX divx	DivX DivX	OpenDivX	SAN3 SDCC	DivX 3 Digital Camera Codec	Sun Communications
DMB1	Rainbow Runner hardware compression	Matrox	SEDG	Samsung MPEG-4	Samsung
DMB2	Rainbow Runner hardware compression	Matrox	SFMC	Surface Fitting Method	CrystalNet
DSVD	DV Codec		SMSC	Proprietary codec	Radius

TABLE 1-continued

FOURCC	Name	Owner	FOURCC	Name	Owner
DUCK	TrueMotion S	Duck Corporation	SMSD	Proprietary codec	Radius
dv25	DVCPRO	Matrox	smsv	Wavelet Video	WorldConnect (corporate site)
dv50	DVCPRO50	Matrox	SP54		SunPlus
dvsd		Pinnacle Systems	SPIG	Spigot	Radius
DVE2	DVE-2 Videoconferencing Codec	InSoft	SQZ2	VXtreme Video Codec V2	Microsoft
DVX1	DVX1000SP Video Decoder	Lucent	SV10	Video R1	Sorenson Media
DVX2	DVX2000S Video Decoder	Lucent	STVA	ST CMOS Imager Data	ST Microelectronics
DVX3	DVX3000S Video Decoder	Lucent	STVB	ST CMOS Imager Data	ST Microelectronics
DX50	DivX MPEG-4 version 5	DivX	STVC	ST CMOS Imager Data (Bunched)	ST Microelectronics
DXTn	DirectX Compressed Texture	Microsoft	STVX	ST CMOS Imager Data	ST Microelectronics
DXTC	DirectX Texture Compression	Microsoft	STVY	ST CMOS Imager Data	ST Microelectronics
ELK0	Elsa Quick Codec	Elsa	SVQ1	Sorenson Video	Sorenson Media
EKQ0	Elsa Quick Codec	Elsa	TLMS	Motion Intraframe Codec	TeraLogic
ESCP	Escape	Eidos Technologies	TLST	Motion Intraframe Codec	TeraLogic
ETV1	eTrepid Video Codec	eTrepid Technologies	TM20	TrueMotion 2.0	Duck Corporation
ETV2	eTrepid Video Codec	eTrepid Technologies	TM2X	TrueMotion 2X	Duck Corporation
ETVC	eTrepid Video Codec	eTrepid Technologies	TMIC	Motion Intraframe Codec	TeraLogic
FLJP	Field Encoded Motion JPEG	D-Vision	TMOT	TrueMotion S	Horizons Technology
FRWA	Forward Motion JPEG with alpha channel	SoftLab-Nsk	TR20	TrueMotion RT 2.0	Duck Corporation
FRWD	Forward Motion JPEG	SoftLab-Nsk	TSCC	TechSmith Screen Capture Codec	Techsmith Corp.
FVF1	Fractal Video Frame	Iterated Systems	TV10	Tecomac Low- Bit Rate Codec	Tecomac, Inc.
GLZW	Motion LZW	gabest@freemail.hu	TVJP		Pinnacle/Truevision
GPEG	Motion JPEG	gabest@freemail.hu	TVMJ	Pinnacle/Truevision	
GWLT	Greyscale WLT DIB	Microsoft	TY2C	Trident Decompression	Trident Microsystems
H260 through H269	ITU H.26n	Intel	TY2N		Trident Microsystems
HFYU	Huffman Lossless Codec		TY0N		Trident Microsystems
HMCR	Rendition Motion Compensation Format	Rendition	UCOD	Clear Video	eMajix.com
HMMR	Rendition Motion Compensation Format	Rendition	ULTI	Ultimotion	IBM Corp.
i263	ITU H.263	Intel	V261	Lucent VX2000S	Lucent
IAN	Indeo 4 Codec	Intel	V655	YUV 4:2:2	Vitec Multimedia
ICLB	CellB Videoconferencing Codec	InSoft	VCR1	ATI Video Codec 1	ATI Technologies
IGOR	Power DVD		VCR2	ATI Video Codec 2	ATI Technologies
IJPG	Intergraph JPEG	Intergraph	VCR3-9	ATI Video Codecs	ATI Technologies
ILVC	Layered Video	Intel	VDCT	VideoMaker Pro DIB	Vitec Multimedia
ILVR	ITU H.263+ Codec		VDOM	VDOWave	VDONet
IPDV	Giga AVI DV Codec	I-O Data Device, Inc.	VDOW	VDOLive	VDONet

TABLE 1-continued

FOURCC	Name	Owner	FOURCC	Name	Owner
IR21	Indeo 2.1	Intel	VDTZ	VideoTizer YUV Codec	Darim Vision Co.
IRAW	Intel Uncompressed UYUV	Intel	VGFX	VideoGramPix	Alaris
IV30 through IV39	Indeo 3	Ligos	VIFP	VFAPI Codec	
IV32 through IV40	Indeo 3.2 Indeo Interactive	Ligos Ligos	VIDS VIVO		Vitec Multimedia Vivo Software
IV49 IV50 JBYS	Indeo Interactive	Ligos Kensington	VIXL VLV1	Video XL	Pinnacle Systems VideoLogic
JPEG	JPEG Still Image	Microsoft	VP30	VP3	On2
JPLG	JPEG Light		VP31	VP3	On2
L261	Lead H.26	Lead Technologies	vssv	VSS Video	Vanguard Software Solutions
L263	Lead H.263	Lead Technologies	VX1K	VX1000S Video Codec	Lucent
LCMW	Motion CMW Codec	Lead Technologies	VX2K	VX2000S Video Codec	Lucent
LEAD	LEAD Video Codec	Lead Technologies	VXSP	VX1000SP Video Codec	Lucent
LGRY	Grayscale Image	Lead Technologies	VYU9	ATI YUV	ATI Technologies
Ljpg	LEAD MJPEG Codec	Lead Technologies	VYUY	ATI YUV	ATI Technologies
LZO1	Lempel-Ziv- Oberhumer Codec	Markus Oberhumer	WBVC	W9960	Winbond Electronics
M263	H.263	Microsoft	WHAM	Microsoft Video 1	Microsoft
M261	H.261	Microsoft	WINX	Winnov Software Compression	Winnov
M4S2	MPEG-4 (automatic WMP download)	Microsoft	WJPG	Winbond JPEG	
MC12	Motion Compensation Format	ATI Technologies	WNV1	Winnov Hardware Compression	Winnov
MCAM	Motion Compensation Format	ATI Technologies	x263		Xirlink
MJ2C	Motion JPEG 2000	Morgan Multimedia	XVID	XVID MPEG- 4	XVID
mJPG	Motion JPEG including Huffman Tables	IBM	XLV0	XL Video Decoder	NetXL Inc.
MJPG	Motion JPEG		XMPG	XING MPEG	XING Corporation
MMES	MPEG-2 ES	Matrox	XWV0- XWV9	XiWave Video Codec	XiWave
MP2A	Eval download	Media Excel	XXAN		Origin
MP2T	Eval download	Media Excel	Y411	YUV 4:1:1	Microsoft
MP2V	Eval download	Media Excel	Y41P	Brooktree YUV 4:1:1	Conexant
MP42	MPEG-4 (automatic WMP download)	Microsoft	Y8	Grayscale video	
MP43	MPEG-4 (automatic WMP download)	Microsoft	YC12	YUV 12 codec	Intel
MP4A	Eval download	Media Excel	YUV8	Caviar YUV8	Winnov
MP4S	MPEG-4 (automatic WMP download)	Microsoft	YUY2	Raw, uncompressed YUV 4:2:2	Microsoft
MP4T	Eval download	Media Excel	YUYV		Canopus
MP4V	Eval download	Media Excel	ZLIB		
MPEG	MPEG		ZPEG	Video Zipper	Methus
MPG4	MPEG-4 (automatic WMP download)	Microsoft	ZyGo	ZyGo Video	ZyGo Digital

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Those of skill in the art will recognize that many of the above-described codecs may be deemed “generalist” codecs in that they achieve a high compression quality for a wide variety of media signals and conditions. However, other codecs may be deemed “specialist” codecs because they compress certain types of media signals well or compress many types of media signals well under certain conditions. Providing a codec library 308 that includes a variety of both generalist and specialist codecs, including codecs of different families, typically results in the best overall compression quality for a compressed media signal 210.

Referring again to FIG. 3, after a codec 110 is selected for a scene 206, a compression module 310 compresses the scene 206 using the selected codec 110. An output module 312 receives the resulting compressed media signal 210 and, in one embodiment, adds codec identifiers 208 to indicate which codecs 110 were used to compress each scene 206. In other embodiments, the codec identifiers 208 may be added by the compression module 310 or at other points in the compression process. The output module 312 then delivers the compressed media signal 210 to the destination system 204 via the network 114.

The embodiment of FIG. 3 is primarily applicable to streaming media applications, including video conferencing. In an alternative embodiment, as depicted in FIG. 4, the output module 312 may be coupled to a storage device 402, such as CD or DVD recorder, flash card writer, or the like. As depicted, the compressed media signal 210 (and codec identifiers 208) may be stored on an appropriate storage medium 404, which is physically delivered to the destination system 204. In such an embodiment, the destination system 204 would include a media reader (not shown) for reading the compressed media signal 210 from the storage medium 404.

Unlike conventional media compression techniques, the original media signal 108 is not compressed using a single codec (i.e., MPEG-2 as in DVDs). Rather, each scene 206 is automatically compressed using the best codec 110 selected from a codec library 308 for that scene 206. Using the above-described technique, between 10 to 12 hours of DVD-quality video may be stored on a single recordable DVD.

FIG. 5 illustrates additional details of the selection module 306. As noted above, the identification module 304 receives the original media signal 108 and identifies individual scenes 206, as well as characteristics 502 of each scene 206. The characteristics 502 may include, for instance, motion characteristics, color characteristics, YUV signal characteristics, color grouping characteristics, color dithering characteristics, color shifting characteristics, lighting characteristics, and contrast characteristics. Those of skill in the art will recognize that a wide variety of other characteristics of a scene 206 may be identified within the scope of the invention.

Motion is composed of vectors resulting from object detection. Relevant motion characteristics may include, for example, the number of objects, the size of the objects, the speed of the objects, and the direction of motion of the objects.

With respect to color, each pixel typically has a range of values for red, green, blue, and intensity. Relevant color characteristics may include how the ranges of values change through the frame set, whether some colors occur more frequently than other colors (selection), whether some color groupings shift within the frame set, whether differences between one grouping and another vary greatly across the frame set (contrast).

In one embodiment, an artificial intelligence (AI) system 504, such as a neural network or expert system, receives the characteristics 502 of the scene 206, as well as a target data

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rate 506 for the compressed media signal 210. The AI system 504 then determines whether a codec 110 exists in the library 308 that has previously been found to optimally compress a scene 206 with the given characteristics 502 at the target data rate 506. As explained below, the AI system 504 may be conceptualized as “storing” associations between sets of characteristics 502 and optimal codecs 110. If an association is found, the selection module 306 outputs the codec 110 (or an indication thereof) as the “selected” codec 110.

In many cases, a scene 206 having the specified characteristics 502 may not have been previously encountered. Accordingly, the selection module 306 makes a copy of the scene 206, referred to herein as a baseline snapshot 508, which serves as a reference point for determining compression quality.

Thereafter, a compression module 510 tests different codecs 110 from the codec library 308 on the scene 206. In one embodiment, the compression module 510 is also the compression module 310 of FIG. 3. As depicted, the compression module 510 compresses the scene 206 using different codecs 110 at the target data rate 506 to produce multiple compressed test scenes 512.

The codecs 110 may be tested sequentially, at random, or in other ways, and all of the codecs 110 in the library need not be tested. In one embodiment, input from the AI system 504 may assist with selecting a subset of the codecs 110 from the library 308 for testing. In some cases, a time limit may be imposed for codec testing in order to facilitate real-time compression. Thus, when the time limit is reached, no additional compressed test scenes 512 are generated.

In one embodiment, a comparison module 514 compares the compression quality of each compressed test scene 512 with the baseline snapshot 508 according to a set of criteria 516. The criteria 516 may be based on a comparison of Peak Signal to Noise Ratios (PSNRs), which may be calculated, for an MxN frame, by:

$$PSNR = 20 \times \log_{10} \left(\frac{255}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{M \times N} \sum_{m=0}^{M-1} \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} [f'(m, n) - f(m, n)]^2}} \right) \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

where f is the original frame and f' is the uncompressed frame. Alternatively, Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Signal to Noise Ratio (SNR), or other objective quality metrics may be used as known to those of skill in the art.

In certain embodiments, a Just Noticeable Difference (JND) image quality metric calculation may be used. JND is a robust objective picture quality measurement method known to those skilled in the art. It includes three dimensions for evaluation of dynamic and complex motion sequences—spatial analysis, temporal analysis and full color analysis. By using a model of the human visual system in a picture differencing process, JND produces results that are independent of the compression process and resulting artifacts.

In one embodiment, the comparison module 514 automatically selects the codec 110 used to generate the compressed scene 512 that has the highest compression quality when compared to the baseline snapshot 508 according to the set of criteria 516. That codec 110 (or an indication thereof) is then output by the selection module 306 as the selected codec 110.

The comparison module 514 tells the AI system 504 which codec 110 was selected for the scene 206. This allows the AI system 504 to make an association between the identified

characteristics **502** of the scene **206** and the selected codec **110**. Thus, in the future, the AI system **504** may automatically select the codec **110** for a similar scene **206** without the need for retesting by the comparison module **514**.

Referring also to FIG. 3, in one configuration, the highest-quality compressed test scene **512a** is simply passed to the output module **312** (not shown) to be included in the compressed media signal **210**. However, the compression module **310** could recompress the scene **206** using the selected codec **110** in certain embodiments.

FIG. 6 provides an example of the above-described process. Suppose that the identification module **304** finds a scene **206a** having a particular set of characteristics **502a**. In one embodiment, the AI system **504** searches an association **602** between the characteristics **502a** and a particular codec **110**. While the AI system **504** is depicted as including characteristics **502**, associations **602**, and codecs **110**, those skilled in the art will recognize that these entities may be represented by codes, hashes, or other identifiers in various implementations.

Assuming that no such association **602** is found, a baseline snapshot **508** of the scene **206a** is taken. In addition, the compression module **510** compresses the scene **206a** at the target data rate **506** using a number of different codecs **110a-c** from the codec library **308** to create a plurality of compressed test scenes **512a-c**. These test scenes **512a-c** are then compared against the baseline snapshot **508** according to a set of criteria **516**, e.g., PSNR.

Suppose that the compressed test scene **512a** produced by one codec **110a** (“Codec 1”) results in the highest compression quality, e.g., the highest PSNR. In such a case, the comparison module **514** would inform the AI system **504** so that an association **602** could be made between the characteristics **502a** of the scene **206a** and the selected codec **110a**. Thus, if a scene **206** having the same characteristics **502a** is encountered in the future, the AI system **504** could simply identify the optimal codec **110a** without the need for retesting.

Referring to FIG. 7, the AI system **504** may be implemented using a typical feedforward neural network **700** comprising a plurality of artificial neurons **702**. A neuron **702** receives a number of inputs (either from original data, or from the output of other neurons in the neural network **700**). Each input comes via a connection that has a strength (or “weight”); these weights correspond to synaptic efficacy in a biological neuron. Each neuron **702** also has a single threshold value. The weighted sum of the inputs is formed, and the threshold subtracted, to compose the “activation” of the neuron **702** (also known as the post-synaptic potential, or PSP, of the neuron **702**). The activation signal is passed through an activation function (also known as a transfer function) to produce the output of the neuron **702**.

As illustrated, a typical neural network **700** has neurons **702** arranged in a distinct layered topology. The “input” layer **704** is not composed of neurons **702**, per se. These units simply serve to introduce the values of the input variables (i.e., the scene characteristics **502**). Neurons **702** in the hidden **706** and output **708** layers are each connected to all of the units in the preceding layer.

When the network **700** is executed, the input variable values are placed in the input units, and then the hidden and output layer units are progressively executed. Each of them calculates its activation value by taking the weighted sum of the outputs of the units in the preceding layer, and subtracting the threshold. The activation value is passed through the activation function to produce the output of the neuron **702**. When the entire neural network **700** has been executed, the outputs of the output layer **708** act as the output of the entire network **700** (i.e., the selected codec **110**).

While a feedforward neural network **700** is depicted in FIG. 7, those of skill in the art will recognize that other types of neural networks **700** may be used, such as feedback networks, Back-Propagated Delta Rule Networks (BP) and Radial Basis Function Networks (RBF). In other embodiments, an entirely different type of AI system **504** may be used, such as an expert system.

In still other embodiments, the AI system **504** may be replaced by lookup tables, databases, or other data structures that are capable of searching for a codec **110** based on a specified set of characteristics **502**. Thus, the invention should not be construed as requiring an AI system **504**.

Referring to FIG. 8, the invention is not limited to embodiments in which different codecs **110** are used to respectively encode different scenes **206** of an original media signal **108**. As illustrated, a single codec **110** may be used in one embodiment. However, different settings **804** (parameters) for the codec **110** may be automatically selected in much the same way that different codecs **110** were selected in the preceding embodiments.

As used herein, codec settings **804** refer to standard parameters such as the motion estimation method, the GOP size (keyframe interval), types of transforms (e.g., DCT vs. wavelet), noise reduction for luminance or chrominance, decoder deblocking level, preprocessing/postprocessing filters (such as sharpening and denoising), etc.

As before, suppose that the identification module **304** finds a scene **206a** having a given set of characteristics **502a**. In one embodiment, the AI system **504** searches an association **802** between the characteristics **502a** and one or more settings **804a** for the codec **110**.

Assume that no such association **802** is found. In one configuration, a baseline snapshot **508** of the scene **206a** is taken. In addition, the compression module **510** compresses the scene **206a** at the target data rate **506** using the same codec **110** but with different settings **804a-c**. The resulting compressed test scenes **512a-c** are then compared against the baseline snapshot **508** according to a set of criteria **516**, e.g., PSNR.

Suppose that the compressed test scene **512a** produced by one group of settings **804a** (“Settings 1”) results in the highest compression quality, e.g., the highest PSNR. In such a case, the comparison module **514** would inform the AI system **504**, so that an association **802** could be made between the characteristics **502a** of the scene **206a** and the selected group of settings **804a**. Accordingly, if a scene **206** having the same characteristics **502a** is encountered in the future, the AI system **504** could simply identify the optimal settings **804a** without the need for retesting.

In still other embodiments, the AI system **504** may search for both different codecs **110** and different codec settings **804** based on a given set of characteristics **502**. Likewise, the compression module **510** may generate compressed test scenes **512** based on combinations of different codecs **110** and different settings **804**. The comparison module **514** may then select the best combination of codec **110** and settings **804** for a given scene **206**.

In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 9, the comparison module **514** may consider other factors in addition to (or in lieu of) compression quality in determining which codec **110** and/or settings **804** to automatically select for a particular scene **206**. For instance, the use of certain codecs **110** may incur licensing costs **902** based on patents or other intellectual property rights. The licensing costs **902** may be tied to the number of times the codec **110** is used, the amount of data compressed using the codec **110**, or in other ways.

While one codec **110** may provide an exceptionally high compression quality (e.g., PSNR), its licensing cost **902** may exceed the value of the transmission and would not be cost justified. Indications of the licensing costs **902** for various codecs **110** may be stored within the codec library **308** or at other locations accessible by the comparison module **514**.

In one embodiment, the licensing costs **902** are considered only when a number of the top codecs **110** produce similar results, e.g., the compression qualities differ by no more than a threshold amount. In the example of FIG. 9, the first three codecs **110** produce output of similar quality. However, the codec **110** with the highest PSNR score is more than two times more expensive than the codec **110** with the next highest PSNR score, which is, itself, almost three times more expensive than the codec **110** with the third highest PSNR score. In one configuration, the comparison module **510** would select the codec **110** with the third highest PSNR score due to its much lower licensing cost **902**.

In other embodiments, the comparison module **514** may create a composite score (not shown) based on the PSNR score, the licensing cost **902**, and other possible factors. In still other embodiments, the comparison module **514** may calculate an anticipated cost (not shown) for the entire transmission and seek to minimize that cost over all of the codec selection decisions. Hence, the comparison module **514** might select a more expensive codec **110** for certain scenes **206**, where a substantial increase in quality is realized, while selecting less expensive codecs **110** for other scenes.

Referring to FIG. 10, a user of the source system **202** may specify a particular target data rate **506**, e.g., 512 kbps, for video communication. However, there is no guarantee that the destination system **204** may be able to process data that quickly. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the network **114** will always provide the same amount of bandwidth. As a result, there may be a need to periodically change the target data rate **506** within the selection module **306** of the source system **202**, since the target data rate **506** will affect which codecs **110** are selected for various scenes **206**.

For example, as shown in FIG. 10, the destination system **204** may be embodied as a video-enabled cellular telephone. Typically, the bandwidth over cellular networks **114** is limited. Similarly, the processing power of a cellular telephone is substantially less than that of a personal computer or dedicated video conferencing system.

Thus, although the user of the source system **202** specifies a target data rate **506** of 512 kbps, the destination system **204** and/or network **114** may not be up to the challenge. In one embodiment, in response to receiving a connection request, the destination system **204** provides the source system **202** with a modified target data rate **1002**, e.g., 128 kbps. The modified rate **1002** may be communicated to the source system **202** using any standard data structure or technique. Thereafter, depending on the configuration, the target data rate **506** may be replaced by the modified rate **1002**.

In certain embodiments, an actual data rate is not communicated. Rather, a message is sent specifying one or more constraints or capabilities of the destination system **204** or network **114**, in which case it would be up to the source system **202** to revise the target data rate **506** as appropriate. A technique of altering the target data rate **506** in response to various conditions is referred to herein as "dynamic streaming."

In one embodiment, dynamic streaming may be employed where no specific message is sent by destination system **204**. The source system **202** may use latency calculations, requests

to resend lost packets, etc., to dynamically determine the target data rate **506** for purposes of codec and/or parameter selection.

In one configuration, as shown in FIG. 11, video frames **1102** within a scene **206** may be subdivided into a plurality of sub-frames **1104**. While the depicted video frame **1102** is subdivided into four sub-frames **1104a-d** of equal size, the invention is not limited in this respect. For instance, a video frame **1102** may be subdivided into any number of sub-frames **1104**, although too many sub-frames **1104** may adversely affect compression quality. Moreover, the sub-frames **1104** need not be of equal size. For example, sub-frames **1104** near the center of the video frame **1102** may be smaller due to the relatively greater amount of motion in this area.

In certain embodiments, the sub-frames **1104** may be defined by objects represented within the video frame **1102**. As an example, the head of a person could be defined as a separate object and, hence, a different sub-frame **1104** from the background. Algorithms (e.g., MPEG-4) for objectifying a scene within a video frame **1102** are known in the art.

A set of sub-frames **1104a-d** within a scene **206** exhibit characteristics **502a-d**, and may be treated, for practical purposes, like a complete video frame **1102**. Accordingly, using the techniques described above, the characteristics **502a-d** may be used to determine an optimal codec **1104a-d** for the compressing the respective sub-frames **1104a-d**. For example, an AI system **504** (not shown) may be used to determine whether an association **602** exists between a set of characteristics **502** and a particular codec **110**. If no association **602** exists, compression **510** and comparison **514** modules (not shown) may be used to test a plurality of codecs **110** on the respective sub-frames **1104** to determine the optimal codec **110**.

Thus, different sub-frames **1104a-d** of a single scene **206** may be compressed using different codecs **110a-d**. In the illustrated embodiment, four different codecs **110a-d** are used.

While specific embodiments and applications of the present invention have been illustrated and described, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the precise configuration and components disclosed herein. Various modifications, changes, and variations apparent to those of skill in the art may be made in the arrangement, operation, and details of the methods and systems of the present invention disclosed herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A media compression method comprising:

using a computer to perform the steps of:

- obtaining a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;
- identifying, by an identification module, a plurality of scenes within the media signal;
- automatically selecting different codecs, by a selection module, from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;
- compressing, by a compression module, the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and
- delivering, by an output module, the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein the codecs are selected from the group consisting of discrete cosine transform (DCT) codecs, fractal codecs, and wavelet codecs.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein a first automatically selected codec comprises a discrete cosine transform (DCT) codec and a second automatically selected codec comprises a fractal codec.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein a first automatically selected codec comprises a discrete cosine transform (DCT) codec and a second automatically selected codec comprises a wavelet codec.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically selecting further comprises:
identifying a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and
searching for a codec in the library that is associated with the identified characteristics of the scene.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the characteristics are selected from the group consisting of motion characteristics and color characteristics.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein searching further comprises using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system to locate a codec associated with the identified characteristics of a scene.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the AI system comprises a neural network.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the AI system comprises an expert system.

10. The method of claim 5, wherein searching further comprises searching for an association between the identified characteristics and a set of parameters to be used with the automatically selected codec;

wherein compressing further comprises compressing the scene using the automatically selected codec with the associated set of parameters; and

wherein delivering further comprises delivering the compressed scene to the destination system with an indication of which codec and which set of parameters were used to compress the scene.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically selecting further comprises:

testing at least a subset of the codecs of the codec library on a scene; and

automatically selecting the codec that produces a highest compression quality for the scene according to a set of criteria without exceeding the target data rate.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein testing further comprises:

storing a baseline snapshot of the scene; and
for each codec to be tested:

compressing the scene at or below the target data rate using one of the codecs in the library;

decompressing the scene using the same codec; and
comparing the quality of the decompressed scene with the baseline snapshot according to the set of criteria.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein comparing further comprises comparing the quality according to a Peak Signal to Noise Ratio (PSNR).

14. The method of claim 12, wherein comparing further comprises comparing the quality according to a Just Noticeable Difference (JND) value.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
identifying a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and
associating the identified characteristics of the scene with the automatically selected codec.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein testing further comprises testing codecs of the codec library on the scene using different sets of parameters and automatically selecting the

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codec and set of parameters that produce a highest compression quality for the scene according to a set of criteria without exceeding the target data rate;

wherein compressing further comprises compressing the scene using the automatically selected codec with the automatically selected parameters; and

wherein delivering further comprises delivering the compressed scene to the destination system with an indication of which codec and set of parameters were used to compress the scene.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
identifying a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and
associating the automatically selected codec and the automatically selected set of parameters with the identified characteristics of the scene.

18. The method of claim 1, further comprising adjusting the target data rate in response to constraints of the destination system.

19. The method of claim 1, further comprising adjusting the target data rate in response to conditions of a transmission channel to the destination system.

20. The method of claim 1, further comprising adjusting the target data rate in response to a message from the destination system.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying further comprises detecting a scene change in response to one frame of the media signal being sufficiently different from a previous frame.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying further comprises detecting a scene change in response to the passage of a fixed period of time.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein delivering further comprises streaming each compressed scene to the destination system through a network.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein delivering further comprises storing each compressed scene on a storage medium.

25. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one codec in the library has an associated licensing cost, and wherein selecting further comprises automatically selecting the codec having the least licensing cost in response to two or more codecs producing substantially the same quality of compressed output for a scene.

26. A media compression method comprising:

using a computer to perform the steps of:

providing a library of codecs, at least one codec having an associated licensing cost;

obtaining a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;

identifying, by an identification module, a plurality of scenes within the media signal;

automatically selecting different codecs, by a selection module, from the codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected produce a highest compression quality at the lowest licensing cost for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;

compressing, by a compression module, the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and

delivering, by an output module, the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

27. A method for communicating a media signal comprising:

using a computer to perform the steps of:

selectively compressing, by a compression module, at least two scenes of a media signal using different codecs from a codec library, wherein the codecs are automatically selected, by a selection module, to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate; and

delivering, by an output module, each compressed scene to a destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

28. A media compression system comprising:

an input module to obtain a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;

an identification module to identify a plurality of scenes within the media signal;

a selection module to automatically select different codecs from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;

a compression module to compress the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and

an output module to deliver the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the codecs are automatically selected from the group consisting of discrete cosine transform (DCT) codecs, fractal codecs, and wavelet codecs.

30. The system of claim 28, wherein a first automatically selected codec comprises a block codec and a second automatically selected codec comprises a fractal codec.

31. The system of claim 28, wherein a first automatically selected codec comprises a block codec and a second automatically selected codec comprises a wavelet codec.

32. The system of claim 28, wherein the identification module is to identify a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and

wherein the selection module is to search for a codec in the library that is associated with the identified characteristics of the scene.

33. The system of claim 32, wherein the characteristics are selected from the group consisting of motion characteristics and color characteristics.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein the selection module comprises an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system to locate a codec associated with the identified characteristics of a scene.

35. The system of claim 34, wherein the AI system comprises a neural network.

36. The system of claim 34, wherein the AI system comprises an expert system.

37. The system of claim 32, wherein the selection module is to search for an association between the identified characteristics and a set of parameters to be used with the automatically selected codec;

wherein the compression module is to compress the scene using the automatically selected codec with the associated set of parameters; and

wherein the output module is to deliver the compressed scene to the destination system with an indication of which codec and which set of parameters were used to compress the scene.

38. The system of claim 28, wherein the selection module is to test at least a subset of the codecs of the codec library on a scene and automatically select the codec that produces a highest compression quality for the scene according to a set of criteria without exceeding the target data rate.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the selection module is to store a baseline snapshot of the scene and, for each codec to be tested, have the scene compressed at or below the target data rate using one of the codecs in the library, have the scene decompressed using the same codec, and compare the quality of the decompressed scene with the baseline snapshot according to the set of criteria.

40. The system of claim 39, wherein the selection module is to compare the quality according to a Peak Signal to Noise Ratio (PSNR).

41. The system of claim 39, wherein the selection module is to compare the quality according to a Just Noticeable Difference (JND) value.

42. The system of claim 39, wherein the identification module is to identify a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and

wherein the selection module is to associate the identified characteristics of the scene with the automatically selected codec.

43. The system of claim 38, wherein the selection module is to test the codecs of the codec library on the scene using different sets of parameters and automatically select the codec and set of parameters that produce a highest compression quality for the scene according to a set of criteria without exceeding the target data rate;

wherein the compression module is to compress the scene using the automatically selected codec with the automatically selected parameters; and

wherein the output module is to deliver the compressed scene to the destination system with an indication of which codec and set of parameters were used to compress the scene.

44. The system of claim 43, wherein the identification module is to identify a plurality of characteristics of a scene; and

wherein the selection module is to associate the automatically selected codec and the automatically selected set of parameters with the identified characteristics of the scene.

45. The system of claim 28, wherein the selection module is to adjust the target data rate in response to constraints of the destination system.

46. The system of claim 28, wherein the selection module is to adjust the target data rate in response to conditions of a transmission channel to the destination system.

47. The system of claim 28, wherein the selection module is to adjust the target data rate in response to a message from the destination system.

48. The system of claim 28, wherein the identification module is to detect a scene change in response to one frame of the media signal being sufficiently different from a previous frame.

49. The system of claim 28, wherein the identification module is to detect a scene change in response to the passage of a fixed period of time.

50. The system of claim 28, wherein the output module is to stream each compressed scene to the destination system through a network.

51. The system of claim 28, wherein the output module is to store each compressed scene on a storage medium.

52. The system of claim 28, wherein at least one codec in the library has an associated licensing cost, and wherein the

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selection module is to automatically select the codec having the least licensing cost in response to two or more codecs producing substantially the same quality of compressed output for a scene.

53. A media compression system comprising: 5
 a library of codecs, at least one codec having an associated licensing cost;
 an input module to obtain a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;
 an identification module to identify a plurality of scenes 10
 within the media signal;
 a selection module to automatically select different codecs from the codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality at the 15
 lowest licensing cost for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;
 a compression module to compress the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and
 an output module to deliver the compressed scenes to the 20
 destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

54. A system for communicating a media signal comprising: 25
 a compression module to selectively compress at least two scenes of a media signal using different codecs from a codec library, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without 30
 exceeding a target data rate; and
 an output module to deliver each compressed scene to a destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

55. A computer-readable medium storing a computer program comprising program code for causing a computer to 35
 perform the steps of:
 obtaining a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;
 identifying, by an identification module, a plurality of 40
 scenes within the media signal;
 automatically selecting different codecs, by a selection module, from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality 45
 for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;

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compressing, by a compression module, the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and
 delivering, by an output module, the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

56. A media compression apparatus comprising:
 means for obtaining a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;
 means for identifying a plurality of scenes within the media signal;
 means for automatically selecting different codecs from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;
 means for compressing the scenes using the automatically selected codecs; and
 means for delivering the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene.

57. A media compression method comprising:
 using a computer to perform the steps of:
 obtaining a media signal to be communicated to a destination system;
 identifying, by an identification module, a plurality of scenes within the media signal;
 automatically selecting different codecs, by a selection module, from a codec library to respectively compress at least two of the scenes, wherein the codecs are automatically selected to produce a highest compression quality for the respective scenes according to a set of criteria without exceeding a target data rate;
 compressing, by a compression module, the scenes using the automatically selected codecs;
 delivering, by an output module, the compressed scenes to the destination system with an indication of which codec was used to compress each scene;
 receiving each compressed scene and indication of a codec at the destination system;
 decompressing, by a decompression module, each compressed scene using the indicated codec; and
 presenting the decompressed scenes to a user of the destination system.

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