The opinion in support of the decision being entered today was not written for publication and is not binding precedent of the Board.

Paper No. 20

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte NOBUHIRO IMAIZUMI and TATSUAKI ONIISHI

Appeal No. 1999-0474
Application No. 08/674,452

ON BRIEF

Before KRASS, FLEMING, and BLANKENSHIP, Administrative Patent Judges.

BLANKENSHIP, Administrative Patent Judge.

DECISION ON APPEAL

This is a decision on appeal under 35 U.S.C. § 134 from the examiner's final rejection of claims 1-6, which are all the claims in the application.

We reverse.

BACKGROUND

The invention is directed to a system aiding in the design of multiplexed communications between switches and loads. Such multiplexed communication systems may be used in motor vehicles. Claim 1 is reproduced below.

1. A control-specification design management system comprising:

a processor;

a rewritable, removable storage;

a look-up table pertaining to:

a plurality of different control switch types,

a plurality of control switches arrayed on an operation panel,

a plurality of different load terminals for connecting to loads,

a first relation between said plurality of control switches and said plurality of different control switch types, and

a second relation between said plurality of load terminals and respective allowed corresponding ones of said plurality of different control switch types;

wherein said processor, in response to a selection of one of said plurality of control switches, accesses said look-up table and identifies candidates from said plurality of load terminals which may be controlled by said selected one of said plurality of control switches;

wherein said identification of said candidates is performed on the basis of said first relation and said second relation;

wherein said processor forms control-specification information based on (1) at least a selected one of said candidates from said plurality of load terminals and (2) at least said selected one of said plurality of control switches; and

wherein said control-specification information is provided on said removable storage;

whereby said removable storage is coupled with a load control device which controls said plurality of loads on the basis of said control-specification information.

The examiner relies on the following reference:

Oho et al. (Oho)	4,855,896	Aug. 8, 1989

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Oho in view of "conventional knowledge in the art."

We refer to the Final Rejection (Paper No. 10) and the Examiner's Answer (Paper No. 17) for a statement of the examiner's position and to the Brief (Paper No. 16) and the Reply Brief (Paper No. 18) for appellants' position with respect to the claims which stand rejected.

OPINION

In response to the rejection of the instant claims (set forth at pages 3 through 6 of the Answer), appellants contend that language in claim 1 distinguishes the invention. In particular, appellants argue that the language requiring access of a look-up table and identifying candidates from the plurality of load terminals which may be controlled by a selected one of the control switches (which appellants refer to as the "candidate requirement") is not taught or suggested by the prior art. "Oho describes an in-place load control system, not a design management system." (Brief at 5.)

The examiner responds (Answer at 6-11) that appellants' arguments appear to be based on preamble language of claim 1, and, even if the scope of the claim is limited by the preamble, the limitations are met by Oho. More to the point, the examiner asserts (id. at 10) that Oho teaches "a wiring logic table which identifies a candidate(s) from a plurality of load terminals which may be controlled by a selected input control switch (see col. 3, lines 45-47; col. 7, lines 50-60)." Appellants respond, in turn, that the claims are drawn to a design system that submits candidates to a designer. "Oho's logic table is predetermined and does not offer any candidates which may be controlled." (Reply Brief at 2.)

In view of the respective positions set out by the examiner and appellants, there does not appear to be any substantial disagreement with respect to the details of the actual system disclosed by Oho. Rather, the controversy turns on claim interpretation. Does instant claim 1 distinguish over the previously designed -- i.e., the end product -- system described by Oho?

We agree with appellants that the system of Oho does not teach the limitations ascribed by the rejection. Claim 1 requires that the processor identify candidates from the plurality of load terminals which "may be controlled" by the selected one of the control switches. In our opinion, the relevant language of claim 1 does not include within its scope the wiring logic table and associated structure described by Oho. The reference makes clear (e.g., col. 10, ll. 21-66) that the wiring logic table (CCTBL) is located in read-only memory (ROM), and configuration of the wiring system does not

change during system operation. The wiring conditions are tabulated in advance so that connections are immediately determined by a search of the wiring logic table.

We thus conclude that a prima facie case for obviousness has not been established for the subject matter as a whole of the sole independent claim on appeal. We do not sustain the rejection of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

CONCLUSION

The rejection of claims 1-6 is reversed.

REVERSED

ERROL A. KRASS Administrative Patent Judge	)	
MICHAEL R. FLEMING Administrative Patent Judge	)	BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES
HOWARD B. BLANKENSHIP Administrative Patent Judge	)	

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