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Application or Tab Switching via Mouse Hover and Scroll

ABSTRACT

Many computer users use several applications simultaneously for various tasks. Switching between applications or browser tabs is cumbersome and requires the user to lift their fingers off the keyboard, move the cursor to the target application via a pointing device, and click the pointing device. This disclosure describes techniques that enable a user to rapidly switch between applications or browser tabs using the scroll of a mouse or a trackpad. The user can simply hover the mouse pointer over the system taskbar or browser tab-bar and scroll the mouse or trackpad to switch between apps or tabs.

KEYWORDS

- Context switch
- Application switch
- Tab switch
- Mouse hover
- Mouse scroll
- User interaction

BACKGROUND

Many computer users use several applications simultaneously for various tasks. Even within a single application such as a browser, a user may frequently switch between tabs. Switching between applications or browser tabs currently requires the user to lift their fingers off the keyboard, move the cursor to the required application or browser tab via a mouse (or trackpad) , and click the mouse (or trackpad), arguably a cumbersome procedure, especially during rapid workflow. Alternatively, keyboard shortcuts such as ctrl+tab or alt+tab can be used to switch between applications.

DESCRIPTION

This disclosure describes techniques that enable a user to rapidly switch between applications or browser tabs by scrolling via a mouse or trackpad.

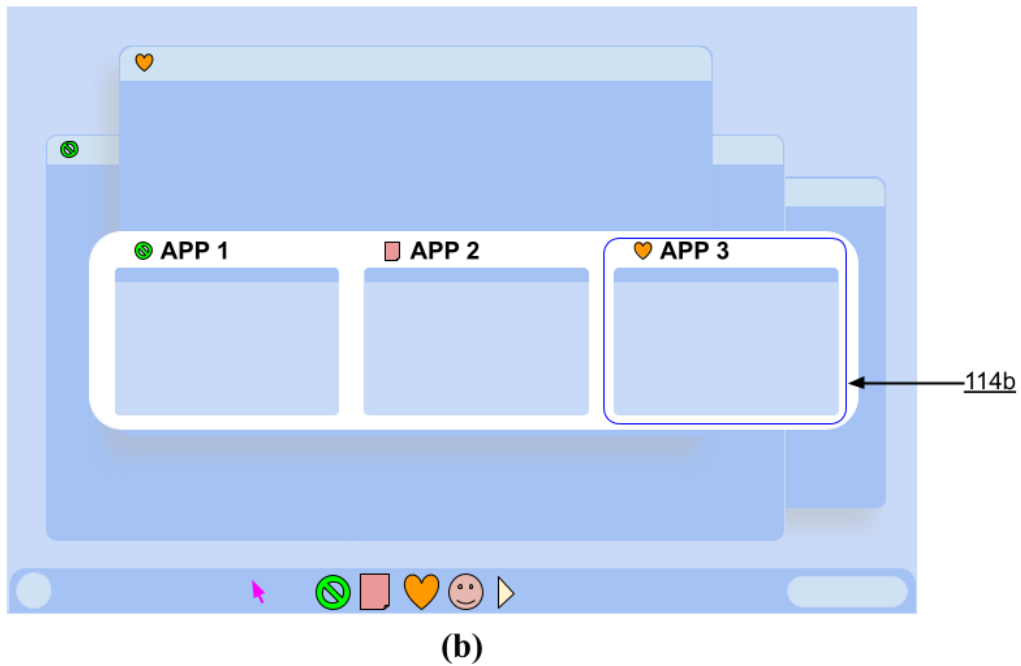
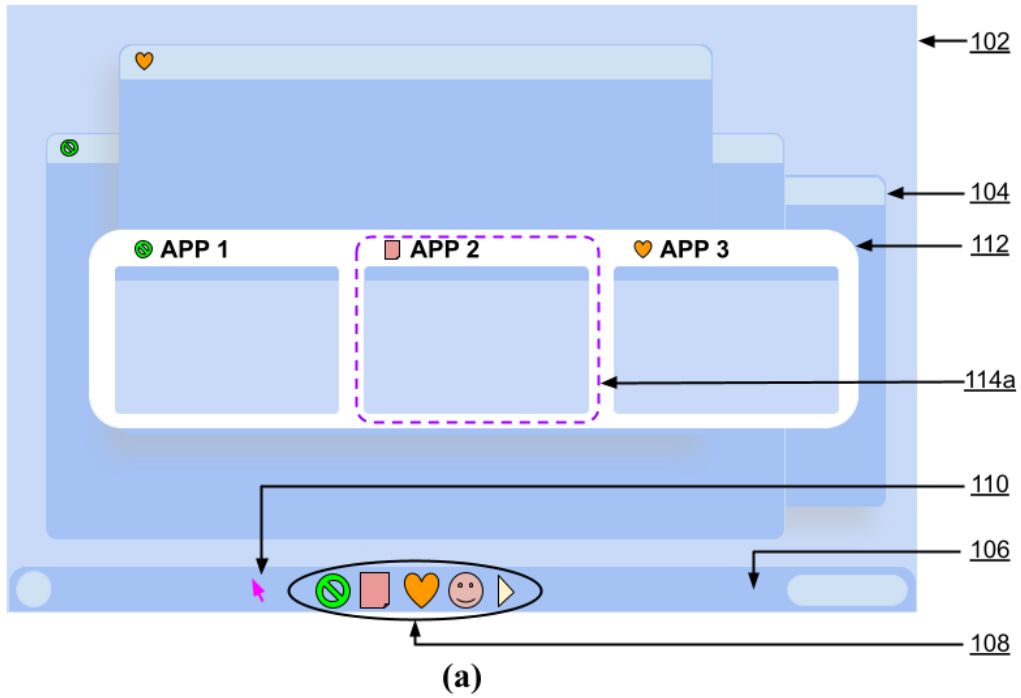


Fig. 1: Switching between apps using a mouse scroll

As illustrated in Fig. 1, per techniques of this disclosure, a user can simply hover the mouse pointer over the system taskbar and scroll the mouse or trackpad to switch between apps. A computer user interface (102) includes one or more active apps (104); a system taskbar (106) that includes application icons (108); etc. Hovering the mouse or trackpad pointer (110) over the system taskbar causes a set of thumbnails (112) of active apps to appear. The user can switch between apps by simply scrolling the mouse or trackpad. For example, the active application app 2, indicated by a dotted outline around the app thumbnail in Fig. 1(a), changes to app 3 (114b) as shown in Fig. 1(b) based upon the scrolling operation.

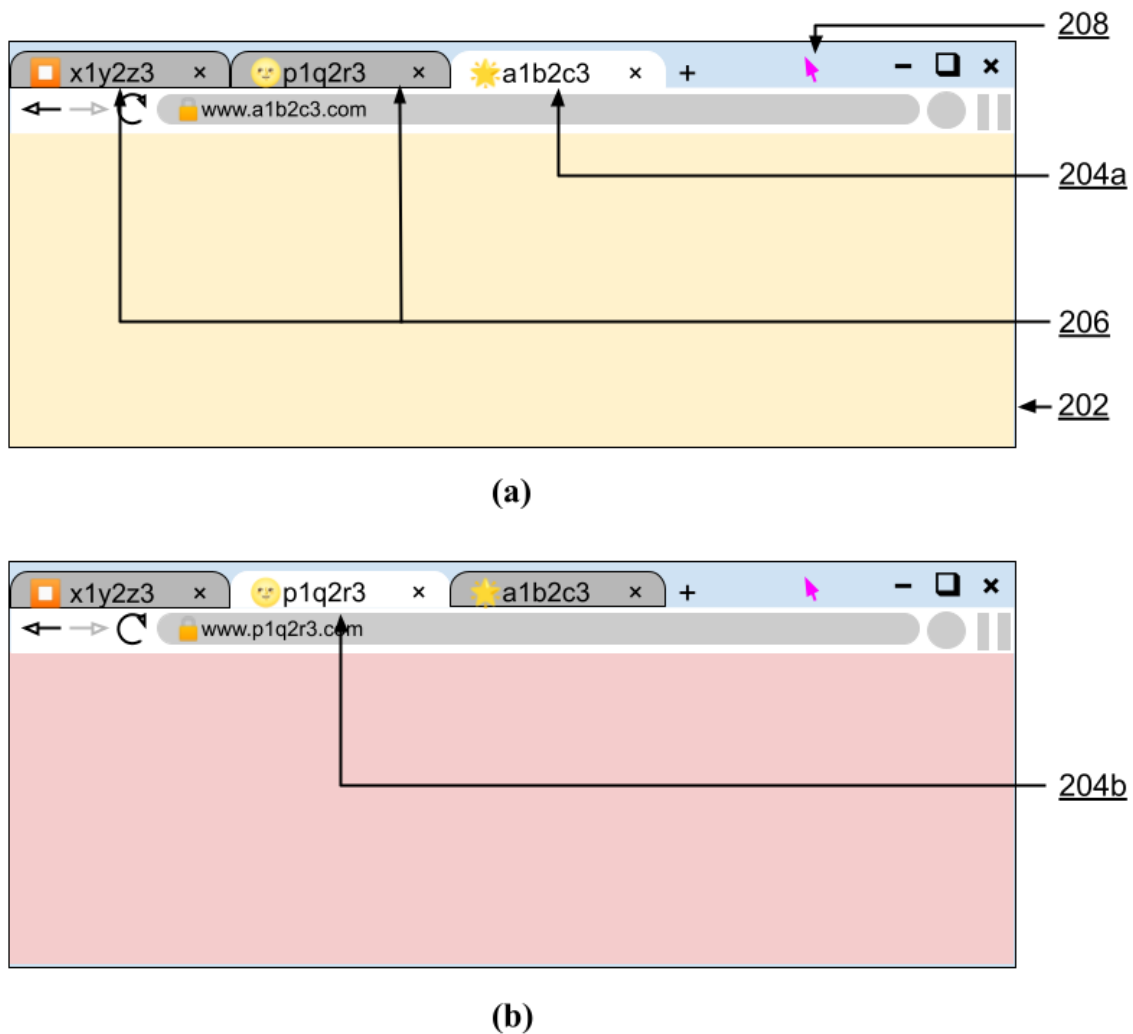


Fig. 2: Switching between tabs using a mouse scroll

As illustrated in Fig. 2, mouse scrolls can also be used to switch between tabs of a browser or of any application. The application (202) includes tabs, one of which is active (204a) and others are inactive (206, inactive status indicated by gray color). To change the currently active tab, the user simply hovers the mouse pointer (208) over the application tab bar and performs a scrolling operation. In response, the active tab changes from a1b2c3.com (204a) in Fig. 2(a) to p1q2r3.com (204b) in Fig. 2(b).

The described techniques reduce the number of operations and clicks needed to switch between active applications or between tabs of an active application. This improves user interaction. The techniques can be utilized in any operating system, browser, or application.

CONCLUSION

This disclosure describes techniques that enable a user to rapidly switch between applications or browser tabs using the scroll of a mouse or a trackpad. The user can simply hover the mouse pointer over the system taskbar or browser tab-bar and scroll the mouse or trackpad to switch between apps or tabs.

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