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Smith et al.

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(54) **ACCESS POINT IN A WIRELESS LAN**

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Mar. 9, 2006	(WO)	PCT/US2006/008747

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See application file for complete search history.

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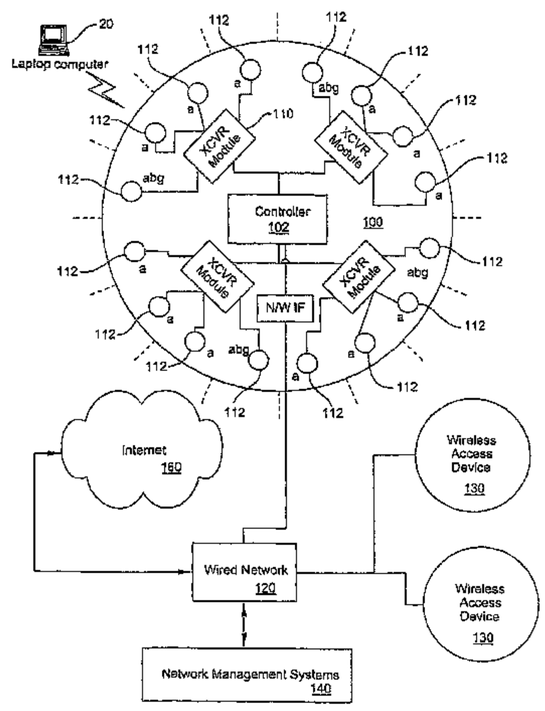
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A wireless access device in a local area network (LAN) having a plurality of transceivers. Each transceiver has a directional antenna positioned in a substantially circular array to communicate signals with a plurality of stations in a corresponding sector. Each sector defines a portion of a coverage area surrounding the wireless access device. The wireless access device has a network interface to a data network, and an array controller to control communication of data between the stations and the transceivers, and between the transceivers and the network interface.

23 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets

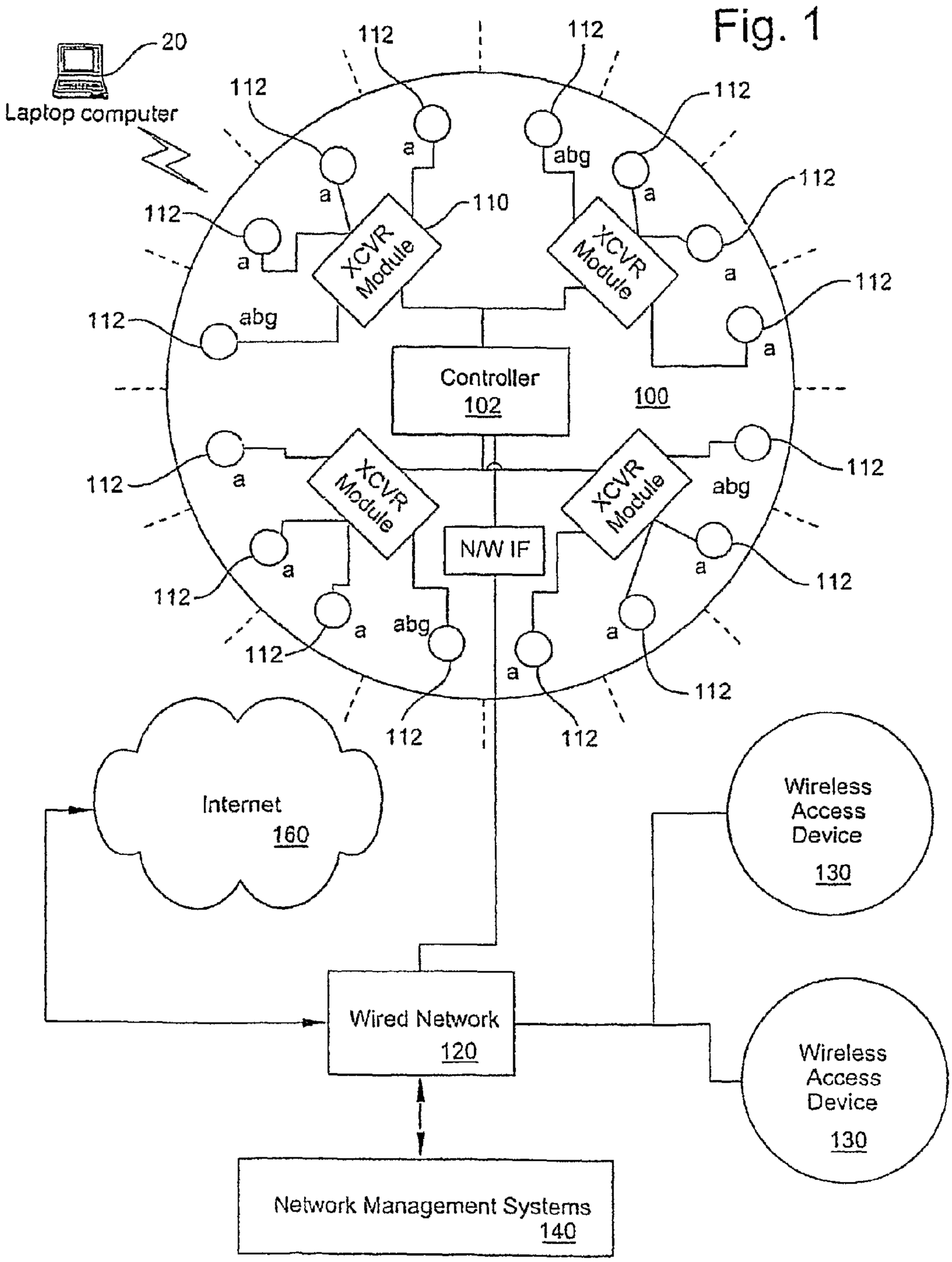


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Fig. 1


20
Laptop computer
112
a
abg
110
XCVR Module
Controller
102
100
N/W IF
Internet
160
Wireless Access Device
130
Wired Network
120
Network Management Systems
140

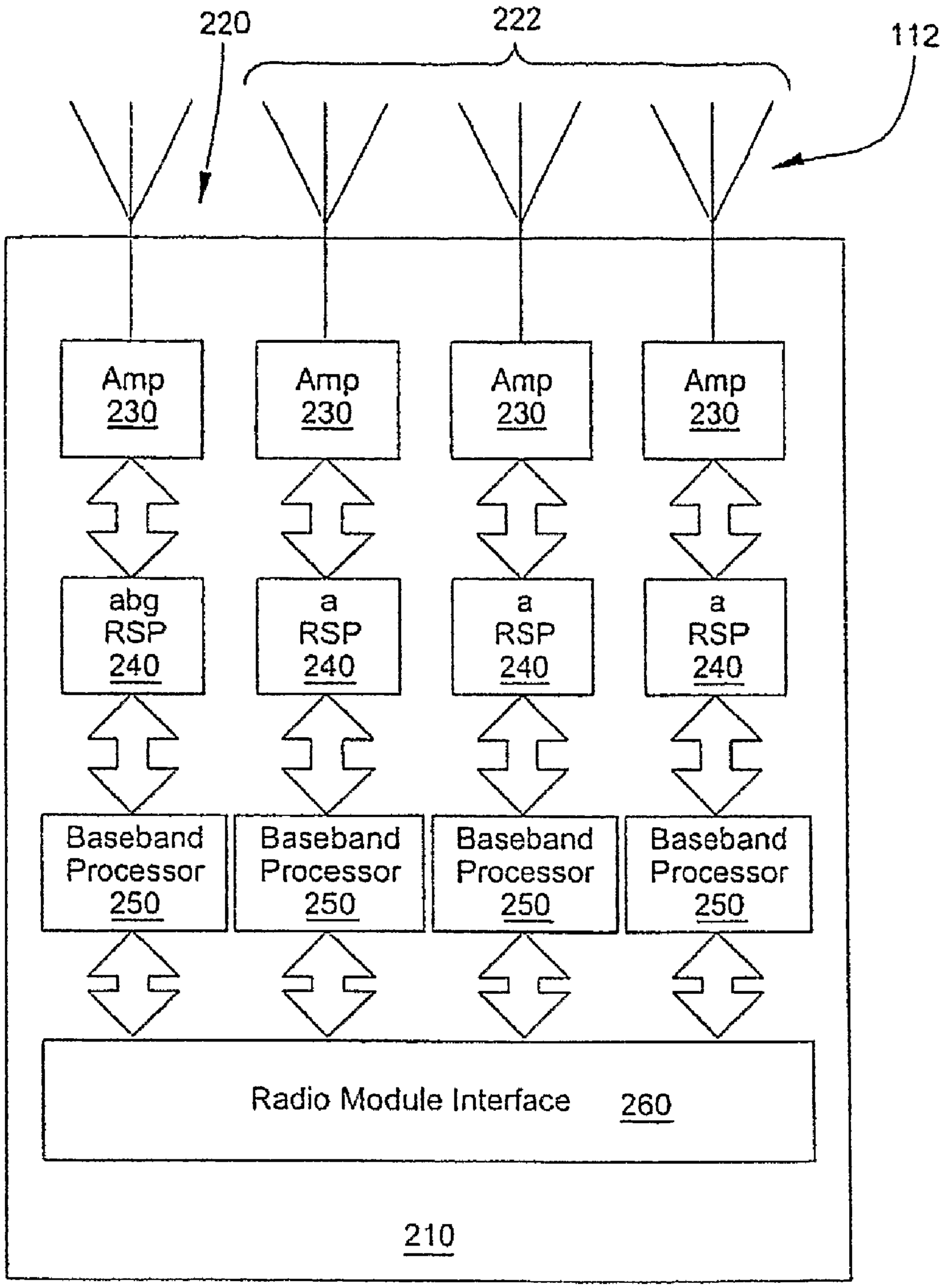

220
222
112
Amp 230
Amp 230
Amp 230
Amp 230
abg RSP 240
a RSP 240
a RSP 240
a RSP 240
Baseband Processor 250
Baseband Processor 250
Baseband Processor 250
Baseband Processor 250
Radio Module Interface 260
210

Fig. 2

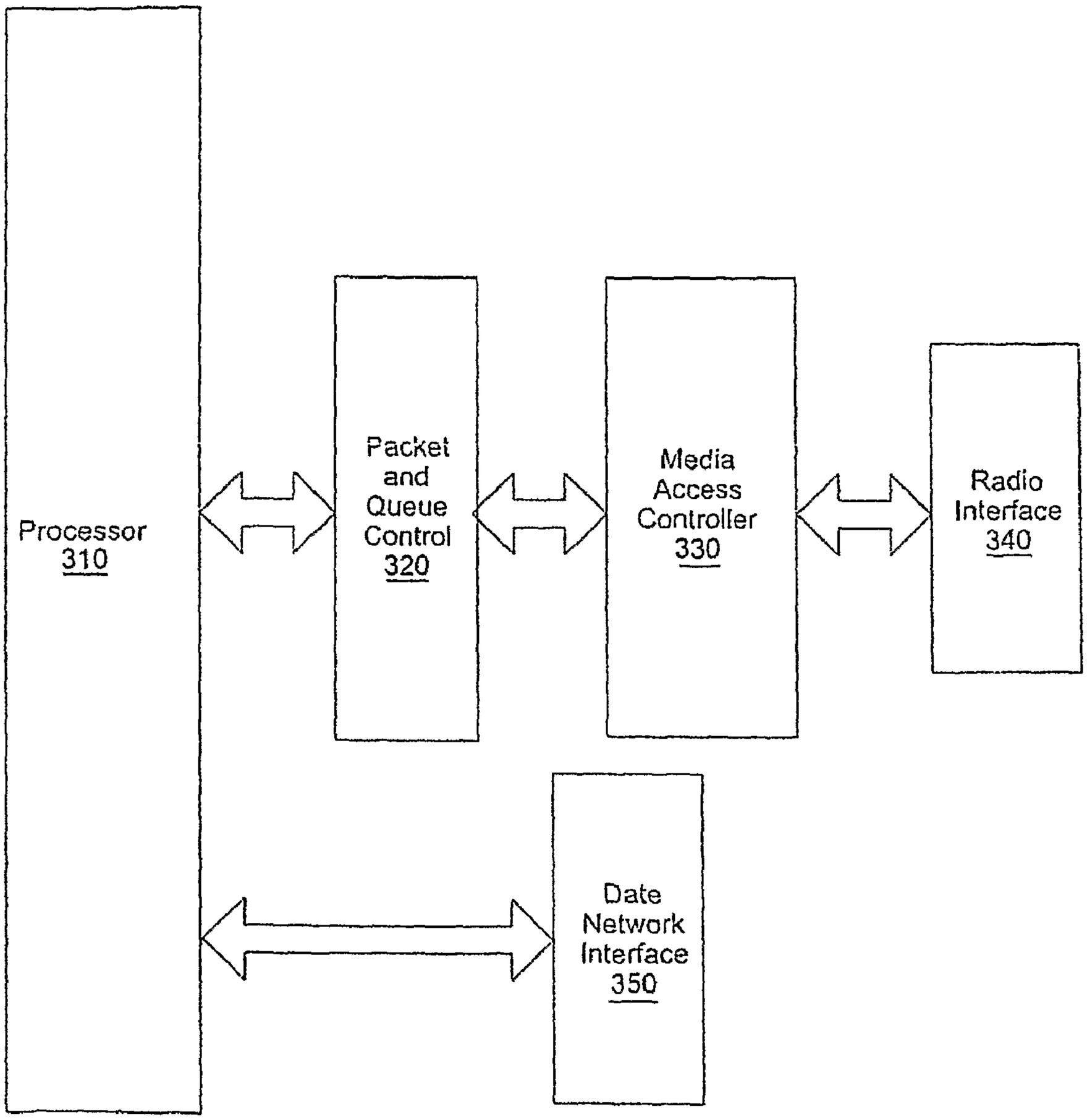

Processor
310
Packet
and
Queue
Control
320
Media
Access
Controller
330
Radio
Interface
340
Date
Network
Interface
350

Fig. 3

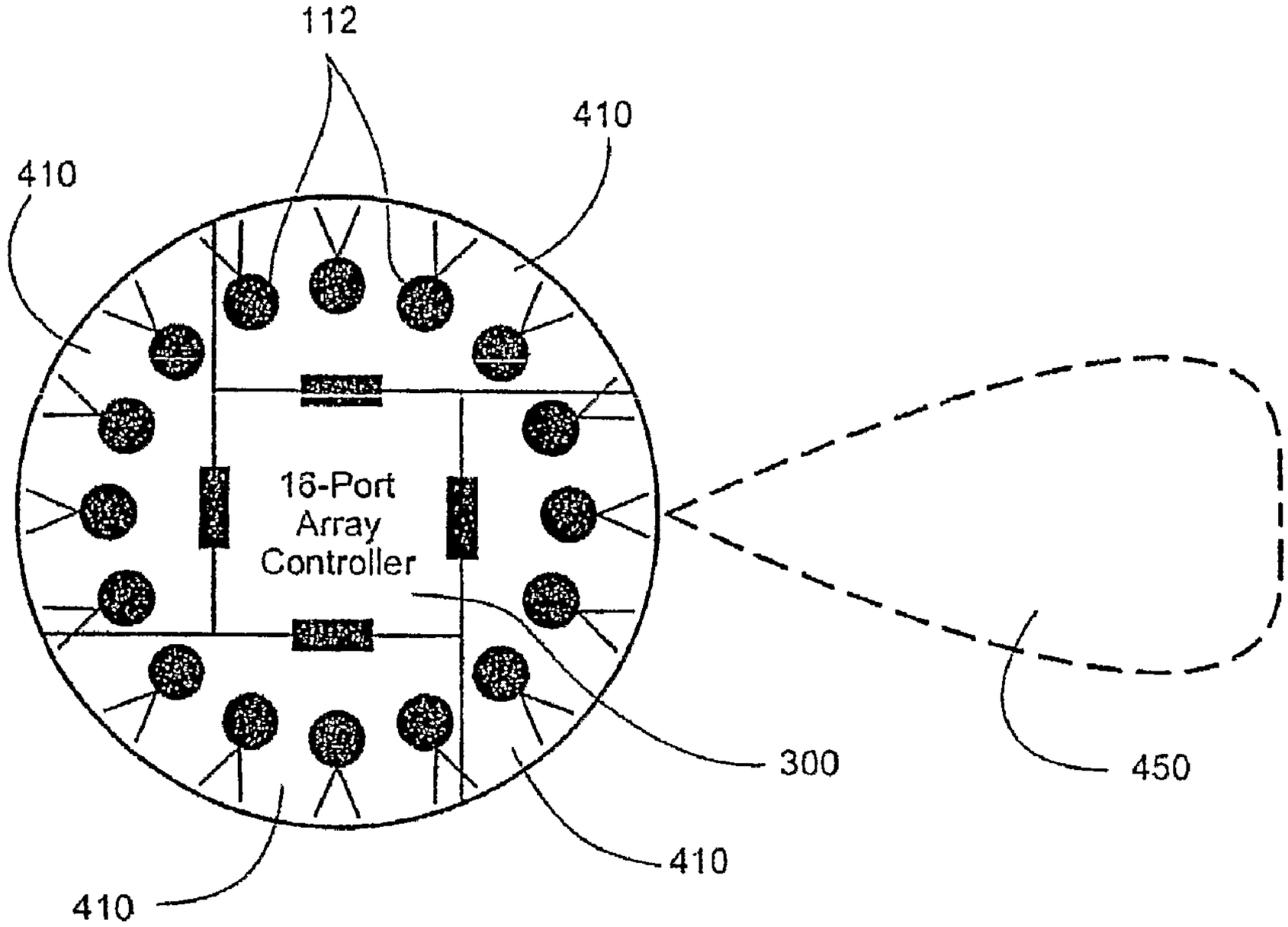


Fig. 4

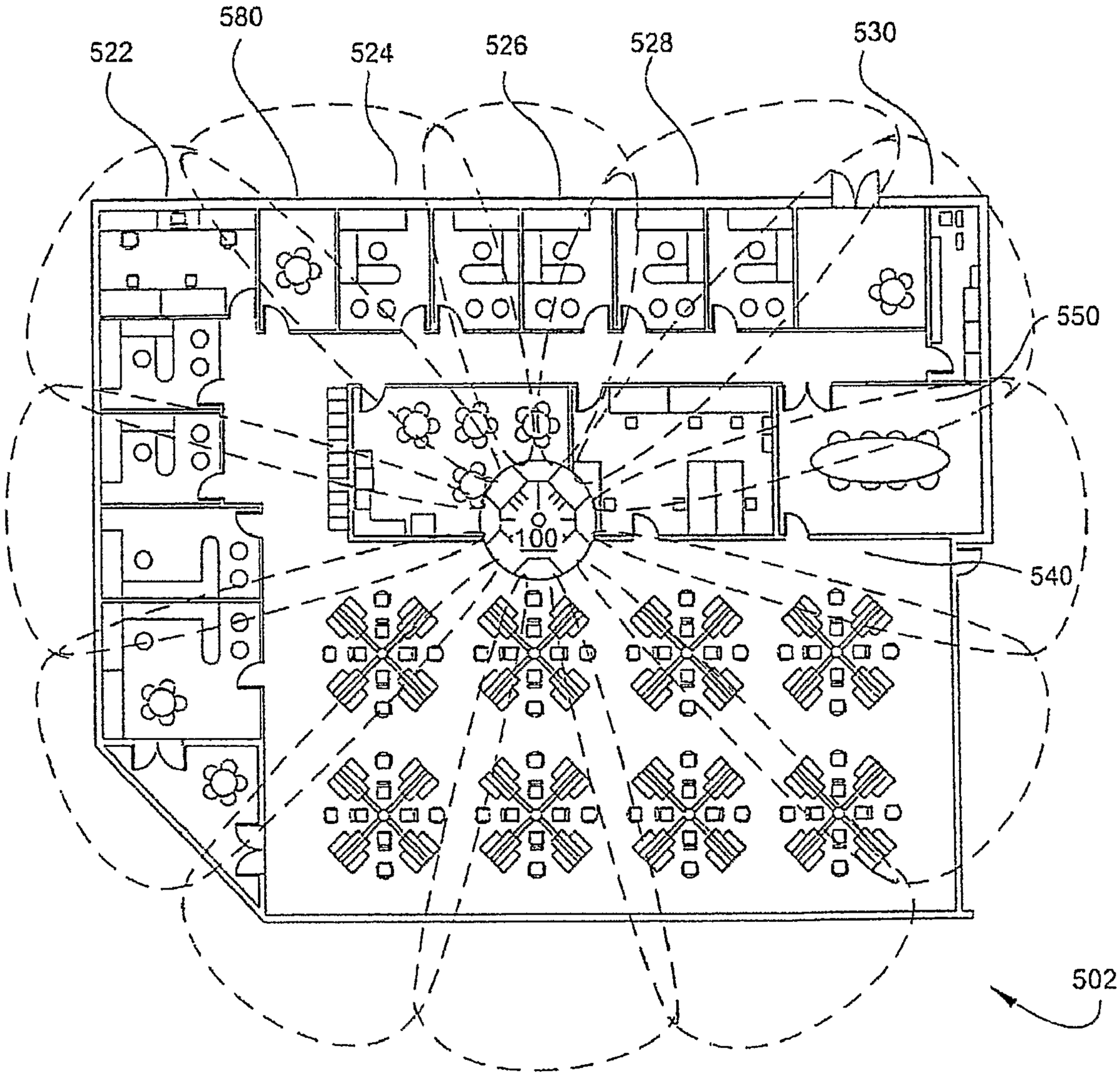


Fig. 5A

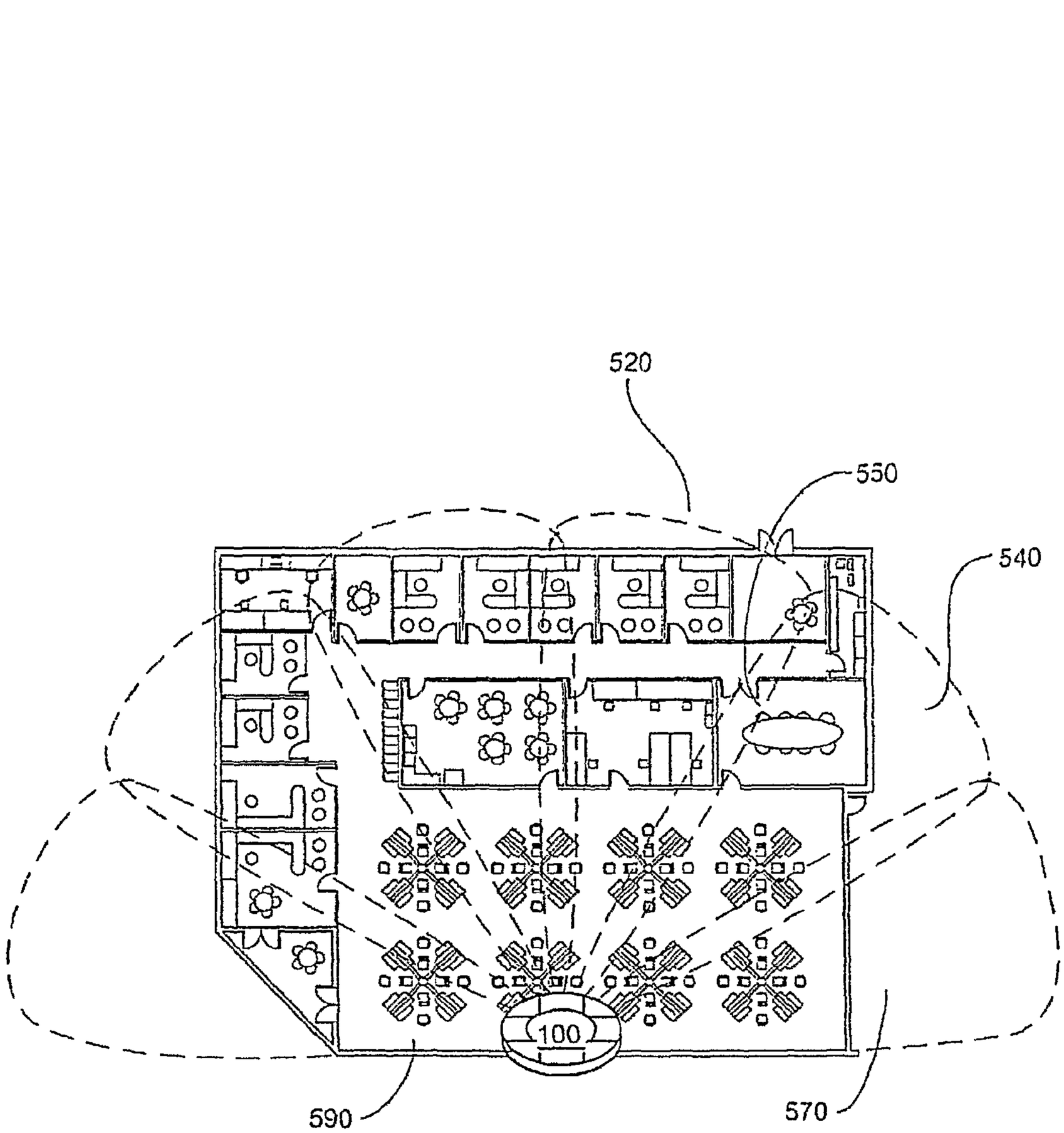


Fig. 5B

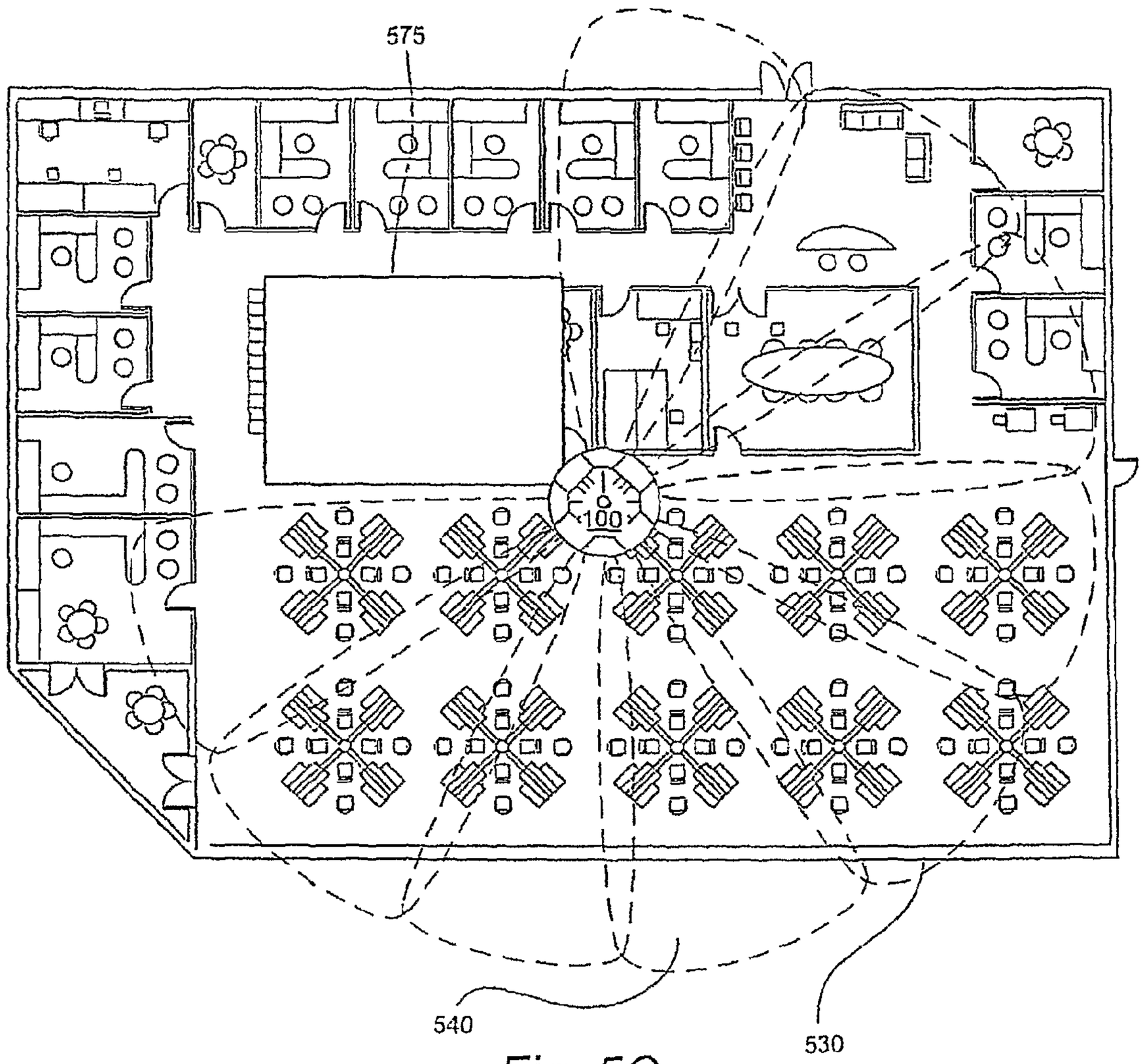


Fig. 5C

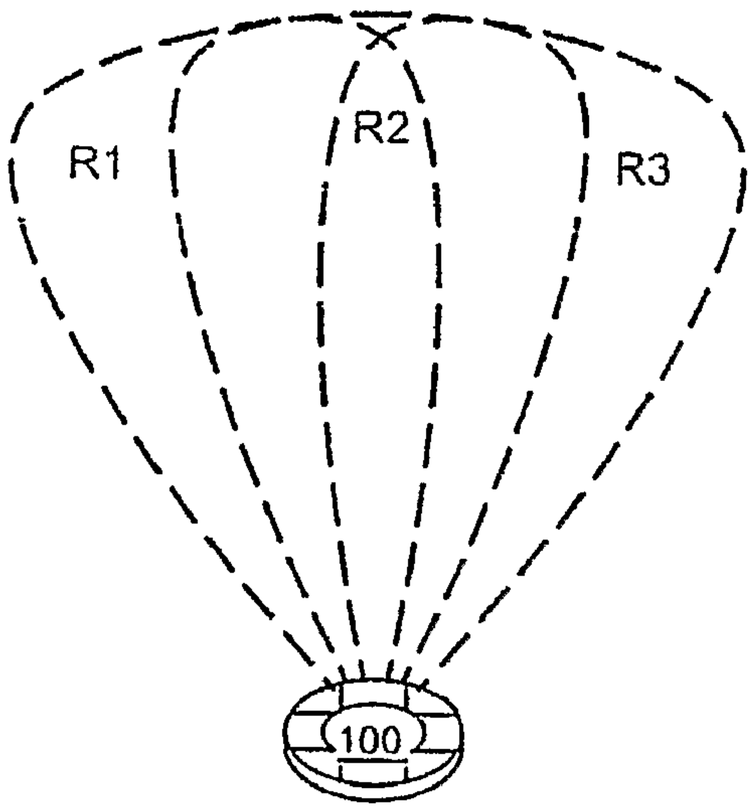


Fig. 5D

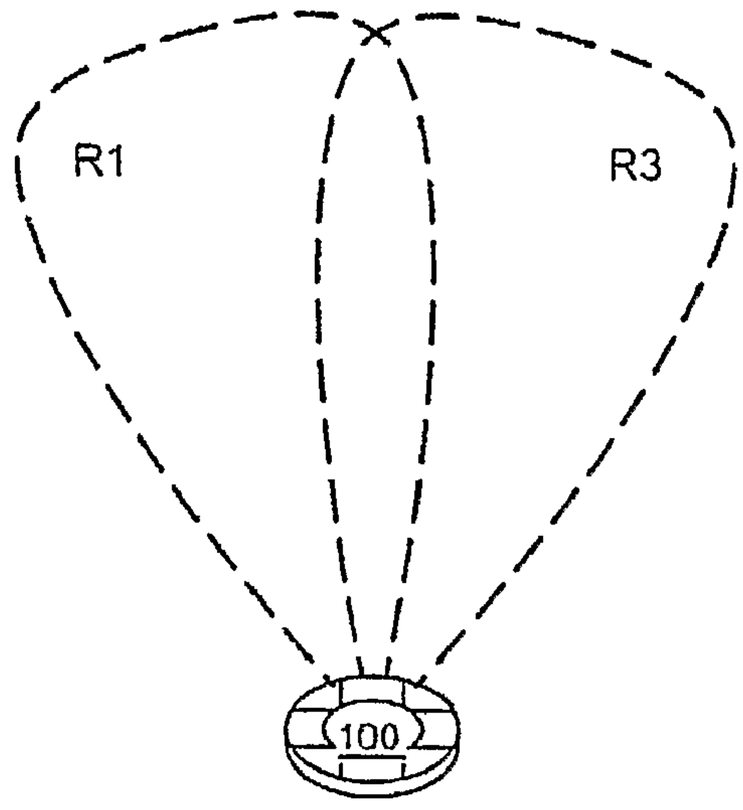


Fig. 5E

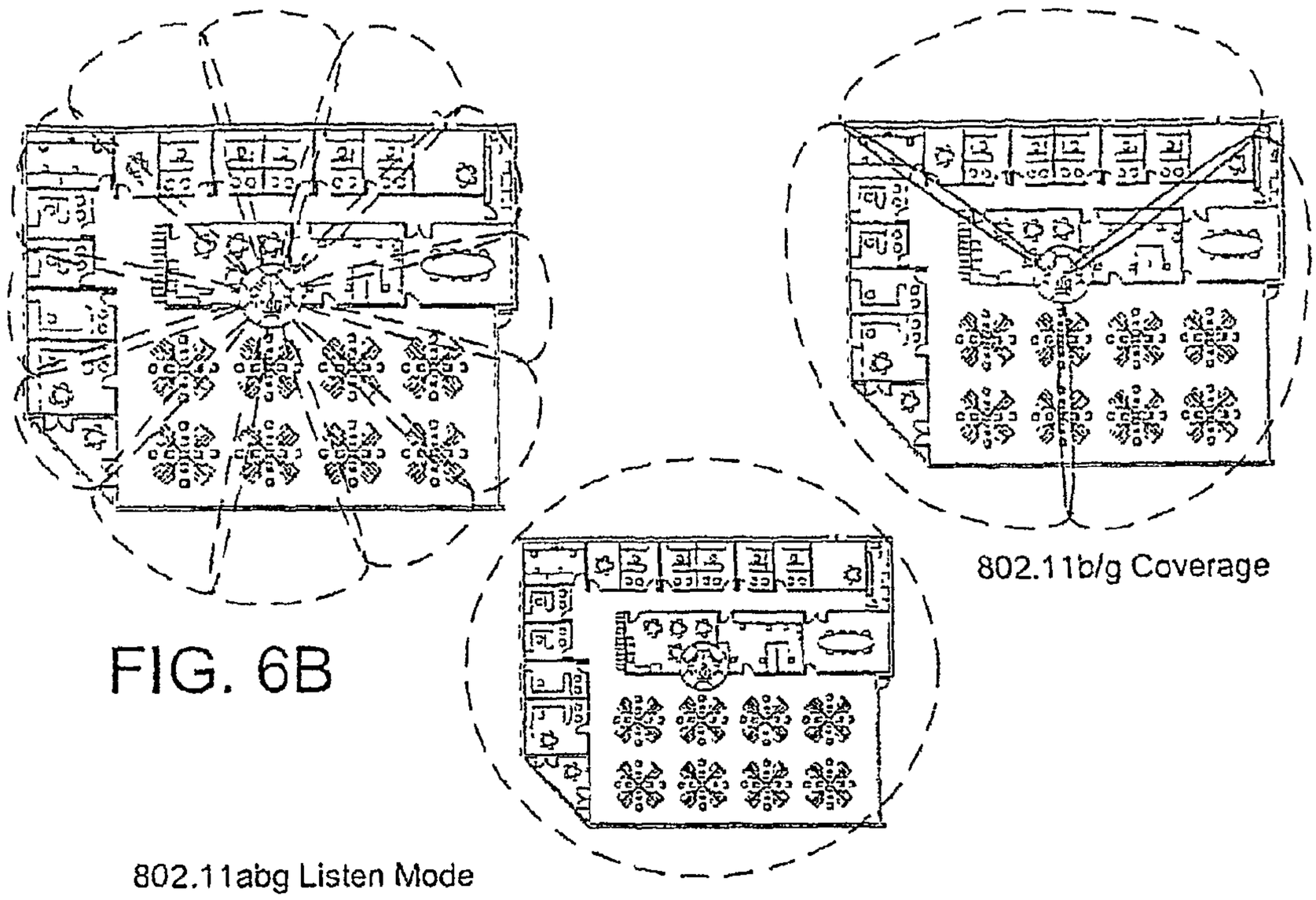

802.11b/g Coverage
802.11abg Listen Mode

FIG. 6B

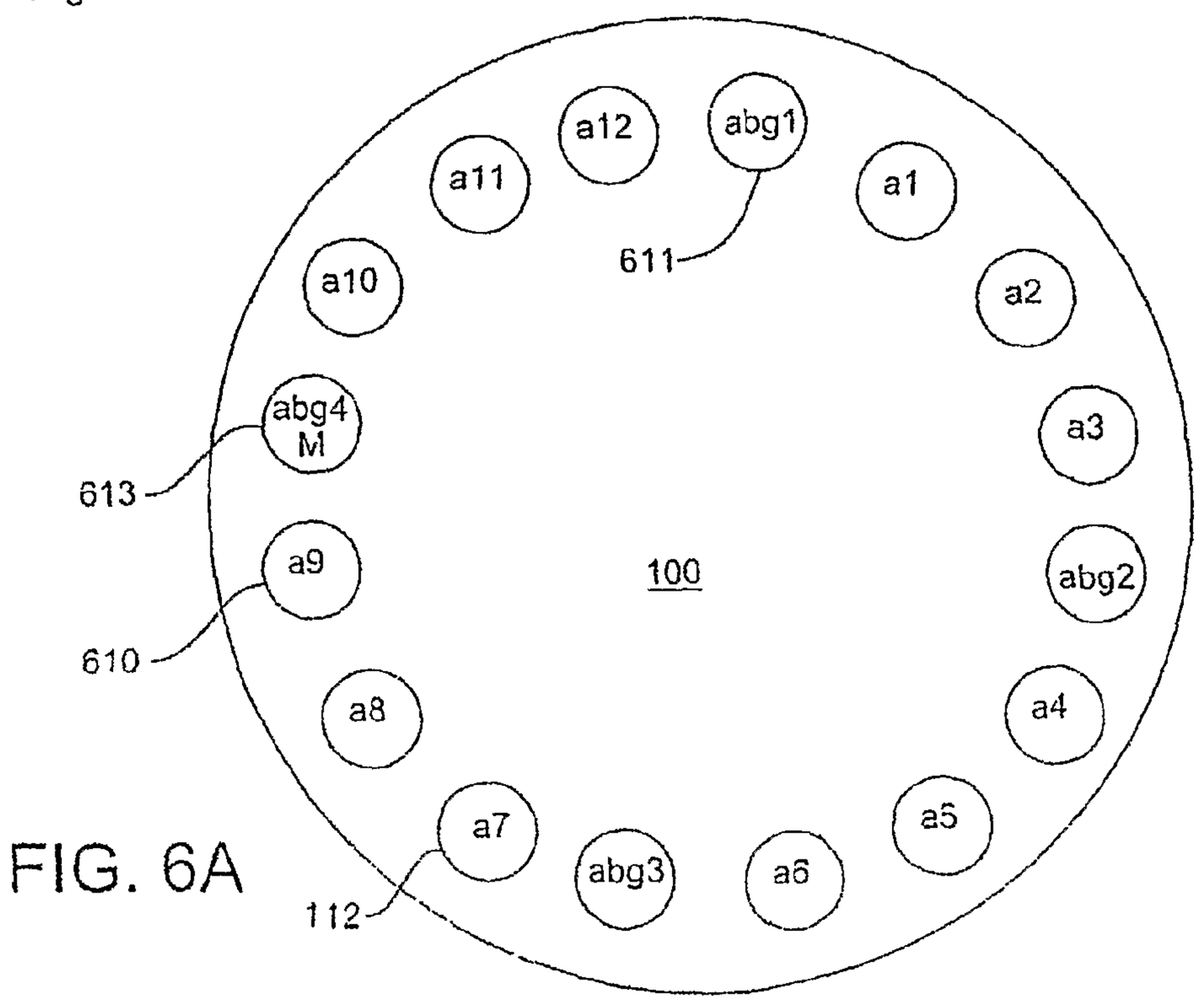

a12
abg1
a11
a1
611
a10
a2
abg4
M
a3
613
a9
100
abg2
610
a8
a4
a7
a5
abg3
a6
112

FIG. 6A

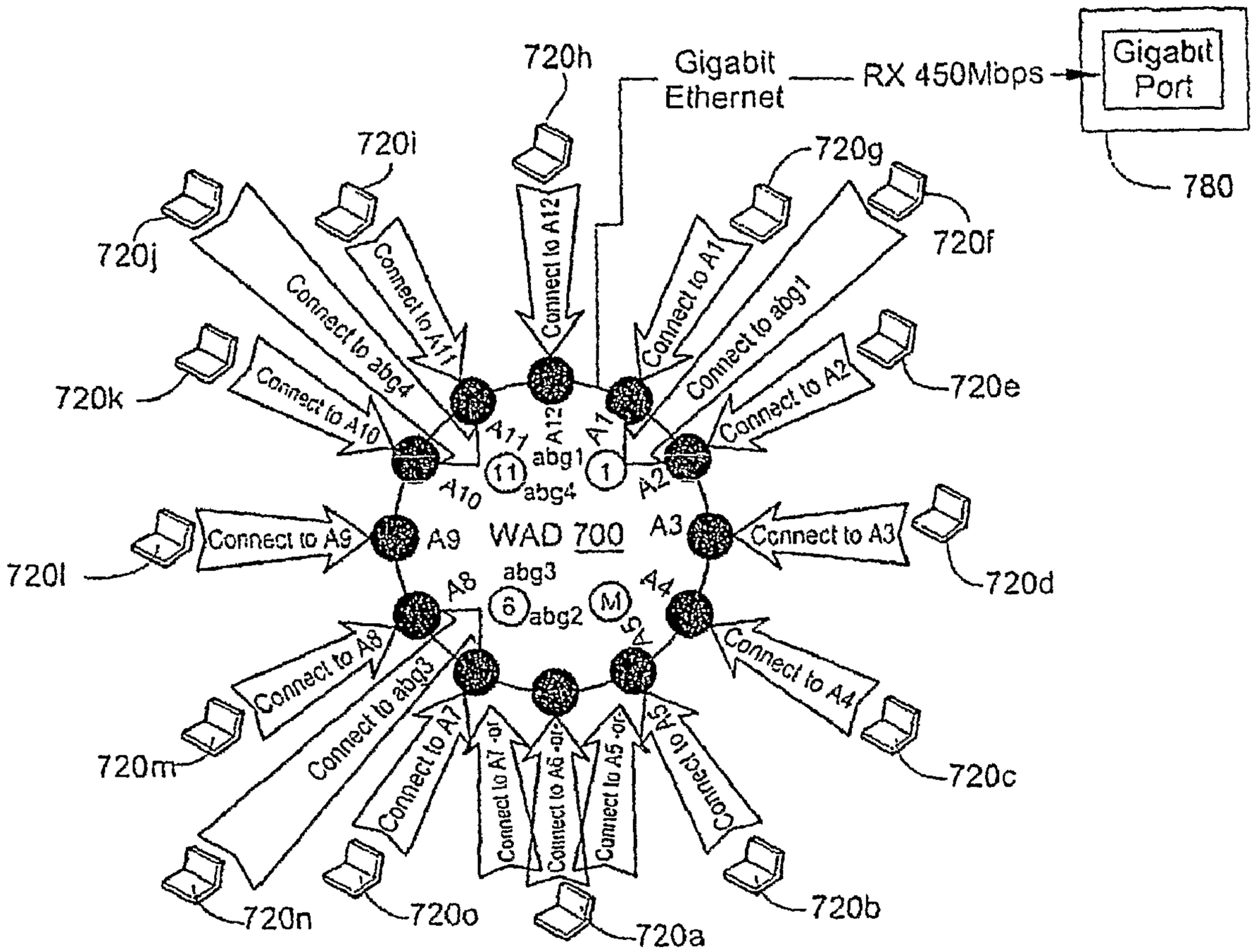

Gigabit Port
780
Gigabit Ethernet
RX 450Mbps
720h
720i
720g
720j
720f
720k
720e
720l
720d
720m
720c
720n
720o
720a
720b
WAD 700
A9
A3
A8
A4
A5
A11
A12
A1
A10
A2
A7
A6
abg1
abg2
abg3
abg4
Connect to A12
Connect to A11
Connect to A1
Connect to abg4
Connect to abg1
Connect to A10
Connect to A2
Connect to A9
Connect to A3
Connect to A8
Connect to A4
Connect to abg3
Connect to A7
Connect to A6
Connect to A5

FIG. 7

ACCESS POINT IN A WIRELESS LAN

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to the provisional patent applications, Ser. No. 60/660,171, titled "WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates, Ian Laity, Mick Conley, Mike de la Garrigue, and Steve Smith, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,276, titled "WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates, Ian Laity, Mick Conley, Mike de la Garrigue, and Steve Smith, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,375, titled "WIRELESS ACCESS POINT," by Dirk I. Gates and Ian Laity, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,275, titled "MULTI-SECTOR ACCESS POINT ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates Ian Laity, Mick Conley, Mike de la Garrigue, and Steve Smith, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,210, titled "MEDIA ACCESS CONTROLLER FOR USE IN A MULTI-SECTOR ACCESS POINT ARRAY," by Mike de la Garrigue and Drew Bertagna filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,174, titled "QUEUE MANAGEMENT CONTROLLER FOR USE IN A MULTI-SECTOR ACCESS POINT ARRAY," by Mike de la Garrigue and Drew Bertagna filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,394, titled "WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates, Ian Laity, Mick Conley, Mike de la Garrigue, and Steve Smith, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,209, titled "WIRELESS LAN ARRAY ARCHITECTURE," by Dirk I. Gates, Ian Laity, Mick Conley, Mike de la Garrigue, and Steve Smith, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,393, titled "ANTENNA ARCHITECTURE OF A WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Abraham Hartenstein, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,269, titled "LOAD BALANCING IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY BASED ON AGGREGATE MEAN LEVELS," by Mick Conley filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,392, titled "ADVANCED ADJACENT CHANNEL SECTOR MANAGE NT FOR 802.11 TRAFFIC," by Mick Conley filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,391, titled "LOAD BALANCING IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY BASED ON AGGREGATE MEAN LEVELS," by Shaun Clem filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,277, titled "SYSTEM FOR TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING FRAMES IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates and Mike de la Garrigue, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,302, titled "SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING CHANNELS IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates and Kirk Mathews, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,376, titled "SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING CHANNELS IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates and Kirk Mathews, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; Ser. No. 60/660,541, titled "MEDIA ACCESS CONTROLLER FOR USE IN A MULTI-SECTOR ACCESS POINT ARRAY," by Dirk I. Gates and Mike de la Garrigue, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference; and PCT patent application serial number PCT/US2006/008747, titled "WIRELESS LOCAL AREA NETWORK ANTENNA ARRAY," filed on Mar. 9, 2006, and incorporated by reference herein; PCT patent application serial number PCT/US2006/008696, titled "WIRELESS ACCESS POINT," filed on Mar. 9, 2006, which claims priority to the above provisional patent applications, and incorporated by reference herein; PCT patent application serial number PCT/US2006/008744, titled "MEDIA ACCESS CONTROLLER FOR USE IN A MULTI-SECTOR ACCESS POINT ARRAY," filed on Mar. 9, 2006, and incorporated by reference herein; and PCT patent application serial number PCT/US2006/008698, titled "SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING CHANNELS IN A MULTI-RADIO WIRELESS LAN ARRAY," filed Mar. 9, 2006, and incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to wireless data communication systems and more particularly to systems and methods for providing access points in wireless local area networks.

2. Description of the Related Art

The use of wireless communication devices for data networking is growing at a rapid pace. Data networks that use "WiFi" ("Wireless Fidelity") are relatively easy to install, convenient to use, and supported by the IEEE 802.11 standard. WiFi data networks also provide performance that makes WiFi a suitable alternative to a wired data network for many business and home users.

WiFi networks operate by employing wireless access points to provide users having wireless (or 'client') devices in proximity to the access point with access to data networks. The wireless access points contain a radio that operates according to one of three standards specified in different section of the IEEE 802.11 specification. Radios in access points communicate using omni-directional antennas in order to communicate signals with wireless devices from any direction. The access points are then connected (by hardwired connections) to a data network system that completes the users' access to the Internet.

The three standards that define the radio configurations are:

1. IEEE 802.11a, which operates on the 5 GHz band with data rates of up to 54 Mbps;
2. IEEE 802.11b, which operates on the 2.4 GHz band with data rates of up to 11 Mbps; and
3. IEEE 802.11g, which operates on the 2.4 GHz band with data rates of up to 54 Mbps.

The 802.11b and 802.11g standards provide for some degree of interoperability. Devices that conform to 802.11b may communicate with 802.11g access points. This interoperability comes at a cost as access points will incur additional protocol overhead if any 802.11b devices are connected. Devices that conform to 802.11a may not communicate with either 802.11b or g access points. In addition, while the 802.11a standard provides for higher overall performance, 802.11a access points have a more limited range due to their operation in a higher frequency band.

Each standard defines 'channels' that wireless devices, or clients, use when communicating with an access point. The 802.11b and 802.11g standards each allow for 14 channels. In IEEE Std. 802.11a-1999, 200 channels are defined; each channel centered every 5 MHz from 5000 MHz to 6000 MHz. The 802.11a standard currently allows for 12 channels in the US. The 14 channels provided by 802.11b and g include only 3 channels that are not overlapping. The 12 channels provided by 802.11a are non-overlapping channels. The FCC is expected to allocate 11 additional channels in the 5.47 to 5.725 GHz band.

Access points provide service to a limited number of users. Access points are assigned a channel on which to communicate. Each channel allows a recommended maximum of 64 clients to communicate with the access point. In addition, access points must be spaced apart strategically to reduce the chance of interference, either between access points tuned to the same channel, or to overlapping channels. In addition, channels are shared. Only one user may occupy the channel at any give time. As users are added to a channel, each user must wait longer for access to the channel thereby degrading throughput.

As more and more users utilize access points for service, there is a need to increase the number of clients served by each access point and to maintain throughput even as the number of clients is increased.

SUMMARY

Systems consistent with the present invention provide wireless access devices for providing a plurality of client devices with wireless access to at least one data network. In one example, the wireless access devices employ a plurality of transceivers, each transceiver having a directional antenna. Each directional antenna is positioned to transmit and receive signals in a sector. Each sector defines a portion of a coverage area surrounding the wireless access device. The wireless access device has an array controller connected to the plurality of transceivers to control operation of the plurality of transceivers. The wireless access device also has a network interface to a data network and a media access controller to control communication of data between the transceivers and the network interface.

Other systems, methods, features and advantages of the invention will be or will become apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the accompanying claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

The components in the figures are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. In the figures, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the different views.

FIG. **1** is a block diagram of a network that uses a wireless access device.

FIG. **2** is a block diagram of a transceiver module in the wireless access device in FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram of a controller in the wireless access device shown in FIG. **1**.

FIG. **4** is a diagram illustrating the formation of sectors by the wireless access device of FIG. **1**.

FIGS. **5**A-E are diagrams illustrating examples of coverage patterns formed by an example of the wireless access device of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **6**A is a diagram of a wireless access device of FIG. **1** labeled by radio type and number.

FIG. **6**B shows coverage patterns formed by the different radio types on the wireless access device.

FIG. **7** illustrates operation of a wireless access device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. **1** is a block diagram of network **10** that uses a wireless access device **100** to provide client devices (or "stations"), such as a laptop computer **20**, access to data network services available on the Internet **160**. The wireless access device **100** is connected to a wired network **120**, which may provide a connection to the Internet **160** or other network. Depending on the number of stations and the size of the area of coverage, the network **10** may include additional wireless access devices **130**. A network management system **120** may be used to configure and manage the wireless access devices **100**, **130**.

The wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1** has a substantially circular structure **108** and includes a array controller **102**, a plurality of transceiver modules **110**, and a network interface **114**. The transceiver modules **110** contain one or more transceivers, radios, for example, and each transceiver is connected to an antenna **112**. The transceiver modules **110** are also connected to the array controller **102**, which operates to configure the transceiver modules **110** and manage any communications connections involving the transceivers.

The wireless access device **100** shown in FIG. **1** has sixteen antennas **112**. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that any number of antennas may be used. The antennas **112** that correspond to the transceivers in the transceiver modules **110** are disposed near the perimeter of the substantially circular structure **108** of the wireless access device **100**. The antennas **112** are preferably directional antennas configured to transmit and receive signals communicated in a radial direction from the center of the wireless access device **108**. Each antenna **112** covers a portion of the substantially circular area surrounding the wireless access device **100** called a "sector" S_i. The total area covered by all of the sectors defines a 360° area of coverage of the wireless access device **100**. This means that a station **20** located in a sector of the area of coverage would be able to communicate wirelessly with the antenna **112** corresponding with that sector. Multi-sector coverage is discussed in more detail below with reference to FIGS. **5**A-**5**E.

The network **10** in FIG. **1** implements well-known standards and protocols used to communicate over the Internet **160**. The transceivers in the wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1** communicate with stations **20** in accordance with the IEEE 802.11 standard (802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g), which is incorporated herein by reference. The remainder of this specification describes operation of examples of the wireless access device **100** in the context of systems that implement IEEE 802.11a, b, or g. However, the present invention is not limited to systems that implement any particular standard. The wireless access device **100** may operate according to any current or future standard, such as for example, the forthcoming IEEE 802.11n.

The wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1** has four transceiver modules **110**. Each transceiver module **110** contains four transceivers, each of which is programmable. In a preferred configuration, three of the four transceivers (shown in FIG. **1** with antennas labeled 'a') in each transceiver module **110** are designated to operate as 802.11a radios. The remaining transceiver (shown in FIG. **1** with antenna labeled 'abg') may be programmed to operate according to any of 802.11a, b, or g. Each transceiver is configured to operate on an assigned channel. The channel may be one of the twelve channels available using the 802.11a standard or one of the fourteen channels available using the 802.11b/g standard.

The wireless access device **100** communicates with stations **20** wirelessly. The stations **20** may be any device enabled to communicate wirelessly with the wireless access device **100** such as, without limitation, laptop computers, mobile telephones (for voice-over-LAN, or VOWLAN applications), personal digital assistants, handheld computers, etc. In examples described here, the stations are enabled to oper-

ate in accordance with one or more of the 802.11 standards. When the station **20** enters the coverage area of the wireless access device **100**, it may send a request to connect to the access point **160**. The wireless access device **100** may perform an authentication process in a login session. Once authenticated, the user of the station **20** may be connected to the Internet **160**.

FIG. **2** is a block diagram of a transceiver module **210** that may be implemented in the wireless access device **100** shown in FIG. **1**. The transceiver module **210** includes four radios, one of which is an 'abg' radio **220** and three of which are 'a' radios **222**. All four radios **220**, **222** include an amplifier **230**, a radio signal processor **240**, and a baseband processor **250**. The four radios **220**, **222** communicate with a transceiver module interface **260**, which allows the transceiver module **210** to communicate with the rest of the wireless access device. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that four radios **220**, **222** are shown as an example. The transceiver module **210** may also have one, two, or any number of radios.

Each radio **220**, **222** connects to an antenna **212**, which transmits and receives radio signals received from the amplifier **230**. As described with reference to FIG. **1**, the antennas **212** are directional antennas, which concentrate signal power in one direction. Directional antennas can therefore cover greater distances than omni-directional antennas used in typical wireless access devices. The multiple radios with radially disposed directional antennas advantageously provides a 360° coverage pattern that is larger than that of radios with omni-directional antennas used in current access points.

The baseband processor **250** processes the digital data that is either being received or transmitted by the radio **220**, **222**. The baseband processor **250** implements protocols required for such functions as assembling/disassembling payloads. The baseband processor **250** performs the digital functions required to implement the 802.11 standard. Preferably, the baseband processor **250** is programmable and may be configured for any of the three standards (802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g). One example of a baseband processor **250** that may be implemented is the Agere WL64040.

The radio signal processor **240** modulates signals to be transmitted and demodulates signals that have been received. The radio signal processor **240** is preferably programmable to implement either the modulation schemes specified by 802.11b/g or 802.11a. One example of a radio signal processor **240** that may be implemented is the Agere WL54040.

The amplifier **230** generates the radio signal to be transmitted by the transceiver **220**, **222** and amplifies signals being received by the antenna **212**. One example of an amplifier that may be implemented in the transceiver module **210** is the SiGe Semiconductor SE2535L for the 5 GHz or 802.11a radios, and the SiGe Semiconductor SE2525L for the 2.4 GHz or 802.11b/g radios.

In the transceiver module in FIG. **2**, the amplifier **230**, radio signal processor **240**, and/or baseband processor **250** may be programmable so that the array controller **102** (in FIG. **1**) may control the transceiver module **200** in a manner that provides certain features. For example, the array controller **102** (in FIG. **1**) may control the amplifiers **230** in a manner that makes the coverage pattern of the wireless access device **102** larger or smaller depending on the needs of the implementation. In addition, the baseband processor **250** may communicate information (such as signal strength) about the radio connection between the wireless access device **100** and the stations **20**.

It is noted that the following description refers to transceivers as radios. Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the term "radio" is not intended as limiting the transceiver to any particular type.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram of an array controller **300** that may be implemented in the wireless access device **100** shown in FIG. **1**. The array controller **300** includes a processor **310**, a packet and queue controller **320**, a medium access controller **330**, a radio interface **340**, and a data network interface **350**.

The processor **310** provides computing resources to the wireless access device. The processor **310** may be any suitable custom or commercial microprocessor, microcontroller, computing chip or other type of processor. The array controller **300** also includes supporting circuitry for the processor **310** such as clock circuitry, I/O ports, memory (including Read Only Memory, or ROM, Random Access Memory, or RAM, Flash memory, Programmable Rom or PROM, etc.), direct memory access, etc. The processor **310** may also manage a bus system for communicating with its support circuitry and with the packet and queue controller **320**, data network interface **350** and medium access controller **330**. In one example, the processor **310** is a Motorola 8540 800 MHz CPU supported by 64 MB expandable system FLASH memory, 128 MB DDR 333 expandable system RAM, and a serial interface (RS232-RJ45 connector). An optional security co-processor may also be included.

The data network interface **350** includes input/output circuitry for communicating over a data network. The array controller **300** implements standards and protocols that allow for communication over the Internet. The data network interface **350** preferably allows for the highest possible speed connection. In one example, the data network interface **350** includes primary and secondary Gigabit Ethernet interfaces, a Fast Ethernet interface, and failover support between the Gigabit Ethernet interfaces.

The packet and queue controller **320** handles receiver and transmitter queues, performs DMA functions, resolves fragmentation, and performs packet translation. The medium access controller **330** provides all IEEE 802.11 MAC services for transceivers. For the wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1**, the medium access controller **330** provides 802.11 MAC services for as many as sixteen transceivers. Both the packet and queue controller **320** and the medium access controller **330** are preferably implemented as application specific integrated circuits (ASIC).

The array controller **300** performs the programmed functions that control the wireless access device **100** as an access point. Functions and features of the operations that the array controller **300** performs include:

1. General implementation IEEE 802.11 Access Point functionality.
2. Non-blocking packet processing from/to any radio interface. In typical wireless access devices that employ a single, omni-directional radio, a packet that is being transmitted may block other packets from access to the medium. This may occur in either direction. Stations typically transmit packets to an access point when the medium is not busy. If the medium is busy with packets from other stations, for example, the packet is blocked. Similarly, the access point may be attempting to send a packet to a station. If other packets are being sent to another station, the original packet is blocked from access to the medium. In the wireless access device **100**, when a station is blocked from communicating a packet to one radio, it may switch to another radio that is not

blocked. If the wireless access device **100** is blocked from sending a packet via one radio, it may switch to another radio.

3. Dynamic automatic channel assignment. The array controller **300** implements algorithms and/or other schemes for assigning channels of the 802.11 standards to the multiple radios. Channels are allocated to radios in a manner that reduces adjacent channel interference (ACI).
4. Directional awareness of where a wireless station is in geographic relationship to the wireless access device **100**. The array controller **300** receives information such as signal strength, and for each station, may keep track of how the signal strength changes over time. In addition, even if one radio is locked in and "connected" to a station, another radio may receive signals and thus, "listen" to the station. The signal strength in relation to the specific radios gathering signal information provide the array controller with sufficient information to create a directional awareness of the location of the wireless station.
5. Station mobility services whereby a station can instantly roam from one sector to another without requiring re-authentication of the station. As a wireless station moves in the coverage area space of the wireless access device, the signal strength sensed by the array controller changes. As the signal strength of the station becomes weaker, the radio associated with the adjacent sector locks in and "connects" with the station without requiring re-authentication.
6. Wireless quality of service.
7. Enhanced load balancing of wireless stations.
8. Constant RF monitoring of channel conditions and security threats
9. Wireless Security processing
10. Internal Authentication Server. Typically, authentication takes place at a server or router that is wired to the access points. In the wireless access device **100**, authentication may be done by the array controller **300**.
11. Wired Networking protocol support.
12. System failover handling and error handling. Because sectors overlap, when a radio fails, the adjacent radios may lock in with stations being handled by the failed radio. In some examples of the wireless access device **100**, the array controller **300** may increase power to adjacent sectors to ensure coverage in any area covered by the failed sector. In addition, when multiple access devices are deployed, one wireless access device may increase power and expand a sector to cover area left without service when a radio fails in an adjacent wireless access device.
13. System management functions.

As discussed above, examples of wireless access devices and systems that employ wireless access devices described in this specification (without limitation) operate in the wireless LAN environment established by the IEEE 802.11 standardization body. The IEEE 802.11 standards including (without limitation):

IEEE 802.11, 1999 Edition (ISO/IEC 8802-11: 1999) IEEE Standards for Information Technology—Telecommunications and Information Exchange between Systems—Local and Metropolitan Area Network—Specific Requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) Specifications

IEEE 802.11a-1999 (8802-11:1999/Amd 1:2000(E)), IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Local and metropolitan area networks—Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) specifications—Amendment 1: High-speed Physical Layer in the 5 GHz band

IEEE 802.11b-1999 Supplement to 802.11-1999, Wireless LAN MAC and PHY specifications: Higher speed Physical Layer (PHY) extension in the 2.4 GHz band

802.11b-1999/Cor1-2001, IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Local and metropolitan area networks-Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) specifications—Amendment 2: Higher-speed Physical Layer (PHY) extension in the 2.4 GHz band—Corrigendum1

IEEE 802.11d-2001 Amendment to IEEE 802.11-1999, (ISO/IEC 8802-11) Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Local and metropolitan area networks—Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) Specifications: Specification for Operation in Additional Regulatory Domains

IEEE 802.11F-2003 IEEE Recommended Practice for Multi-Vendor Access Point Interoperability via an Inter-Access Point Protocol Across Distribution Systems Supporting IEEE 802.11 Operation

IEEE 802.11g-2003 IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Local and metropolitan area networks—Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) specifications—Amendment 4: Further Higher-Speed Physical Layer Extension in the 2.4 GHz Band

IEEE 802.11h-2003 IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and Information Exchange Between Systems—LAN/MAN Specific Requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) Specifications: Spectrum and Transmit Power Management Extensions in the 5 GHz band in Europe

IEEE 802.11i-2004 Amendment to IEEE Std 802.11, 1999 Edition (Reaff 2003). IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between system—Local and metropolitan area networks Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) specifications—Amendment 6: Medium Access Control (MAC) Security Enhancements

IEEE 802.11j-2004 IEEE Standard for Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Local and metropolitan area networks—Specific requirements—Part 11: Wireless LAN Medium Access Control (MAC) and Physical Layer (PHY) specifications—Amendment 7: 4.9 GHz-5 GHz Operation in Japan

All of the above-listed standards are incorporated herein by reference.

Radios operating under 802.11 may operate in one of two frequency bands: the 2.4 GHz band and the 5 GHz band. The IEEE specifies multiple channels within each band (see Table 1). Channels are defined as allocations of frequency spectrum with specified center frequencies and spacing. For example, in the 2.4 GHz band there are 14 defined channels starting at

a center frequency of 2.412 GHz and incrementing up to 2.484 GHz at 5 MHz intervals. Channels are considered overlapping if their bands overlap above a certain power threshold. For instance, in the 2.4 GHz region each channel operates with a frequency band of 12 MHz on either side of the center frequency. So with 14 channels defined with center frequencies 5 MHz apart, several of them are overlapping. In fact, there are only three channels (channels 1, 6, and 11) that do not overlap in the 2.4 GHz band. Their center frequencies are 2.412 GHz, 2.437 GHz and 2.462 GHz.).

In the 5 GHz band, the IEEE Std. 802.11a-1999 defines 200 channels; each channel centered every 5 MHz from 5000 MHz to 6000 MHz. The 802.11a standard currently allows for 12 channels in the US. The 12 channels provided by 802.11a are non-overlapping channels. The FCC is expected to allocate 11 additional channels in the 5.47 to 5.725 GHz band. Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the channels described herein are for purposes of illustrating an example and not intended as any limitation on the scope of the invention. Embodiments of the present invention that are designed to implement any part of the 802.11 standard may use any set of channels specified by any part of the IEEE 802.11 standard whether such channels are available now or in the future.

TABLE 1

IEEE 802.11 U.S. Radio Channel Assignments

IEEE 802.11 A (5.0 GHz Band)		IEEE 802.11 B/G (2.4 GHz Band)	
Channel Number	Frequency (MHz)	Channel Number	Frequency (MHz)
36	5180	1	2412
40	5200	2	2417
44	5220	3	2422
48	5240	4	2427
52	5260	5	2432
56	5280	6	2437
60	5300	7	2442
64	5320	8	2447
149	5745	9	2452
153	5765	10	2457
157	5785	11	2462
161	5805	12	2467
		13	2472
		14	2484

The wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1** assigns channels to the sixteen radios in a manner that enhances performance, throughput, coverage area and capacity. Typical access points use one radio with a coverage area defined by an omni-directional antenna and assigned to a single channel. Therefore, all of the users in the coverage area tune in to the same channel in order to communicate with the access point. In the wireless access device **100** in FIG. **1**, each radio forms a different sector defining a portion of a substantially circularly-defined coverage pattern. In addition, each radio is assigned a unique channel so that no two radios in one device communicate over the same channel.

FIG. **4** is a diagram illustrating the formation of sectors by the wireless access device of FIG. **1**. The wireless access device **100** has 16 radios **412** divided into groups of four radios **412** mounted on each of four transceiver modules **410**. An array controller **402** is located roughly in the center of the wireless access device **100** where it connects with each of the four transceiver modules **410** at inter-module connections **408**. The inter-module connections **408** contain communication paths (via a bus or set of signal paths on a connector) that implement the interface between the array controller **402** and the radios **412**. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the wireless access device **100** may have more or fewer than 16 radios. For example, in other embodiments, the wireless access device **100** has 4 radios (e.g. three 'abg' unidirectional radios and one 'abg' omni-directional) or 8 radios (e.g. four 'a' unidirectional radios, three 'abg' unidirectional radios, one 'abg' omni-directional radio) or even 24 radios (anywhere from 16-24 'a' radios and 0-8 'abg' radios). The number of radios is not important so long as multiple radios may be configured to provide a 360° coverage area.

As discussed, each radio **412** contains a directional antenna configured to establish a coverage area in a sector **450** that radiates out from the wireless access device **100**. The radios **412** may be individually controlled such that when they are all operating they may form a coverage pattern that surrounds the wireless access device **100**. The coverage pattern created by the wireless access device **100** may be similar to coverage patterns created by existing access points that use one radio radiating out of an omni-directional antenna. However, the wireless access device **100** in FIG. **4** uses sixteen radios **412** radiating out of more powerful directional antennas to create a coverage pattern area that is significantly greater than that of a typical access point. In addition, the sectors **450** created by the radios **412** in the wireless access device **100** advantageously overlap to provide features not currently available in typical access points. The radios **412** are also programmable such that they may be controlled to operate at power levels that allow for coverage patterns that are suited to the layout of the implementation. Examples are discussed below with reference to FIGS. **5**A-E.

In FIG. **5**A, a wireless access device **100** is implemented in an implementation I with all of the radios in the wireless access device **100** configured to communicate with stations within a coverage area **502**. The radios in the wireless access device **100** form sectors. A first sector **530** is shown with an adjacent sector **540** along with an area of overlap **550** formed by the overlap of the first and second sectors **530**, **540**. FIG. **5**A illustrates one of many advantages that the wireless access device **100** has over typical access points. The wireless access device **100** includes programmable and configurable control over the operation of the radios on the wireless access device **100**. When deployed, the wireless access devices **100** may be configured to create a coverage pattern that is suitable for by the exact implementation I. For example, in FIG. **5**A, the coverage pattern **502** has been configured to conform to the implementation I. The wireless access device **100** may be configured such that the radios that create a set of coverage patterns **522**, **524**, **526**, **528**, **530** that project towards a side **580** communicate signals at a lower power limiting the extent of the coverage area created by each radio. This is illustrated by a set of middle sectors **524**, **526**, **528** covering less distance than outer sectors **522**, **530**, which cover the corners or the implementation I along the side **580**. This implementation I advantageously substantially limits the ability for a station to connect from beyond the wall along the side **580** of implementation I.

FIG. **5**B illustrates how the wireless access device **100** may be configured to provide special features in a specific implementation. In FIG. **5**B, the wireless access device **100** is implemented in a space **570** in which the resident desires to have wireless Internet access. The space **570** is located with one side **590**, which faces an open and public area from which hackers or otherwise unauthorized users may attempt to gain access to the Internet via the wireless access device **100**. The wireless access device **100** may be used to provide users in the space **570** with access to the Internet while limiting access by

those on the other side of **590**. One way as illustrated in FIG. **5**B is to place the wireless access device **100** along the side **590** and turn off radios that would create sectors on the other side of **590**, and turn on the radios that create sectors in the space **570**. Such an implementation would yield a coverage pattern similar to the one shown in FIG. **5**B.

FIG. **5**C shows how the wireless access device **100** may be configured to limit the affects of obstacles that may cause reflections in the radio signals. Reflections in typical access points may cause multi-path interference. When radio signals reflect off of obstacles, the reflections may reach the station as different signals coming from different directions, or multiple paths. The wireless access device **100** may be configured to avoid multi-path interference by configuring the radios to avoid generating sectors that could reach the obstacle. In FIG. **5**C, the wireless access device **100** is shown generating sectors **520**, **540**, but not generating any sectors in the direction of obstacle **575**.

FIG. **5**D illustrates how overlapping sectors may be used to provide radio frequency failover so that stations do not lose connectivity when a radio fails, or is otherwise unavailable. In FIG. **5**D, wireless access device **100** has three radios creating a sector each (R**1**, R**2**, R**3**). In FIG. **5**E, the wireless access device **100** has lost the radio associated with sector R**2**. However, sectors R**1**, R**2**, R**3** advantageously overlap. The wireless access device **100** may switch stations in sector R**2** that were connected via the radio that generated sector R**2** to the radios that created either of sectors R**1** or R**3**.

FIG. **6**A is a diagram of a wireless access device **100** of FIG. **1** labeled by radio type and number. Radios that communicate, or are configured to communicate, as 802.11a radios only are labeled 'a.' Radios that may be programmed or configured to communicate using 802.11a, b, or g radios are labeled 'abg.' The twelve 'a' radios **610** (a**1**-a**12**) are assigned a unique one of the twenty-three channels available under the 802.11a standard. Three of the four 'abg' radios are assigned the three non-overlapping channels available under the 802.11b/g standards. The fourth 'abg' radio is implemented as an omni-directional radio in listen mode exclusively.

FIG. **6**B shows coverage patterns formed by the different radio types on the wireless access device. The twelve 'a' radios **610** each have a coverage area emanating in a sector that spreads out more than 30°. The sectors of the twelve 'a' radios **610** may combine to form a substantially circular 802.11a coverage pattern **620**. Preferably, the sectors are larger than 30° in order to create overlap between the sectors, such as for example, the overlap **650** between sectors **630** and **640**. FIG. **6**B also shows the three 'abg' radios **611** with the coverage area of more than 120°. The sectors combine to provide a 360° coverage pattern. However, each sector is more than 120° to create overlap between the sectors. The fourth 'abg' radio **613** is configured as an omni-directional radio able to communicate in all directions. The fourth 'abg' radio **613** is used as a monitor or a sniffer radio in a listen-only mode. This radio listens to each channel in sequence to build a table of all stations and access devices. This table may be compared to an administrator controlled list of allowed stations and access devices. Stations and access devices not in the administrator controlled list are termed rogues. One function performed by the fourth 'abg' radio **613** is to detect unauthorized stations in the coverage area.

FIG. **7** is a diagram of a wireless access device **700** connected wirelessly to a plurality of stations **720***a-o* via channels allocated to the plurality of radios a**1**-a**12**, afg**1**-afg**4** on the wireless access device **700**. The radios are labeled according to their type and radio numbers. Inside the circles representing the radios are numbers identifying the channels assigned to the radio. As shown, radios a**1**-a**12** and afg**1**-afg**4** are assigned channels as shown in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2

Radio No.	Channel	Frequency (MHz)
A9	36	5180
A12	40	5200
A3	44	5220
A6	48	5240
A10	52	5260
A1	56	5280
A4	60	5300
A7	64	5320
A11	149	5745
A2	153	5765
A5	157	5785
A8	161	5805
M	—	Monitor radio that can listen on any abg channel
abg1	1	2412
abg3	6	2437
abg4	11	2462

The radios in the wireless access device **700** are advantageously assigned different channels. The radios in FIG. **7** and the array controller (described above with reference to FIG. **3**) are housed within a single enclosure tightly coupled by digital bus. The housing provides a central control point for the sixteen radios that is not tethered by any cabled bus.

The stations **720***a-o* in FIG. **7** represents stations attempting to connect to the wireless access device **700**. The arrows indicate the stations' ability to connect to a particular radio as well as the ability of the station to communicate using the appropriate protocol (i.e. 802.11a, b, or g). To illustrate, station **720***a* is a target wireless client attaching to the wireless access device **700** using protocols specified by 802.11a. Radios a**5**, a**6**, and a**7** generate sectors that preferably overlap such that station **720***a* may connect to either one of the three radios. Each radio is assigned a unique channel that does not overlap with any other channel.

If the radio to which station **720***a* fails, or is otherwise unable to provide service to station **720***a*, the array controller is able to switch the connection to station **720***a* over to one of the adjacent radios. The IEEE 802.11a, b, and g protocols permit radios to "listen" to signals being communicated with stations that are connected to another radio. The array controller may obtain data such as signal strength and directional awareness and other factors that allow it to determine which radio is best suited to continue communicating with the station **720***a*.

The wireless access device **700** is connected to a Gigabit Ethernet port **780**, which provides a direct connection to the user's network.

Although the controller **300** depicted in FIG. **3** uses memory, one skilled in the art will appreciate that a substantial part of systems and methods consistent with the present invention may be stored on or read from other machine-readable media, for example, secondary storage devices such as hard disks, floppy disks, and CD-ROMs; a signal received from a network; or other forms of ROM or RAM either currently known or later developed. Further, although specific components of wireless access device **100** are described, one skilled in the art will appreciate that a network access device suitable for use with methods, systems, and articles of manufacture consistent with the present invention may contain additional or different components.

The foregoing description of an implementation has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not exhaustive and does not limit the claimed inventions to the precise form disclosed. Modifications and variations are possible in light of the above description or may be acquired from practicing the invention. For example, the described implementation includes software but the invention may be implemented as a combination of hardware and software or in hardware alone. Note also that the implementation may vary between systems. The claims and their equivalents define the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A wireless access device comprising:

a plurality of transceivers, each transceiver having a directional antenna, each directional antenna positioned in a substantially circular array to communicate signals with a plurality of stations in a corresponding sector, each sector defining a portion of a coverage area surrounding the wireless access device;

a network interface to a data network; and

an array controller to control communication of data between the stations and the transceivers, and between the transceivers and the network interface, the array controller including coverage pattern defining functions operable to control the transceivers to generate coverage patterns that provide access to a border beyond which access is limited, and to generate coverage patterns that limit reflections of signals off of an obstacle.

2. A wireless access device according to claim **1** where each of the plurality of transceivers is a radio that may be configured to communicate pursuant to the IEEE 802.11a, IEEE 802.11b, IEEE 802.11g or any sub-part of IEEE 802.11.

3. A wireless access device according to claim **2** where the plurality of transceivers covers all available channels in the band defined by IEEE 802.11b, or IEEE 802.11g.

4. A wireless access device according to claim **2** where the plurality of transceivers covers all available channels in the band defined by IEEE 802.11a.

5. A wireless access device according to claim **2** where the transceivers include a first plurality of transceivers configured to operate pursuant to IEEE 802.11a and a second plurality of transceivers configured to operate pursuant to IEEE 802.11b/g.

6. A wireless access device according to claim **5** where each of the first plurality of transceivers is assigned a unique channel defined by 802.11a.

7. A wireless access device according to claim **5** where each of the second plurality of transceivers is assigned a unique non-overlapping channel defined by 802.11b/g.

8. A wireless access device according to claim **2** where one of the plurality of transceivers is configured to receive only using an omni-directional antenna.

9. A wireless access device according to claim **1** where the plurality of transceivers includes:

twelve 802.11a radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 30';

three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and

one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

10. A wireless access device according to claim **1** where the plurality of transceivers includes:

four 802.11a radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 90°;

three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and

one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

11. A wireless access device according to claim **1** where the plurality of transceivers includes: three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

12. A system for providing access to data network services comprising:

at least one wireless access device having a plurality of transceivers, each transceiver having a directional antenna, each directional antenna positioned in a substantially circular array to communicate signals with a plurality of stations in a corresponding sector, each sector defining a portion of a coverage area surrounding the wireless access device, the at least one wireless device including coverage pattern defining functions performed by enabling and disabling selected transceivers, where the coverage pattern defining functions are configured to control the transceivers to generate coverage patterns that provide access to a border beyond which access is limited and to generate coverage patterns that limit reflections of signals off of an obstacle; and

a wired network connected to the at least one wireless access device, the wired network having an interface to at least one data network service; where the at least one wireless access device communicates with stations within the coverage area and forms a communications path between the wireless stations and the wired network.

13. A system according to claim **12** where each of the plurality of transceivers in the at least one wireless access device is a radio configured to communicate pursuant to the IEEE 802.11a, IEEE 802.11b, or IEEE 802.11g standard.

14. A system according to claim **13** where the plurality of transceivers in the at least one wireless access device covers all available channels in the band defined by IEEE 802.11b, or IEEE 802.11g.

15. A system according to claim **13** where the plurality of transceivers in the at least, one wireless access device covers all available channels in the band defined by IEEE 802.11a.

16. A system according to claim **13** where the transceivers in the at least one wireless access device include a first plurality of transceivers configured to operate pursuant to IEEE 802.11a and a second plurality of transceivers configured to operate pursuant to IEEE 802.11b/g.

17. A system according to claim **16** where each of the first plurality of transceivers is assigned a unique channel defined by 802.11a.

18. A system according to claim **16** where each of the second plurality of transceivers is assigned a unique non-overlapping channel defined by 802.11b/g.

19. A system according to claim **12** where one of the plurality of transceivers is configured to receive only using an omni-directional antenna.

20. A system according to claim **12** where the plurality of transceivers includes:

twelve 802.11a radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 30';

three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and

one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

21. A system according to claim **12** where the plurality of transceivers includes:

four 802.11a radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 90°;

three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and

one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

22. A system according to claim **12** where the plurality of transceivers includes:

three 802.11a/b/g radios configured to generate a uni-directional sector of at least 120°; and

one 802.11a/b/g radio configured to generate an omni-directional coverage pattern.

23. A system according to claim **12** further comprising a network management system operable to provide management functions over the at least one wireless access device.

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