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Maine

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[54] **APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR SENDING DATA MESSAGES AT AN OPTIMUM TIME**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **370/271**; 370/314; 370/322; 370/326; 370/348; 340/825.49; 455/54.1; 379/59; 379/67; 379/90; 379/131; 379/140

[58] **Field of Search** 370/271, 310, 370/313, 314, 322, 326, 345, 348, 468, 498; 340/825.44, 825.49; 455/31.1, 33.1, 34.1, 49.1, 54.1; 379/58, 59, 67, 90, 93, 140, 130, 131

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

Subscriber units (**26**) in a satellite communication system (**10**) send and receive data messages at optimum times. Each subscriber unit (**26**) has a pre-programmed database that includes a collection of messages (**302**), such as data (**314**), fax (**316**), pre-recorded voice (**318**), pager (**320**), or video files (**322**). Pre-programmed times include low traffic times (**404**) and/or most economical times (**406**) at the point of origination and/or destination. Low traffic time information (**404**) and most economical time information (**406**) are stored in the subscriber unit (**26**) and may be updated by the communication system (**10**). The subscriber unit (**26**) sends and receives messages at either a pre-programmed or low traffic time (**404**) or most economical time (**406**). The satellite communication system (**10**) calculates message delivery time when different from a user's time zone. A user is notified when a message is sent and received. The subscriber unit (**26**) stores the messages for future access. The message storage system (**55**) is reusable in other communication system equipment.

22 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets