embedded in the electronic postmark stamped on the received e-mail, and the receiver mail server **50**M can use the sending time attached by the authorization mail server **20**M to the e-mail as the accepting time for the e-mail.

Now, the process flow in the mail server **50**M for the receiver of the e-mail is described with reference to FIG. **7**.

At step S**401**, immediately after the receiver mail server **50**M accepts the e-mail, the e-mail acceptance information section **55** automatically informs the e-mail sender's PC **30**, the authorization mail server **20**M that has sent the e-mail, or the licensed ISP's server **20**S, that the receiver mail server **50**M has accepted the e-mail.

Then, with appropriate timings, the e-mail data accumulated in the e-mail accumulation section **52** is retrieved, and the electronic postmark data attached to the e-mail data is decrypted in the decryption section **54***a* of the electronic postmark verification section **54**. Then, the electronic postmark verification section **54** verifies the information included in the decrypted electronic postmarks to determine whether the electronic postmarks have been stamped by the authorized authorization mail server **20**M or not (step S**402**).

Then, the e-mail with the electronic postmarks determined to have been stamped by the authorization mail server **20**M as a result of the verification is sorted (classified or reordered) by the e-mail sorting section **56** based on the highly accurate time information included in the electronic postmarks (GMT or a local time based on GMT) (step S**403**). Here, in the case of general e-mail, the e-mail data is reordered based on the order of the date of the electronic postmarks. In addition, if the receiver mail server **50**M is accepting e-mail such as registrations to win a prize, the e-mail received from registrants (senders) can be sorted in the order in which the e-mail messages were sent or with regards to whether the sending dates meet the deadline or not, based on the highly accurate time information obtained from the electronic postmarks stamped on the e-mail.

Then, the e-mail data sorted in the receiver mail server **50**M is transferred to the receiver's PC **60** that is the destination of the e-mail from the receiver mail server **50**M via the receiver ISP's server **50**S (step S**404**: <**8**>, <**9**> in FIG. **1**). In the case of registration to win a prize, the receiver's PC **60** accepts the registrations and determines whether they meet the deadline or not based on the sorting result obtained in the receiver mail server **50**M. In this case, it is also possible to transfer to the receiver's PC **60** only the e-mail determined to meet the deadline in sorting in the receiver mail server **50**M.

Afterward, the receiver's PC **60** receives the e-mail (step S**501**) and opens it (step S**502**). Then, as shown in FIG. **8**, the electronic postmark (the time stamp) EM including the highly accurate time information is displayed on an e-mail display screen A based on the rendering data included in the electronic postmark. The same goes for printing out the e-mail. As shown in this figure, the electronic postmark EM is displayed at a particular position on the e-mail display screen A based on the electronic postmark issue program. In the electronic postmark EM practically displayed like this are displayed the highly accurate time information "GMT" and/or "JST," the name of the licensed ISP (Authorized Provider) which stamped the electronic postmark EM, and so on.

It is further possible to have a viewer (a window) configured to pop up on the e-mail display screen A when a pointer such as a mouse pointer is put on the electronic postmark EM, in which information other than the information displayed as the electronic postmark EM are displayed within the viewer, for example the address of the authorization mail server **20**M, the IP address of the authorization mail server **20**M, and so on.

Thus, the receiver can visually know the sending time for the e-mail and other information from the information described in the electronic postmark EM.

As described above, because the authorization mail server **20**M for the sender of e-mail stamps the electronic postmark with the highly accurate time information embedded into it on the e-mail being sent from the sender, the receiver of the e-mail can obtain the accurate sending time for the e-mail. Accordingly, it is possible to utilize the accurate time information for registration to win a prize as well as for regular e-mail, and various kinds of inconvenience on the Internet are eliminated.

Further, because the authorizing office **10** is adapted to authorize the authorization mail server **20**M to issue the electronic postmarks with the highly accurate time information, the time information included in the electronic postmarks is guaranteed as accurate. Moreover, the load on the authorizing office **10** can be reduced, compared with the case where the authorizing office **10** itself provides the highly accurate time information or stamps the electronic postmarks with the highly accurate time information on the e-mail. Further, in practice, the configuration of this embodiment can be realized simply if a conventional ISP is authorized by the authorizing office **10**. In addition, a user can readily receive the services of the above embodiment without the need of maintaining the highly accurate time information in the sender's (user's) PC **30** but only with registration with the licensed ISP that owns the authorization mail server **20**M.

Moreover, the data on the electronic postmarks to which the highly accurate time information is attached in the authorization mail server **20**M is made tamperproof by the predetermined electronic postmark issue program, and is further encrypted to be transferred to the receiver mail server **50**M. This realizes high validity of the electronic postmarks (high reliability of the information).

Here, because the authorization mail server **20**M encrypts the electronic postmark data with the private key, the receiver mail server **50**M can verify the electronic postmark based on whether the electronic postmark data can be decrypted with the public key or not. That is, as far as the electronic postmark data can be decrypted, the electronic postmark can be regarded as having been stamped in the authorization mail server **20**M, and moreover, the time information included in it can be trusted to be highly accurate.

Further, the receiver mail server **50**M is adapted to accept e-mail and accumulate it in the e-mail accumulation section **52** on reception of the e-mail data transferred from the authorization mail server **20**M. In this manner, the receiver mail server **50**M can prevent its processing from being slowed and realize fast processing even when it is flooded by e-mail messages, by checking information such as the time information with appropriate timings after reception of the e-mail messages rather than on reception of them. This is realized because the sending time information resulting from the highly accurate time information is included in the electronic postmarks stamped on the e-mail, and the sending time information is adopted as the receiving time for the e-mail in the receiver mail server **50**M.

In addition, as shown in FIG. **8**, the electronic postmark EM appears on the e-mail display screen A or on a paper on which e-mail message is printed out, just like a postmark in regular postal services. Therefore, with a glance at the e-mail, the receiver of the e-mail can know the accurate sending time for the authorized e-mail.

Although the above embodiment is described with the example of stamping the electronic postmarks on e-mail, similar configurations can be also applied to other cases, for