Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR GIVING AND RECEIVING GIFTS

Abstract: A system and method for giving and receiving gifts over a network such as the Internet. The system according to the invention includes a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer. The system receives a pre-selected gift order and preferably payment from a Giver over a computer network. The system notifies the Recipient, preferably by email, that the Giver has selected a gift for him or her. The system accepts a request from the Recipient to receive the pre-selected gift, a different gift, or credit. The Giver may also limit the Recipient’s exchange possibilities. The system sends the selected gift whether it is the pre-selected gift, a different gift including a specific alternate gift or a category of alternate gifts, restrictively or non-restrictively selected by the Giver, or credit.
METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR GIVING AND RECEIVING GIFTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to giving and receiving gifts and, more particularly, to a method and a system of giving a recipient the choice of receiving a pre-selected gift selected by a giver, a financial credit, or a different gift.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

Selecting and giving a gift to a friend or relative can be an arduous task. Occasionally, a gift giver will ask an intended recipient what gift he or she would like to receive. When the gift giver does so, the gift selection process is usually easy; the gift giver simply buys what the recipient requests. More often than not, however, an individual who desires to give a gift wants the gift to be a surprise for the recipient and will not ask the recipient what he or she would like to receive. In this situation, the gift giver often has little or no guidance as to what to purchase for the recipient. As a result, the recipient, although undoubtedly pleased with the gift giver’s thoughtfulness and generosity, may be displeased with the gift selection itself if, for example, the recipient already owns the selected gift, dislikes the color of the gift, or simply has different tastes than the gift giver.

When the recipient receives an undesired gift, he or she may sometimes exchange the gift for another gift at the locale where the gift was purchased. Alternatively, the recipient may return the gift for a refund. In either of these situations, the recipient is inconvenienced by having to visit the locale where the item was purchased to return or exchange the item. In the case of a purchase made online, the recipient must re-pack and often pay for the return shipping of the gift to a merchant. Additionally, to exchange or return the item, the recipient must know where the item was purchased and may be required to furnish a receipt. To obtain this information, the recipient usually must awkwardly ask the gift giver where the item was purchased or even ask for the receipt.

Several methods exist which may be used to avoid this awkwardness. Gift certificates have long been used as a means of giving a gift while increasing the
likelihood that the recipient will receive what he or she desires. However, a gift certificate may not be an ideal gift for several reasons. First, a recipient’s enjoyment is usually heightened when the recipient knows that time and effort were devoted to thinking about and searching for a specific gift. Gift certificates may be purchased quickly and with little thought. Thus, many recipients view gift certificates as impersonal and indicative of a lack of forethought on the part of the gift giver. Another problem with gift certificates is that they usually require that the recipient visit a specific location to redeem its value. Thus, a recipient may be inconvenienced in redeeming a gift certificate although this inconvenience may be minimized with gift certificates redeemable over the Internet. Another problem with gift certificates is that they necessarily disclose to the recipient the amount that the gift giver spent on the gift at the outset. Many gift givers prefer that the price of their gifts remain undisclosed and are thus dissatisfied with giving gift certificates.

This awkwardness may also be minimized or eliminated if a recipient creates a gift registry. However, gift registries pose other problems. Because a recipient creates a pre-defined list of gifts when he or she creates a registry, there is no opportunity for the recipient to enjoy the surprise of receiving an unexpected gift that a giver has chosen specifically for the recipient. Also, the recipient usually contemplates a specific gift-giving occasion when setting up the registry. Thus, a registry would not be feasible for an unplanned or surprise occasion. Furthermore, many recipients and givers may feel that there is an element of presumption involved in creating such a list. Finally, gift givers usually desire that the price of their gift be kept secret. Usually the recipient can easily determine the price of an item on the registry when setting it up. Buying a gift on a recipient’s registry means that the gift giver sacrifices price anonymity because the recipient will likely know the value of the gift.

Thus, a need exists for a new method of giving gifts that is personalized and shows thought on the part of the giver, will allow the recipient to be surprised, but will also provide the recipient with the opportunity to select a different gift prior to delivery if he or she would prefer the different gift over the pre-selected gift. A need also exists for exchanging or returning gifts without the inconveniences associated with traditional retail exchanges and returns.
SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is a system and method for giving and receiving gifts over a network such as the Internet. The system according to the invention includes a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer, a Recipient computer, and possibly a Bank computer. The system receives a selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift. The system may notify the Recipient computer of the pre-selected gift. The system may receive a request from the Recipient computer for information about the pre-selected gift. The system accesses a database, obtains information about the pre-selected gift, and sends the information to the Recipient computer. The system receives a first Recipient selection from the Recipient computer. The system causes the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if the first Recipient selection indicates the pre-selected gift. The system may cause a financial credit to be provided to the Recipient if the first Recipient selection indicates a financial credit. The system accesses a database for information about different gifts and sends this information to the Recipient computer if the first Recipient selection requests information about different gifts. The system may receive a second Recipient selection from the Recipient computer. The system causes the different gift to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates a different gift. The system causes the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates the pre-selected gift. The system causes financial credit to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates financial credit.

The term “gift” as used herein shall be understood in a relative sense and is intended to designate a transfer of any item to a third party regardless of whether the Giver paid for that item or another item.

The term “Bank” as used herein shall be understood in a relative sense and is intended to designate any financial processing system or combination of financial processing systems.

The terms “Giver computer,” “Recipient computer,” and “Bank computer” as used herein are intended to designate a computer being associated with a Giver, Recipient, or Bank, respectively.
**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES**

The present invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1A is a diagram of a network in which the invention can be carried out.

FIG. 1B is a functional block diagram of a server computer in the network of FIG. 1A, used by a Merchant, in which the invention can be carried out.

FIG. 1C is a functional block diagram of a client computer in the network of FIG. 1A, used by the Giver or Recipient.

FIG. 1D is a flow diagram of the method and system performed in the server computer of FIG. 1B, in accordance with the invention.

FIG. 2A is a detailed flow chart illustrating a preferred embodiment of how a Giver purchases a gift for a Recipient through a Merchant's Web site.

FIG. 2B is a detailed flow chart illustrating an alternate embodiment of how a Giver purchases a gift for a Recipient through a Merchant's Web site.

FIG. 3A is a detailed flow chart illustrating a preferred embodiment of how a Recipient can exchange an undesired gift for a different gift or financial credit before shipment.

FIG. 3B is a detailed flow chart illustrating an alternate embodiment of how a Recipient can exchange an undesired gift for an alternate gift or financial credit before shipment.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

The present invention is described in terms of the following example. This is for convenience only and is not intended to limit the application of the present invention. In fact, after reading the following description, it will be apparent to one skilled in the relevant art how to implement the present invention in alternate embodiments.

**SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE**

Certain embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the figures. FIG. 1A is a diagram of a network and the underlying architecture in which the invention can be carried out. The system includes a server computer 104' controlled by a Merchant 104 and connected over a network 500 such as
the Internet to a Giver computer, a Recipient computer, and, possibly, a Bank computer. A database 112, which is connected to the server 104', stores gift inventory 114, Giver records 116, Recipient records 118, gift selections 120, information on different gifts 122, and similar information. The Giver computer, the Recipient computer, and possibly the Bank computer have browser programs running on them. For example, the Giver 102 has browser program 102', the Recipient 106 has browser program 106', and the Bank 110 may have a browser program 110'.

The principal participants in the gift giving and receiving system include a Giver 102, a Merchant 104, and a Recipient 106. In one embodiment, the Merchant 104 is coupled to the Internet (World Wide Web) over which a Giver 102, Merchant 104, Recipient 106, and possibly a Bank 110 can communicate with one another using standard Internet protocols, such as HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) or File Transfer Protocol (FTP). More specifically, the Merchant 104 provides a Web site through which it offers to Givers 102 and Recipients 106 various products and services by transmitting Web pages, as described herein. Thus, each Giver 102 has an interface device, such as a personal computer, portable device, set-top box, or the like with a browser to access the Internet as described above. Preferably, each Recipient 106 also has an interface device with a browser for accessing the Internet. Alternatively, the Giver 102, Merchant 104, and Recipient 106 may communicate over alternate communication media including wide area network (WAN), public switched telephone network, and the like.

Figure 1B is a functional block diagram of a server computer in the network of FIG. 1A, used by a Merchant, in which the invention can be carried out. The server computer 104' includes a memory 512 connected by a bus 506 to a database 112, a hard drive 506, a CPU 508, and a network interface card 510 which is connected to the Internet network 500. Alternatively, other network interface devices known in the art such as modems may be used. The memory 512 includes an input buffer 514, a program 502 embodying the inventive method of FIG. 1D, a gift inventory buffer 516, a Giver records buffer 518, a Recipient records buffer 520, a pre-selected gift buffer 522, a different gifts buffer 524, an output buffer 526, and an operating system 504. The Server 104' and the program 502 prepare a gift Web page to be sent to the Recipient describing a pre-selected gift, one or more different gifts, and a financial credit which are available to the Recipient. The gift Web page includes controls in the form of HyperText Markup
Language (HTML) tags, which enable the Recipient to make a selection with the Recipient’s browser 106’. When the Recipient makes the selection by selecting an HTML tag for the pre-selected gift, for example, the gift Web page is converted thereby into a selection Web page which the Recipient sends back to the Server which then processes the selection Web page. The programs stored in the memory 512 are sequences of executable operations which, when executed by the CPU 508, perform the methods of the invention.

The network interface card 510 first receives an online query from a Giver computer requesting information regarding the various items in the Merchant’s inventory. The program 502, as described below, continues with the operation of searching the gift inventory 114 in the database 112 for the requested information and temporarily storing the requested information in the gift inventory buffer 516. The program 502 then transfers the requested information as a reply to the output buffer 526. The program 502 continues with the operation of sending the reply to the Giver via the network interface card 510 over the network 500 to the Giver computer.

The network interface card 510 will then receive a selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift. The selection is received by the input buffer 514. The program will search the gift inventory 114 in the database 112 for the pre-selected gift and reserve that item for a specified period of time. The pre-selected gift information will be stored in the pre-selected gift buffer 522, and then stored in the pre-selected gift location 120 of the database 112.

Additionally, the network interface card 510 may receive a selection from the Giver computer of an alternate gift or group of gifts and/or of a category of alternate gifts or categories of alternate gifts. The selection information is received by the input buffer 514. The program 502 will send this information to the different gifts buffer 524 and then store the information in the different gifts location 122 of the database 112.

The network interface card 510 will then receive Giver information and Recipient information from the Giver computer. Initially this information will be stored in the input buffer 514. However, the information is then transferred to the Giver Records Buffer 518 and the Recipient Records Buffer 520, respectively. The network interface card 510 may also receive information such as a brief message from the Giver necessary to create a personalized gift message for the Recipient. The information is then
transferred to the Giver Records Location 116 and Recipient Records Location 118 of the database 112. The message may similarly be initially stored in the input buffer 514, transferred to a message buffer (not illustrated), and stored in the database 112 for later retrieval.

The program 502 will then search the Recipient Records Location 116 of the database 112 for the Recipient’s email address, which is then temporarily stored in the Recipient records buffer. The program 502 will then search the pre-selected gift location 120 of the database 112 for the pre-selected gift information. The pre-selected gift information is then temporarily stored in the pre-selected gift buffer 524. The program 502 will then prepare an email message for the Recipient which will be sent to the output buffer 526 and sent to the Recipient computer. Preferably, the email message would be in HTML format and would display an image and description of the pre-selected gift, an explanation of the gift giving and receiving process, and, if created, the personalized message written by the Giver. The email message may additionally include information pertaining to the different gift options and the financial credit option.

The network interface card 510 may then receive a request from the Recipient computer for information about the pre-selected gift. The Recipient would make such a request in several situations. For example, the Recipient would request information about the pre-selected gift if the email contained insufficient information about the pre-selected gift; the Recipient was unable to download a file which would contain an image or description of the gift; the Recipient’s email provider or email client was unable to open or present HTML-formatted email messages; or the Recipient was otherwise unable to view an image or description of the pre-selected gift. This request would be stored in the input buffer 314. The program 502 would access the pre-selected gift location 120 of the database 112 and search for information regarding the pre-selected gift. This information would be temporarily stored in the pre-selected gift buffer 522. The program 502 would create a reply and send the reply to the output buffer 526. The pre-selected gift information would then be sent to the Recipient computer.

The network interface card 510 will then receive a first Recipient selection from the Recipient computer. The first Recipient selection is initially stored in the input buffer 514. If the first Recipient selection indicates the pre-selected gift, then the program will cause the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient after the
Recipient’s delivery address is obtained and/or verified. If the first Recipient selection indicates financial credit, then the program will cause financial credit to be provided to the Recipient.

If the first Recipient selection requests information about different gifts, the program 502 will search the different gifts location 122 of the database 112 for information about the different gifts. The different gifts information is then stored in the different gifts buffer 524, arranged as a reply, sent to the output buffer 526, and sent to the Recipient computer.

The Recipient may repeatedly request information about various different gifts. Thus, the server may receive several “first Recipient selections” from the Recipient computer requesting information about various different gifts. Correspondingly, the server computer may repeatedly access information from the database 112 about the different gifts, store the information in the different gifts buffer 524, arrange several replies, send the information to the output buffer 526, and send several batches of information about the different gifts to the Recipient computer. This exchange of information may continue until the Recipient accepts the pre-selected gift, a different gift, or financial credit in the second Recipient selection process, discussed below.

The network interface card 510 may then receive a second Recipient selection from the Recipient computer, which is initially stored in the input buffer 514. If the second Recipient selection indicates the pre-selected gift, then the program will provide the pre-selected gift to the Recipient after the Recipient’s delivery address is obtained and/or verified. If the second Recipient selection indicates a different gift, then the program will cause the indicated different gift to be provided to the Recipient after the Recipient’s delivery address is obtained and/or verified. If the second Recipient selection indicates financial credit, then the program will cause financial credit to be provided to the Recipient.

If the second Recipient selection indicates a different gift and the price of the different gift does not equal the price of the pre-selected gift, the program 502 may perform various price calculations as discussed below. The program 502 will search the database 112 for pricing information regarding the selected different gift and the price of the pre-selected gift and send this information to a buffer (not illustrated). Preferably, the program will calculate the difference between these prices and store this information in a
calculation buffer (not illustrated). The program 502 will determine whether a Recipient payment is required or whether a difference credit should be provided to the Recipient and store this information in the calculation buffer. The program 502 will send this information to the output buffer 526 and then send the information to the Recipient computer.

Alternatively, the server may receive a single Recipient selection from the Recipient computer. If the email received by the Recipient contained all necessary information about the pre-selected gift, the different gifts, and the financial credit options, the Recipient could immediately determine whether to select the pre-selected gift, a different gift, or financial credit. Thus, the server would receive only a single Recipient selection which would indicate the pre-selected gift, a different gift, or financial credit. This information would be stored in the input buffer 514 and then transferred to a single selection information buffer (not illustrated). If the single selection indicates the pre-selected gift, then the program will cause the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient after the Recipient’s delivery address is obtained and/or verified. If the single selection indicates a different gift, then the program will cause the indicated different gift to be provided to the Recipient after the Recipient’s delivery address is obtained and/or verified. If the single selection indicates financial credit, then the program will cause financial credit to be provided to the Recipient. The various server price calculations discussed herein may similarly be employed in this embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 1C is a functional block diagram of a client computer such as the Giver computer or the Recipient computer in the network of FIG. 1A. Each client computer includes a memory 130 connected by a bus 148 to a database 138, a keyboard and mouse interface 140, a hard drive 142, a CPU 144, and a network interface card 146 which is connected to the Internet network 500. Alternatively, other network interface devices such as modems may be used. The memory 130 includes an input buffer 132, an output buffer 134, a browser program (102' and 106') and an operating system 136.

FIG. 1D is a flow diagram of the operations performed in the server computer of FIG. 1B, in accordance with the invention. Program 502 is a sequence of executable operations that embody the method of FIG. 1D.

The server computer begins at 152 by receiving a catalog Web page containing a gift selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift (154). The server
will likely cause the Recipient to be notified of the pre-selected gift (155) and of the gift-giving and receiving system. The server may receive a request from a Recipient computer for information about the pre-selected gift (156). Preferably, however, the server will not receive the request 156 because the Recipient will have received information about the pre-selected gift in the original notification email (155). However, the server would continue by accessing a database for information about the pre-selected gift and sending the information as a pre-selected gift Web page to the Recipient computer (158). The server continues by receiving a Recipient selection Web page from the Recipient computer with a first Recipient selection (160). The server continues by causing the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if the first Recipient selection indicates delivery of the pre-selected gift (162). The server may continue by causing a financial credit to be provide to the Recipient if the first Recipient selection indicates a financial credit (163). The server continues by accessing a database for information about different gifts if the first Recipient selection requests information about the different gifts (164). The server continues by sending the information about the different gifts to the Recipient computer if the first Recipient selection requests information about different gifts (166). The server continues by receiving a second Recipient selection from the Recipient computer (168). The server may conclude by causing the different gift to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates delivery of the different gift (170). The server may conclude by causing the pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates delivery of the pre-selected gift (172). The server may conclude by causing a financial credit to be provided to the Recipient if the second Recipient selection indicates credit (174).

Additional executable operations may be included in the program 502. For example, the server may receive payment and/or payment information from the Giver computer via a Bank computer. Also, as discussed below, additional executable operations may be added to the program 502 to allow for the Giver to select one or more alternate gifts or categories of alternate gifts. Additionally or alternatively, the program may cause various confirmations to be sent to the Giver and Recipient throughout the gift giving and receiving process. Preferably, the Giver would receive notice, i.e., by email, confirming the original pre-selected gift order, and informing the Giver that the Recipient has made a selection. Additionally, the Giver and Recipient may receive notice that the
gift has been shipped. Also, if the Recipient so requests, the program may send a "thank you" card by email to the Giver or cause a real (off-line) "thank you" card to be sent to the Giver.

Executable operations may be added, as discussed above, to allow the program 502 to calculate whether a Recipient payment is required or whether the Recipient should receive a difference credit once the Recipient has selected a different gift. Accordingly, the server can arrange receipt of a payment from the Recipient if the Recipient selects a different gift of greater price than the pre-selected gift. Also, the server can cause a difference credit to be provided to the Recipient if the Recipient selects a different gift of lesser price than the pre-selected gift.

The server computer may also record several aspects of the giver-merchant-recipient interactions. These records (or logs) will allow the Merchant to better understand the consumer demand for the goods and/or services offered on the Merchant's Web site. The server will log the items that are browsed and ultimately pre-selected by Givers and record how often the pre-selected items are accepted by Recipients. The server may also record how often the pre-selected items are exchanged for financial credit or different items. The server may also log other items that are browsed by Recipients, and/or other items that may ultimately be purchased by Recipients. The server will allow for the data in these logs to be analyzed and cross-referenced with historical records. For example, a Merchant could view how a specific Recipient has behaved over a period of time, including the number of times that the Recipient has utilized with the gift-giving system, the number of gifts that the Recipient has been sent, the percentage of times that the Recipient has chosen the pre-selected item, etc.

Based on an analysis of the historical data captured in the logs, a Merchant may elect to contact certain Givers and/or Recipients who have, through their behavior, indicated their interest in various goods or services offered by the Merchant. These contacts might constitute offers for sale of items that are similar or related to items previously selected by the Giver and/or Recipient. The logs might also be used by the Merchant to suggest that Recipients send their Givers return gifts. This description of the uses of the data log is not intended to be exhaustive and one skilled in the art would appreciate how to implement the data log in alternate embodiments.
METHOD OVERVIEW

As an overview, the Giver 102 first interacts with a Merchant 104. In this interaction, the Giver 102 browses the Merchant’s 104 goods and/or services and selects a gift (the “pre-selected gift”) for the Recipient 106. The Giver 102 also provides the Recipient’s email address, delivery address, if available, and a method of payment. Alternatively, in addition to pre-selecting a gift for the Recipient 106, the Giver 102 may select an inclusive or exclusive category or categories of alternate gifts. In another alternate embodiment, in addition to pre-selecting a gift for the Recipient 106, the Giver 102 may specifically select individual alternate gifts. Other embodiments may combine these various embodiments. In some embodiments, the Giver may restrict the ability of the Recipient to exchange the gift or receive financial credit.

The Merchant 104 then interacts with the Recipient 106. In this interaction, the Merchant 104 contacts the Recipient 106, most likely by email, to inform the Recipient 106 that a pre-selected gift has been reserved for him or her. The Merchant 104 also provides information about the pre-selected gift -- most likely by sending the Recipient 106 an image of the gift via HTML email, downloadable image, or by a hypertext link which allows the Recipient to access the Merchant’s Web site. A written description of the pre-selected gift and a description of how the gift giving and receiving system works would preferably accompany the email. The email may also contain an individualized message from the Giver.

In a preferred embodiment of the gift giving system, the Recipient 106 can exchange his or her pre-selected gift for another item or items selected from all of the items and services offered by the Merchant’s Web site or other participating Web sites (“different gifts”). The Recipient may also select financial credit for later use. Thus, in the preferred embodiment of the system, the Recipient has the ability to select: (1) the pre-selected gift; (2) a different gift selected from the Merchant’s Web site by the Recipient; or (3) financial credit for later use at the Merchant’s Web site.

Because the pre-selected gift can be exchanged before shipment, the Recipient can avoid the hassles associated with traditional gift exchanges such as sending the gift back to the Merchant or having to go back to the store where the gift was purchased. Moreover, unlike traditional exchanges, which occur after the gift has been received by the Recipient, the different gift would be selected by the Recipient before any
gift is shipped to the Recipient. By exchanging the gift prior to shipment, unnecessary initial shipping costs are avoided and administrative costs are minimized.

In another embodiment, the Merchant 104 would inform the Recipient 106 of alternate gift possibilities that the Giver 102 might have selected. The Recipient 106 may then choose to receive the pre-selected gift or one of the alternate gifts. In another embodiment, the Recipient 106 can exchange his or her pre-selected gift exclusively for financial credit at the Merchant’s Web site or another participating site.

Finally, the Merchant 104 obtains or confirms the Recipient’s desired delivery address and dispatches the selected gift, or possibly credit confirmation, to the Recipient 106.

THE MERCHANT/GIVER INTERACTION

A more detailed schematic of the gift-giving system will now be described with reference to Figures 2A, 2B, 3A, and 3B. FIG. 2A is a detailed flow chart showing the specific operations involved in the preferred embodiment of the Giver/Merchant interaction. The gift-giving system begins with the Giver accessing the Merchant’s Web site (202). Although discussed here in terms of a Web site, alternative embodiments may not utilize a Web site. For example, the present system could be used in the telemarketing industry, catalogue industry, through kiosks located in stores, or other retail industries known in the art.

The Merchant’s Web site may provide a gift catalog Web page with an image and/or written description of the various items offered for sale. After accessing the Web site, the Giver will browse through or search for various retail items in the traditional fashion keeping in mind the cost of the items, the occasion, the Recipient’s tastes and desires and the like (204). In this way, the Giver takes time selecting a specific gift that is personalized for the Recipient. Thus, this gift-giving system provides a means for giving a specific personalized gift unlike some other gift giving methods such as gift certificates.

After viewing the items for sale, the Giver may choose to identify a pre-selected gift for purchase (206). The Giver can identify and purchase the pre-selected gift in one of several ways known in the art. For example, the Giver may select a pre-selected gift for purchase by activating his or her mouse device while the mouse device icon overlaps an HTML tag corresponding to an image of the desired gift on the gift catalog...
Web page, text describing the gift, or text describing the gift giving and receiving system. The Giver may also select the pre-selected gift by moving a cursor through the various gifts with the arrow keypad on his or her computer keyboard and pressing the enter key after the cursor has selected an HTML tag corresponding to the desired gift item. This list of methods of selecting the pre-selected gift is not intended to be exhaustive and many other selecting means known in the art may be used in the present gift-giving system. When the Giver has completed the selection, the Giver computer 102 sends the gift catalog Web page containing the selection back to the Merchant Server 104’. By pre-selecting a gift, the Giver reserves the item for a specified period of time (i.e., 14 days to a month) during which the Recipient may be assured of receiving the pre-selected item. Preferably, the value of the pre-selected gift will be reserved for a longer period of time (i.e., a year). If the Recipient opts for credit, the financial credit will likely be redeemable for another fixed period of time (i.e., a year) during which the Recipient may exchange the financial credit for a different gift. If the pre-selected gift, the value of the pre-selected gift, or financial credit that was created as a result of the pre-selected gift remains unredeemed after the specified period of time, the Merchant will capture the cash initially taken in as profit.

After the Giver has pre-selected a gift, the gift catalog Web page will prompt the Giver to enter information about the Recipient (230). Specifically, the Giver will enter the Recipient’s email address, as this is the means likely used by the Merchant to contact the Recipient (See FIG. 3A and FIG. 3B, 302). Other contact information may also be supplied such as the Recipient’s address, delivery address (if different), and telephone number. However, the address, delivery address, and telephone number information may not be required.

After entering the Recipient’s information, the gift catalog Web page will prompt the Giver to enter billing information and the Giver’s contact information (232). The method of billing may vary in the different embodiments of the present system. The Giver may enter credit card information in one embodiment, but may send a check, money order, or other payment in other embodiments. The Giver may also electronically wire the money to the Merchant or be billed for later payment. In most embodiments, as shown in FIG. 1A, the Merchant server computer 104’ will interact with the Bank,
possibly through the Bank’s computer browser 110’ via the network 500, to complete the financial transaction.

Similarly, exactly when the Giver pays or is billed may vary in different embodiments. The payment or billing preferably occurs when the Giver selects the gift and instructs the Merchant to send the Recipient notice of the pre-selected gift. Alternatively, payment may be received or the Giver may be billed when the Recipient selects a gift or financial credit. The amount of the payment received is preferably the price of the pre-selected gift. However, in alternate embodiments, payment may vary based on whether the Recipient selects the pre-selected gift or a different gift. Additional details of the various payment embodiments of the gift-giving system are discussed below in reference to FIG. 3A.

The Giver may also be required to provide certain contact information such as his or her email address or telephone number so that the Merchant may be able to contact the Giver to confirm the order, purchase, delivery, and the like. Preferably, the gift catalog Web page will also allow the Giver to create a personalized email greeting card for delivery to the Recipient at the time the Recipient is notified of the pre-selected gift.

The Giver/merchant interaction may proceed differently in other embodiments of the present gift giving and receiving system. In one embodiment of the gift giving and receiving system, illustrated in Figure 2B, the Giver may pre-select a gift, select one or more specific alternate gifts, and/or one or more categories of alternate gifts. Note that depending on the embodiment, the specific alternate gift selection procedure may occur before or after the categorical alternate gift selection procedure. Alternatively, the system and method may provide a Giver with the option of selecting individual alternate gifts but not categories of alternate gifts. Likewise, the system and method may provide the Giver with the option of selecting categories of alternate gifts but not individual alternate gifts.

The Merchant’s site may help the Giver select the pre-selected or alternate gifts in several ways. For example, after selecting the pre-selected gift, the site may provide a list of other gifts similar in type and/or cost. Also, the site may provide a questionnaire that the Giver may complete. The questionnaire may supply the Merchant
with information about the Recipient such as interests, age, etc. that allows the Merchant to suggest pre-selected or alternate gifts that the Recipient might like.

Once the Giver has pre-selected a gift (206), the Web site may prompt the Giver to continue browsing the individual retail items 114 contained in the Web site database 112. Alternatively, the Web site might not prompt the Giver to continue browsing. In either case, the Giver may continue browsing the Web site for one or more alternate gifts (208, 210). If the Giver finds a gift that he or she would like to select as an alternate gift (212), then the Giver can select the item as an alternate gift by utilizing one of the aforementioned selection methods or another selection method known in the art (214). After selecting an alternate gift, the Giver has the choice of continuing to browse the site for specific alternate gifts (216) or proceeding to the next step in the system. The Giver may select as many or as few alternate gifts as he or she desires or as many gifts as the Merchant’s site permits. If the Giver selects one or more alternate gifts, the Merchant will store the information in its database 112 for later retrieval.

After selecting the pre-selected gift (206) and after selecting one or more alternate gifts (210-216), the Giver might not desire to browse for additional specific alternate gifts. If the Giver chooses not to browse the Merchant’s site for specific alternate gifts or to discontinue such browsing, the site may provide the Giver with an opportunity to select through its interface a category of gifts from which the Recipient may choose a different gift. Thus, the Giver must determine whether to browse the Merchant’s pre-determined alternate gift categories (218). These categories may define any common aspect of goods or services which occupy the category. Examples include categories defined by type of merchandise (i.e., sporting goods or books), categories defined by intended use (i.e., educational goods) or categories defined by style of merchandise (i.e., goods of traditional or modern style). If the Giver chooses to browse the gift categories (220), the Web site will display a list of the categories. The Giver may examine the various categories more closely through one of the above selection means and see examples of gifts that comprise each category.

If the Giver determines that a certain category matches the interests of the Recipient, the Giver may select that category as a means of aiding the Recipient in selecting a possible different gift (224). After selecting a category, the Giver may choose to browse more categories (226) and select additional categories (224). Thus, a Giver
could select a pre-selected gift and several categories of alternate gifts. By selecting specific alternate gifts and/or one or more categories of alternate gifts, the Recipient will understand that the Giver gave the Recipient’s gift much thought and will appreciate the flexibility to select one or more gifts that may differ from the pre-selected gift.

Suppose, for example, a Recipient is a fan of mystery novels and sporting memorabilia. The Giver could select a baseball autographed by Babe Ruth as the pre-selected gift, and select two categories, books and sporting memorabilia, as alternate categories. If the Recipient already owned a Babe Ruth autographed baseball and preferred a different selection, say an original Nancy Drew Mystery Novel in mint condition that was located in the “books” category, he could select the novel as his alternate selection instead of the baseball.

The alternate gift categories or specific alternate gift selections may be inclusive or exclusive in nature. An inclusive alternate gift or gift category would provide an alternate list of gifts from which the Recipient could select a gift. An exclusive alternate gift or gift category would provide an alternate list of gifts from which the Recipient could not choose his or her gift.

In the inclusive or exclusive alternate gift embodiments, the Recipient may or may not be limited by the alternate selections chosen by the Giver. In one embodiment of the gift-giving system, the Recipient may only select an alternate gift from one of the alternatives selected by the Giver; by selecting alternate gifts, the Giver is inherently limiting the Recipient to the alternate selections. In other embodiments, however, the Giver may specify whether the categories or specific alternate gifts are restrictive in nature (228). If the alternatives (inclusive or exclusive) are not designated as restrictive, then they solely constitute suggestions for the Recipient, and the Recipient is free to select any different gift offered by the Merchant’s site. The step of selecting alternate gifts as restrictive may occur at any point during the Merchant/Giver interaction. The Giver may indicate that the alternate gifts or category of gifts may be restrictive in nature by checking off a box on the Web site interface or by any other means known in the art. This restrictiveness may be preferred in many situations. The following examples illustrate the inclusive and exclusive concepts as well as the restrictive and non-restrictive concepts.
Suppose a grandmother chooses an educational book as the pre-selected gift for her grandson. The grandmother does not mind if the grandson exchanges the book for a different gift, but she thinks he spends too much time playing video games and would prefer if the grandson did not select a video game as his different gift. In this situation, the grandmother could have indicated on the Merchant’s site that the Recipient is limited to either the pre-selected gift or a selection from a selected category, i.e., educational toys. This limitation is inclusive and restrictive; the grandson could not select a video game because the grandmother indicated during the Merchant/Giver interaction that the Grandson could select only the pre-selected gift or an item from the inclusive educational toy category.

Alternatively, the grandmother could have placed a restrictive exclusive categorical limitation on her grandson’s options. Continuing with the above example, the grandmother could have selected the educational book as the pre-selected gift. However, she could have selected “video games” as her alternate category and indicated through the Merchant’s Web site that the category was exclusive in nature. Also, the grandmother could have indicated that the category was restrictive. Because the category was designated exclusive and restrictive, the grandson could select the book or any item offered by the site other than video games. This embodiment would provide the grandson with more options than the previous restrictive inclusive example, yet it still would accomplish the grandmother’s goal of ensuring that the grandson could not select a video game as his different gift.

If the grandmother desired that the grandson select the book or an educational toy, but did not want to preclude her grandson from selecting a video game that he strongly desired, then she could select the book as the pre-selected gift and designate “educational toys” as an inclusive category as in the first example above. In contrast to the first example, she could have designated the category as non-restrictive. In this case, the grandson could select items within or outside of the educational toys category; the grandmother’s selections were, in effect, suggestions. Although the grandson could select outside of the inclusive category of educational toys, he would be made aware by the suggestion that the grandmother preferred that he select the book or an educational toy.
In a fourth example, the grandmother could select the book as the pre-selected gift and the category of "video games" as an exclusive category. As in the previous example, if she designated the category as non-restrictive, then the category and pre-selected gift would be solely suggestions. However, in this example, the grandmother would make it even more clear to the grandson that she disapproved of his selecting a video game. Nevertheless, if the grandson strongly desired a video game, he could select such an item because the grandmother indicated that the exclusive category was non-restrictive.

Although the above four examples illustrated a pre-selected gift and an alternate gift category, the concepts are equally applicable to specific alternate gift selections. For example, if the grandmother disliked only one particular video game, she could have selected that game as a specific alternate gift and indicated that the specific alternate gift was exclusive and restrictive in nature. As in the second example described above, this approach would allow the grandson to select any gift offered on the site except the specified video game. The concepts above could also be used if the Giver combined specific alternate gifts with alternate gift categories.

Various embodiments of the above alternate gift selection procedure exist. Preferably, the Web site would allow the Giver to select one or more alternate gift categories (inclusive or exclusive, restrictive or non-restrictive), but the site would not allow the Giver to select specific alternate gifts. Alternatively, the Web site may only allow the Giver to select one or more specific alternate gifts. The Web site would not allow the Giver to select alternate gift categories.

After the Giver has selected a pre-selected gift and, if desired, specified alternate gifts and/or categories of alternate gifts, the site will prompt the Giver to enter information about the Recipient (230). Specifically, in the preferred embodiment, the Giver must enter the Recipient's email address, as this is the preferred manner in which the Merchant contacts the Recipient. Other contact information may also be supplied such as the Recipient's address, delivery address (if different), and telephone number. However, the latter information may not be required.

After entering the Recipient's information, the site will prompt the Giver to enter billing information and the Giver's contact information (232). The method of billing may vary in the different embodiments of the present system. The Giver may
enter credit card information in one embodiment, but may send a check, money order, or other payment in other embodiments. The Giver may also electronically wire the money to the Merchant or be billed for later payment in other embodiments. Alternatively, as shown in FIG. 1A, the Merchant server computer 104’ may interact with a Bank via the network 500 to complete the financial transaction.

THE MERCHANT/RECIPIENT INTERACTION

FIG. 3A illustrates the preferred embodiment of the Merchant/Recipient interaction. This Figure is a continuation of Figure 2A, the preferred embodiment of the Merchant/Giver interaction. In this embodiment, the Recipient is free to select a different gift as described below. In effect, the Recipient can exchange the pre-selected gift for a different gift selected by the Recipient. However, this exchange occurs before anything is shipped to the Recipient.

After the Giver has pre-selected a gift, the Merchant will notify the Recipient, preferably by email, that a pre-selected gift has been reserved for the Recipient. This communication may be of many different forms. In one embodiment, the Merchant sends the Recipient an email. The Merchant may also notify the Recipient of the gift by telephone, letter, or similar communication method. The notification will also likely provide the Recipient with a passcode (302).

In the email embodiment, the email will likely contain an explanation of the gift giving and receiving system, a description of the pre-selected gift and possibly descriptions of various different gift possibilities. The email may also contain a personalized message from the Giver as discussed above. Preferably, the email will also contain a hyperlink through which the Recipient can access the Merchant’s Web site (304). By utilizing the hyperlink (304), i.e., by using a mouse, keyboard or similar device, the Recipient can access from the Server 104’ a pre-selected gift Web page and display it on browser 106’ that may further describe the pre-selected gift and the different gift possibilities. If the Recipient’s email provider or client does not facilitate direct Web access, the Recipient may write down the hyperlink address and access the Web site via an Internet provider and/or Web browser that does provide access to the Web. Similarly, the Recipient may “cut and paste” the hyperlink address from the email into his or her Internet browser to view the Web site.
Preferably, the email will display an image of the pre-selected gift in, for example, an HTML format (312). Thus, the displaying step (312) may be combined with the notifying step (302). In this embodiment, the Recipient can immediately view the pre-selected gift after opening the email and can access the Merchant’s Web site via the hypertext link to complete the transaction. The HTML email embodiment of the invention may have several options in the email itself. For example, within the HTML message itself, the Recipient may be able to select the pre-selected gift, indicate a desire to browse different gifts, select one or more specific alternate gift(s), or select financial credit for later use. The email will contain a textual description of the gift and the Internet address of the Merchant’s Web site so that a Recipient whose email provider and/or email client are incapable of displaying an HTML-formatted email image can access the site and complete the transaction.

Additionally or alternatively, the email may contain a file attachment, for example in .jpeg, .gif, or other image format, which may be downloaded by the Recipient. Once downloaded, the Recipient may be able to view the pre-selected gift and possibly any alternate gifts or exchange possibilities. This embodiment may be used in conjunction with an email message to provide those unable to view HTML email with the ability to view the pre-selected gift and possibly different gifts.

After accessing the Web site at the server 104’, the Recipient may be prompted to enter his or her email address and passcode (306). After entering the email address and passcode, a program which interacts with the Merchant’s Web site will determine whether an appropriate email/passcode combination has been entered (308). If an incorrect combination has been entered, the site will prompt the Recipient to reenter his or her email address and passcode (310), after which point the Recipient will reenter the email address and passcode (306). If an appropriate email address and passcode combination has been entered, the site will allow the Recipient to proceed in the gift giving and receiving system.

Preferably, in the HTML formatted email embodiment, the passcode will be embedded in a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). The passcode may or may not be visible to the Recipient. If the passcode is embedded in the URL, then the Recipient may access the Web site, as discussed above, and enter his email address. Because the passcode is embedded in the URL of the HTML-formatted email, the Recipient usually
does not have to enter his or her passcode. In this embodiment, the Recipient will have to enter a passcode if the email message is not available at the time that he or she accesses the Web site.

Although FIG. 3A indicates that the Web site will display the pre-selected gift after the Recipient has entered the correct email address and passcode, the email will preferably display the pre-selected gift prior to the Recipient’s having entered this information as discussed above. Thus, the Recipient might not request information about the pre-selected gift. Moreover, the email address and passcode verification process may occur at any point in the gift-giving and receiving process prior to the shipping of the gift. For example, it may be preferred to verify the email address and passcode combination after the Recipient has selected his or her gift or financial credit.

Other embodiments of the gift giving system might not require a passcode/email combination. For example, the Recipient may be required to enter his or her mother’s maiden name, place of birth, place where the Giver and Recipient first met, or similar information individualized for the Recipient if the Giver provides such information. In this alternate embodiment, the Recipient will likely be pleased that the Recipient has thought to personalize the gift receiving process.

After viewing the pre-selected gift and possibly accessing the Web site, the Recipient may decide whether to browse for a different gift (404), accept the primary gift (412), or accept financial credit (414). This decision is herein referred to as the Recipient’s “first Recipient selection.” Note that the Recipient may make several “first Recipient selections” if he or she chooses to browse more than one different gift.

The Recipient may choose to select the pre-selected gift immediately after viewing the pre-selected gift and/or accessing the Web site (404, 412, 318). In one embodiment, the Recipient need not access the Web site in order to select a pre-selected gift, a different gift, or financial credit. A link may exist in the notifying email through which the Recipient may make his or her selection. Alternatively, the Merchant’s Web site will have an interface through which the Recipient can accept the Giver’s pre-selected gift selection via computer mouse, keyboard or similar device. Alternatively, the Recipient can accept the pre-selected gift via telephone, email, or similar communication device. One benefit of this embodiment is that if the Recipient selects the pre-selected gift without browsing for a different gift, price anonymity can be maintained.
The Recipient may choose not to immediately accept the pre-selected gift if he or she would prefer to browse for a different gift or receive financial credit. Thus, the Recipient must determine whether to browse for a different gift listed on that Web site or, in some embodiments, on another participating site (404). If the Recipient chooses not to browse for a different gift, and the Recipient does not want to receive the pre-selected gift (412), then the Recipient may receive a financial credit equal or about equal to the price paid by the Giver for the pre-selected gift for later use (414). This financial credit could be used for a later purchase at the Web site, another participating Web site, or, in an alternate embodiment, at a participating off-line retailer.

If the Recipient selects financial credit instead of the pre-selected gift or a different gift, the Giver will be notified that the gift has been received, although the notification would preferably not indicate that the Recipient opted for financial credit. The Recipient would also receive a written receipt, preferably by email, indicating that he or she has a financial credit at the site. The receipt will also likely contain the same passcode as in the original email and instructions for its use. The financial credit may be redeemed within a designated period of time by the Recipient’s accessing the Web site, and entering his or her email and passcode. As in the original email notification message, if the financial credit receipt is in HTML email format, the passcode may be embedded in the URL of the HTML formatted email message.

The Recipient may choose to browse for different gifts offered on the Merchant’s Web site (404). After browsing the different gifts (406), the Recipient will have to decide whether to select one of the different gifts (408), the pre-selected gift (412), or financial credit (414). This decision is herein referred to as the “second Recipient selection.” The Recipient can select one of the different gifts on the Web site (410) in a similar manner to selecting the pre-selected gift. In one embodiment, the Web site will have an interface through which the Recipient can select one of the different gifts via computer mouse, keyboard or similar device. Alternatively, the Recipient may be able to accept a different gift via telephone, email, or similar communication device. Alternatively, the Recipient may select the primary gift (412) or financial credit (414) as discussed above.

Two price scenarios arise if the Recipient selects a different gift with a price that is different from the price of the pre-selected gift. Preferably, if the selected
different gift is more expensive than the pre-selected gift (438), then the Recipient must pay the difference between the price of the different gift and the price paid by the Giver for the pre-selected gift (442). If the selected different gift is less expensive than the pre-selected gift (440), then the Recipient may receive a credit (444) for the difference between the price the Giver paid for the pre-selected gift and price of the different gift.

Preferably, if the price of the pre-selected gift changes between the time the Giver selects the pre-selected gift and the time that the Recipient makes his or her selection, the price of the pre-selected gift at the time the Giver selected the pre-selected gift will be used in calculating the amount owed by the Recipient or any credit owed to the Recipient.

Preferably, the price the Giver paid for the pre-selected gift is revealed to the Recipient once the Recipient chooses to browse the different gift selections. Thus, in this embodiment price anonymity cannot be maintained.

In another preferred embodiment, the site could display different gifts within a certain price range of the pre-selected gift (i.e., ± $10). The site could display different gifts within a specific price range of the pre-selected gift and display the price of the pre-selected gift and the different gifts. Obviously, if the price of the pre-selected gift is displayed, price anonymity will not be maintained. Alternatively, the site can maintain price anonymity by not displaying the price of the different gift, but instead displaying the difference in price between the different gift and the pre-selected gift.

Alternatively, price anonymity can be maintained by only allowing the Recipient to browse for different gifts that are less or as expensive as the pre-selected gift. In this embodiment, the difference in price between the different gift, if selected, and the pre-selected gift may be reserved as credit for later use by the Recipient or credited to the Giver. In another embodiment, the Giver may agree to make an additional payment should the Recipient select a different gift that is more expensive than the pre-selected gift. In this embodiment, the Giver may obviously place a limit on the price of the different gift that the Recipient may select. In each of these embodiments, unlike gift certificates, price anonymity can be maintained.

In another embodiment of the present gift giving and receiving system, the Recipient may select a plurality of different gifts instead of the pre-selected gift.

Alternatively, the Merchant's Web site may not provide the Recipient with the option to choose financial credit in his or her first selection or second Recipient
selection. Instead, the Recipient would decide in his or her first Recipient selection to select the pre-selected gift or to view the different gifts. Accordingly, the Recipient would decide between the pre-selected gift and the different gift(s), but not a financial credit, in his or her second Recipient selection.

Similarly, in some embodiments, the Merchant’s Web site may not provide the Recipient with the option to choose a different gift. In this embodiment, the Recipient would likely make a single selection. In the single Recipient selection, the Recipient would choose between the pre-selected gift and a financial credit.

In yet another alternate embodiment, the Giver may place a restriction on the ability of the Recipient to receive a credit for any such difference in price. Instead, the Giver may indicate when placing the gift order that any credit should be refunded to the Giver or be directed to a third-party designee. Once the Recipient has selected a different gift and completed payment or received a financial credit as discussed above, the gift giving and receiving system continues in a similar fashion as discussed below.

After selecting the pre-selected gift, different gift, or financial credit, the Recipient will be prompted to confirm his or her delivery address if the Giver had previously entered a delivery address (320). If the Giver-supplied delivery address is undesirable for the Recipient, the Recipient may enter a different delivery address. Obviously, if the Giver did not enter a delivery address when ordering the gift, then the Recipient would enter his or her delivery address at this time.

After the Recipient selects his or her preferred gift or a financial credit, the Merchant’s Internet site may allow the Recipient to create a “thank you” card or an email to be sent to the Giver. After creating the card or email, the server will cause the card to be mailed to the Giver through the postal service or similar delivery agent or cause the Recipient’s “thank you” email to be sent to the Giver. In one embodiment, the Recipient may select a non-email “thank you” card to be mailed to the Giver. The Recipient may pay for this service with his or her remaining credit or by other payment methods known in the art.

If the Recipient opted for the pre-selected gift, the Merchant or a distributor would ship (322) the gift to the Recipient at the address inputted or confirmed in step 320. After the gift has been shipped, the server may cause the Recipient to be notified that the gift has been shipped. This communication may be made by email,
telephone or similar communication embodiment. Similarly, the server may also cause
the Giver to be notified that the Recipient has selected a gift and that the gift has been
shipped. Preferably, the email sent to the Giver would not indicate whether the Recipient
selected the pre-selected gift, a different gift, or financial credit.

The Recipient and Giver notifications may occur simultaneously with the
time of gift or credit selection, at the time of gift shipment, after shipment, after delivery,
or at any combination thereof. For example, one email message may be sent to the Giver
and one email may be sent to the Recipient to inform them that the gift has been shipped.
Additional email messages may be sent to the Giver and the Recipient to inform them that
the gift has been delivered. Email communications may be employed to confirm the
Recipient's selection and to inform the Recipient that the selected item has left the
warehouse or similar storage facility.

FIG. 3B illustrates an alternative embodiment of the Merchant/Recipient
interaction. This Figure is a continuation of Figure 2B, an alternative embodiment of the
Merchant/Giver interaction. In this embodiment, the Recipient is free to select the pre-
selected gift or an alternate gift as described below. In effect, the Recipient can exchange
the pre-selected gift for one of the alternate gifts. This exchange occurs before any item
is shipped to the Recipient.

The first few steps (302-312) of this embodiment proceed in the same or
similar fashion as described in reference to FIG. 3A. The key differences between this
embodiment and the embodiments discussed above begin after the Recipient has viewed
his or her pre-selected gift.

After the Recipient has accessed the Merchant’s Web site and viewed the
pre-selected gift (not necessarily in that order), or after viewing the pre-selected gift in the
notification email, the Recipient will decide in his or her first Recipient selection whether
to browse the alternate gifts or deny the pre-selected and alternate gifts and opt instead to
receive credit for later use. This decision is illustrated in FIG. 3B in two steps (314, 316).

If the Recipient chooses not to browse the alternate gift possibilities, the
Recipient must decide whether he or she would like to accept the pre-selected gift (316).
If, after deciding not to review the possible alternate gifts, the Recipient chooses not to
accept the pre-selected gift, the Recipient can deny the pre-selected gift (326). The Web
site, which is displayed through the Recipient computer browser, may have an interface
through which the Recipient can deny the pre-selected gift. This interface may be
activated by activating the mouse device while the mouse device icon is positioned over a
properly labeled Web interface location, by using the computer keyboard, or by using a
similar device.

Instead of selecting the pre-selected gift or an alternate gift, the Recipient
may choose to receive financial credit (328) to use later at that Web site or, in other
embodiments, at other participating Web sites or off-line store locations. Preferably, even
if the alternate gift selections were designated as restrictive, the Recipient may opt for
financial credit. However, the alternate gift restrictions will limit a Recipient’s ability to
redeem his or her financial credit to the extent defined by the Giver’s restrictive
limitation. Alternatively, a Recipient may not opt for financial credit if the Giver placed a
restrictive limitation on the Recipient’s exchange possibilities.

In some embodiments, this restrictiveness is inherent in the system; if the
Giver selects an alternate gift, the recipient can select only the pre-selected gift or one of
the alternate gifts. Alternatively, the site may have an interface through which the Giver
may indicate specifically that his or her alternate gift selections are restrictive.
Alternatively, the Giver or his or her designee may receive the financial credit, should the
Recipient refuse all of his or her gift options.

If the Recipient chooses not to browse the alternate gifts, the Recipient can
accept the pre-selected gift (318). In this case, the Recipient will select the pre-selected
gift as described above (318) and confirm or provide the Recipient’s delivery address
(320). Then, the pre-selected gift will be dispatched (322) and the parties notified of the
shipment and/or delivery (322, 324).

If the Recipient does choose to browse the Giver’s alternate gift
suggestions (314, 330), the Recipient will make a second Recipient selection to receive
either the pre-selected gift, an alternate gift, or financial credit. If, after browsing the pre-
determined alternate gift suggestions, the Recipient chooses to receive the pre-selected
gift (332), then the gift giving and receiving system will proceed as indicated above by
selecting the pre-selected gift (318) and confirming or inputting his or her delivery
address (320). The pre-selected gift will then be delivered (322) and the Giver and
Receiver notified (322, 324) as discussed above.
However, after browsing the alternate gifts (330), the Recipient may opt not to select the pre-selected gift. In this scenario, the Recipient must determine whether to accept one of the alternate gifts (334) or financial credit (328). If the Recipient so desires, he or she may choose an alternate gift much as the Recipient would select the pre-selected gift (336). In one embodiment, the Web site will have an interface through which the Recipient can accept one of the Giver’s pre-selected alternate gifts via computer mouse, keyboard or similar device. Alternatively, the Recipient may be able to accept an alternate gift via telephone, email, or similar communication device.

In another embodiment of the present gift giving and receiving system, the Recipient may select a plurality of alternate gifts instead of the pre-selected gift.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the price of the pre-selected gift is revealed to the Recipient once the Recipient chooses to browse the alternate gifts selections.

In a different embodiment, price anonymity can be maintained by only allowing the Recipient to browse alternate gifts that are less expensive than the pre-selected gift. In another embodiment, the Giver may agree to make an additional payment should the Recipient select an alternate gift that is more expensive than the pre-selected gift. In this embodiment, the Giver may obviously place a price limit on the alternate gift that the Recipient may select. In each of these embodiments, price anonymity can be maintained.

As discussed above, two scenarios arise if the Recipient selects an alternate gift of different price than the pre-selected gift. In one embodiment of the system, if the selected alternate gift is more expensive than the pre-selected gift (338), then the Recipient must pay the difference between the alternate gift and the pre-selected gift (342). If the selected alternate gift is less expensive than the pre-selected gift (340), then the Recipient may receive a credit (344) for the difference in price between the pre-selected gift and the alternate gift. However, the Giver may place a restriction on the ability of the Recipient to receive a credit for this difference in price. Instead, the Giver may indicate when placing the gift order that any credit be refunded to the Giver or be directed to a third-party designee.

Once the Recipient has selected an alternate gift and completed payment or received financial credit, the gift giving and receiving system continues in a similar
fashion as discussed above. Specifically, the Recipient will confirm his or her delivery address (320), and the alternate gift will be shipped to the Recipient (322) and the parties notified of shipment and/or delivery (322, 323).

If after browsing the alternate gifts, the Recipient chooses not to accept either the pre-selected gift (332) or any of the alternate gifts (334), the Recipient can deny the gifts as discussed above (326). The Web site may have an interface through which the Recipient can deny the alternate gift. This interface may be activated by activating the mouse device while the mouse icon is positioned over a properly labeled Web interface location, by using a computer keyboard, or by using a similar device.

After rejecting the pre-selected gift and the alternate gifts, the Recipient may receive financial credit (328) to use later at that Web site or, in other embodiments, at other Web sites or store locations.

Although the above embodiments may contain a first Recipient selection (or several first Recipient selections) and a second Recipient selection, one skilled in the art would appreciate that the above embodiments could be carried out in a single Recipient selection. Such an embodiment would be useful if the initial Recipient notification informed the Recipient of the pre-selected gift, the alternate gifts, the financial credit option, and the gift-giving and receiving system.

While the invention has been described in its preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that the words which have been used are words of description, rather than limitation, and that changes may be made within the purview of the appended claims without departing from the true scope and spirit of the invention in its broader aspects. For example, those skilled in the art would recognize that the invention described herein is not limited to the order of the various operations illustrated in FIGS. 1D, 2A, 2B, 3A, and 3B and discussed above. The operations may occur in any logical order.
CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method in a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer comprising:
   5 receiving a selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
   providing information about said pre-selected gift to the Recipient computer;
   receiving a first Recipient selection from the Recipient computer;
   causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
   accessing a database for information about a different gift if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
   sending said information about said different gift to the Recipient computer if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
   receiving a second Recipient selection from the Recipient computer;
   causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
   causing a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.

2. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising:

20 causing a credit to be provided to the Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates said credit.

3. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising:

causing a credit to be provided to the Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates said credit

4. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising:

causing a credit to be provided to the Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates said credit; and
causing said credit to be provided to the Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates said credit.

5. The method of claim 4 additionally comprising:
   receiving a second Giver selection from the Giver computer of one or more alternate gifts.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said one or more alternate gifts.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of offered goods or services other than said one or more alternate gifts.

8. The method of claim 4 additionally comprising:
   receiving a second Giver selection for an alternate gift category from said Giver computer;
   said alternate gift category comprising a plurality of items.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said items.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group comprising offered goods or services other than said items.

11. The method of claim 4 additionally comprising:
   receiving a second Giver selection for one or more specific alternate gifts and one or more alternate gift categories from said Giver computer;
   said one or more alternate gift categories comprising a plurality of items.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said one or more specific alternate gifts and said items.
13. The method of claim 11 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group comprising offered goods or services other than said one or more specific alternate gifts and other than said items.

14. The method of claim 1 additionally comprising:
   receiving a request from the Recipient computer for information about said pre-selected gift;
   accessing a database for information about said pre-selected gift;

15. The method of claim 4, wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said chosen different gift has a second price, the method additionally comprising:
   receiving a Recipient payment if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift and said second price is greater than said first price, said Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said first price; and
   providing said Recipient with a difference credit if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift and said first price is greater than said second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said second price.

16. A method in a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer comprising:
   receiving a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
   sending information about said pre-selected gift to the Recipient computer;
   receiving a Recipient selection from the Recipient computer;
   causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
   causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates said credit.
17. A method in a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer comprising:
   receiving a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
   sending information about said pre-selected gift and a different gift to the
   Recipient computer;
   receiving a Recipient selection from the Recipient computer;
   causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient
   selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
   causing a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient
   selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift; and
   causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection
   indicates credit.

18. A method of giving and receiving gifts over a computer network comprising:
   receiving a Giver selection for a pre-selected gift from a Giver computer over said
   computer network;
   notifying a Recipient that said pre-selected gift has been selected for said
   Recipient;
   receiving a delivery address over said computer network;
   receiving a Recipient selection from a Recipient computer over said computer
   network;
   causing said pre-selected gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient
   selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
   causing a chosen different gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient
   selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.

19. The method of claim 18 additionally comprising:
   causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection
   indicates said credit.
20. The method of claim 19 wherein said notifying comprises an email communication to said Recipient computer.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said different gift has a second price, the method additionally comprising:
   receiving a Recipient payment if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift and said second price is greater than said first price, said Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said first price; and
   providing said Recipient with a difference credit if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift and said first price is greater than said second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said second price.

22. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising a memory device and a processor coupled to said memory device, said processor configured to:
   receive a selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
   provide information about said pre-selected gift to a Recipient computer;
   receive a first Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
   cause said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
   access a database for information about a different gift if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
   send said information about said different gift to the Recipient computer if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
   receive a second Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
   cause said pre-selected gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
   cause a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.
23. The system of claim 22 wherein said processor is additionally configured to:
caused a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said first Recipient selection
indicates said credit.

24. The system of claim 22 wherein said processor is additionally configured to:
cause a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection
indicates said credit.

25. The system of claim 22 wherein said processor is additionally configured to:
cause a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said first Recipient selection
indicates said credit; and
cause said credit to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient
selection indicates said credit.

26. The system of claim 22 wherein said processor is additionally configured to:
receive a request from said Recipient computer for information about said pre-
selected gift; and
access a database for information about said pre-selected gift.

27. The system of claim 25, wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said
chosen different gift has a second price, the system additionally configured to:
receive a Recipient payment if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery
of said chosen different gift and said second price is greater than said first price; said
Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said first price;
and
provide said Recipient with a difference credit if said second Recipient selection
indicates delivery of said chosen different gift and said first price is greater than said
second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said
second price.
28. The system of claim 25 additionally configured to:
   receive a second Giver selection from the Giver computer of one or more alternate
gifts.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the
   group consisting of said one or more alternate gifts.

30. The system of claim 28 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the
   group consisting of offered goods or services other than said one or more alternate gifts.

31. The system of claim 25 additionally configured to:
   receive a second Giver selection for an alternate gift category from said Giver
   computer;
   said alternate gift category comprising a plurality of items.

32. The system of claim 31 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the
   group consisting of said items.

33. The system of claim 31 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the
   group comprising offered goods or services other than said items.

34. The system of claim 25 additionally configured to:
   receive a second Giver selection for one or more specific alternate gifts and one or
   more alternate gift categories from said Giver computer;
   said one or more alternate gift categories comprising a plurality of items.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the
   group consisting of said one or more specific alternate gifts and said items.
36. The system of claim 34 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group comprising offered goods or services other than said one or more specific alternate gifts and other than said items.

37. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising a memory device and a processor coupled to said memory device, said processor configured to:

- receive a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
- send information about said pre-selected gift to a Recipient computer;
- receive a Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
- cause said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
- cause a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates said credit.

38. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising a memory device and a processor coupled to said memory device, said processor configured to:

- receive a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
- send information about said pre-selected gift and a different gift to a Recipient computer;
- receive a Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
- cause said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
- cause a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift; and
- cause a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates credit.

39. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising a memory device and a processor coupled to said memory device, said processor configured to:

- receive a Giver selection for a pre-selected gift from a Giver computer over a computer network;
notify a Recipient that said pre-selected gift has been selected for said Recipient;
receive a delivery address over said computer network;
receive a Recipient selection from a Recipient computer over said computer network;

cause said pre-selected gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
cause a chosen different gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.

40. The system of claim 39 additionally configured to:

cause a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates said credit.

41. The system of claim 40 wherein said notifying comprises an email communication to said Recipient computer.

42. The system of claim 41 wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said different gift has a second price, the system additionally configured to:

receive a Recipient payment if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift and said second price is greater than said first price, said Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said first price; and

provide said Recipient with a difference credit if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift and said first price is greater than said second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said second price.
43. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising:

means for receiving a selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
means for providing information about said pre-selected gift to a Recipient computer;
means for receiving a first Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
means for causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
means for accessing a database for information about a different gift if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
means for sending said information about said different gift to the Recipient computer if said first Recipient selection requests said information about said different gift;
means for receiving a second Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
means for causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
means for causing a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.

44. The system of claim 43 additionally comprising:
means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates said credit.

45. The system of claim 43 additionally comprising:
means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates said credit.

46. The system of claim 43 additionally comprising:
means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said first Recipient selection indicates said credit; and
means for causing said credit to be provided to said Recipient if said second Recipient selection indicates said credit.

47. The system of claim 43 additionally comprising:
means for receiving a request from said Recipient computer for information about said pre-selected gift;
means for accessing a database for information about said pre-selected gift.

48. The system of claim 46, wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said chosen different gift has a second price, the system additionally comprising:
means for receiving a Recipient payment if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift and said second price is greater than said first price, said Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said first price; and
means for providing said Recipient with a difference credit if said second Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift and said first price is greater than said second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said second price.

49. The system of claim 46 additionally comprising:
means for receiving a second Giver selection from the Giver computer of one or more alternate gifts.

50. The system of claim 49 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said one or more alternate gifts.

51. The system of claim 49 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of offered goods or services other than said one or more alternate gifts.
52. The system of claim 46 additionally comprising:
    means for receiving a second Giver selection for an alternate gift category from said Giver computer;
    said alternate gift category comprising a plurality of items.

53. The system of claim 52 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said items.

54. The system of claim 52 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group comprising offered goods or services other than said items.

55. The system of claim 46 additionally comprising:
    means for receiving a second Giver selection for one or more specific alternate gifts and one or more alternate gift categories from said Giver computer; and
    said one or more alternate gift categories comprising a plurality of items.

56. The system of claim 55 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group consisting of said one or more specific alternate gifts and said items.

57. The system of claim 55 wherein said chosen different gift is selected from the group comprising offered goods or services other than said one or more specific alternate gifts and other than said items.

58. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising:
    means for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
    means for sending information about said pre-selected gift to the Recipient computer;
    means for receiving a Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
    means for causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates said credit.

59. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising:
means for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
means for sending information about said pre-selected gift and a different gift to a Recipient computer;
means for receiving a Recipient selection from said Recipient computer;
means for causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift;
means for causing a chosen different gift to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift; and
means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates credit.

60. A system for giving and receiving gifts comprising:
means for receiving a Giver selection for a pre-selected gift from a Giver computer over a computer network;
means for notifying a Recipient that said pre-selected gift has been selected for said Recipient;
means for receiving a delivery address over said computer network;
means for receiving a Recipient selection from a Recipient computer over said computer network;
means for causing said pre-selected gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and
means for causing a chosen different gift to be delivered to said address if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said chosen different gift.
61. The system of claim 60 additionally comprising:
   means for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient
   selection indicates said credit.

62. The system of claim 61 wherein said means for notifying comprises an email
   communication to said Recipient computer.

63. The system of claim 62 wherein said pre-selected gift has a first price, and said
   different gift has a second price, the system additionally comprising:
   means for receiving a Recipient payment if said Recipient selection indicates
   delivery of said different gift and said second price is greater than said first price, said
   Recipient payment being the difference between said second price and said
   first price; and
   means for providing said Recipient with a difference credit if said Recipient
   selection indicates delivery of said different gift and said first price is greater than said
   second price, said difference credit being the difference between said first price and said
   second price.

64. A computer program article of manufacture, comprising:
   a computer readable medium for a Merchant server computer connected over a
   network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer associated with a Recipient;
   program means in said computer readable medium for receiving a Giver selection
   from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;
   program means in said computer readable medium for sending information about
   said pre-selected gift to the Recipient computer;
   program means in said computer readable medium for receiving a Recipient
   selection from the Recipient computer;
   program means in said computer readable medium for causing said pre-selected
   gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said
   pre-selected gift; and
program means in said computer readable medium for causing a credit to be provided to said Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates said credit.

65. The computer program article of manufacture of claim 64 additionally comprising:

program means in said computer readable medium for causing said different gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift.

66. A computer program article of manufacture, comprising:

a computer readable medium for a Merchant server computer connected over a network to a Giver computer and a Recipient computer associated with a Recipient;

program means in said computer readable medium for receiving a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift;

program means in said computer readable medium for accessing information about a different gift;

program means in said computer readable medium for sending information about said pre-selected gift and said different gift to the Recipient computer;

program means in said computer readable medium for receiving a Recipient selection from the Recipient computer;

program means in said computer readable medium for causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift; and

program means in said computer readable medium for causing said different gift to be provided to the Recipient if said Recipient selection indicates delivery of said different gift.

67. A server memory for storing data for access by an application program being executed on a data processing system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:

a data structure stored in said memory, said data structure including information
used by said application program and including:

a plurality of data objects stored in said memory, each of said data objects containing different information from a database;

a pre-selected gift web page data object including a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and information on credit to be provided to said Recipient; and

a recipient selection web page data object including a recipient selection of either said pre-selected gift or said credit to be provided to said Recipient.

68. A server memory for storing data for access by an application program being executed on a data processing system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:

a data structure stored in said memory, said data structure including information used by said application program and including:

a plurality of data objects stored in said memory, each of said data objects containing different information from a database;

a pre-selected gift web page data object including a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and information on a different gift; and

a recipient selection web page data object including a recipient selection of either said pre-selected gift or said different gift to be provided to said Recipient.

69. A server memory for storing data for access by an application program being executed on a data processing system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:

a data structure stored in said memory, said data structure including information used by said application program and including:

a plurality of data objects stored in said memory, each of said data objects containing different information from a database;

a pre-selected gift web page data object including a Giver selection from the Giver
computer of a pre-selected gift and information on a different gift; and

a Recipient selection web page data object including a chosen gift;

said chosen gift being selected from the group consisting of said pre-selected gift, said different gift, or a credit.

5 70. An Internet-based system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:

a server computer hosting gift giving service accessible via client computers to a plurality of users making inquiries to the server;

10 wherein said server provides a pre-selected gift web page including a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and information on a credit to be provided to said Recipient;

said server computer further providing a Recipient selection web page comprising input controls whereby the recipient selects either said pre-selected gift or said credit to be provided to said Recipient;

15 whereby either said pre-selected gift or the credit is caused to be provided to said Recipient in response to said Recipient selection.

71. An Internet-based system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:

a server computer hosting gift giving service accessible via client computers to a plurality of users making inquiries to the server;

20 wherein said server provides a pre-selected gift web page including a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and information of a different gift;

said server computer further providing a Recipient selection web page comprising input controls whereby the recipient selects either said pre-selected gift or said different gift to be provided to said Recipient;
whereby either said pre-selected gift or said different gift is caused to be provided to said Recipient in response to said Recipient selection.

72. An Internet-based system for receiving a Giver selection from a Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and causing said pre-selected gift to be provided to a Recipient if a Recipient selection indicates delivery of said pre-selected gift, comprising:
a server computer hosting gift giving service accessible via client computers to a plurality of users making inquiries to the server;
wherein said server provides a pre-selected gift web page including a Giver selection from the Giver computer of a pre-selected gift and information of a different gift;
said server computer further providing a Recipient selection web page comprising input controls whereby the recipient selects a chosen gift;
said chosen gift being selected from the group consisting of said pre-selected gift, said different gift, or a credit;
whereby said chosen gift is caused to be provided to said Recipient in response to said Recipient selection.
BEGIN SERVER PROGRAM 502

RECEIVE SELECTION FROM GIVER COMPUTER OF A PRE-SELECTED GIFT

CAUSE RECIPIENT TO BE NOTIFIED OF PRE-SELECTED GIFT

RECEIVE REQUEST FROM RECIPIENT COMPUTER FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRE-SELECTED GIFT

ACCESS DATABASE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRE-SELECTED GIFT AND SEND THE INFORMATION TO THE RECIPIENT COMPUTER

RECEIVE FIRST RECIPIENT SELECTION FROM RECIPIENT COMPUTER

CAUSE PRE-SELECTED GIFT TO BE PROVIDED TO RECIPIENT IF THE FIRST RECIPIENT SELECTION INDICATES THE PRE-SELECTED GIFT

CAUSE FINANCIAL CREDIT TO BE PROVIDED TO RECIPIENT IF THE FIRST RECIPIENT SELECTION INDICATES FINANCIAL CREDIT

ACCESS A DATABASE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS IF THE FIRST RECIPIENT SELECTION REQUESTS INFORMATION ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS

SEND INFORMATION ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS TO THE RECIPIENT COMPUTER IF THE FIRST RECIPIENT SELECTION REQUESTS INFORMATION ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS

RECEIVE A SECOND RECIPIENT SELECTION FROM THE RECIPIENT COMPUTER

CAUSE PRE-SELECTED GIFT TO BE PROVIDED TO RECIPIENT IF THE SECOND RECIPIENT SELECTION INDICATES THE PRE-SELECTED GIFT

CAUSE FINANCIAL CREDIT TO BE PROVIDED TO RECIPIENT IF THE SECOND RECIPIENT SELECTION INDICATES FINANCIAL CREDIT

CAUSE THE SELECTED DIFFERENT GIFT TO BE PROVIDED TO THE RECIPIENT IF THE SECOND RECIPIENT SELECTION INDICATES THE SELECTED DIFFERENT GIFT
FIGURE 2A

ACCESS WEB SITE 202

BROWSE INVENTORY 204

SELECT PRE-SELECTED GIFT 206

GIVER ENTERS RECIPIENT'S EMAIL ADDRESS AND DELIVERY ADDRESS (IF AVAILABLE) 230

ENTER GIVER'S BILLING AND CONTACT INFORMATION 232
FIGURE 3B

1. MERCHANT NOTIFIES RECIPIENT OF GIFT AND PROVIDES PASSCODE
2. RECIPIENT ACCESSSES WEB SITE
3. RECIPIENT ENTERS EMAIL ADDRESS AND PASSCODE
4. DISPLAY PRIMARY GIFT
5. CORRECT ID & PASSWORD?
6. SITE PROMPTS TO REENTER EMAIL & PASSCODE
7. SELECT PRIMARY GIFT
8. CONFIRM OR OBTAIN DELIVERY ADDRESS
9. SHIP GIFT AND NOTIFY RECIPIENT
10. NOTIFY GIVER OF DELIVERY
11. ALTERNATE LESS EXPENSIVE THAN PRIMARY?
12. ALTERNATE MORE EXPENSIVE THAN PRIMARY?
13. SELECT ALTERNATE GIFT
14. ACCEPT PRIMARY GIFT?
15. ACCEPT ALTERNATE GIFT?
16. BROWSE ALTERNATE GIFTS
17. BROWSE ALTERNATE GIFTS
18. ACCEPT PRIMARY GIFT?
19. ACCEPT ALTERNATE GIFT?
20. RECIPIENT DENIES GIFT
21. RECIPIENT RECEIVES CREDIT SUBJECT TO POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS
22. RECIPIENT ENTERS BILLING INFORMATION
23. YES
24. NO
25. NO
26. NO
27. NO
28. YES
29. YES
### INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

#### A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPC(7)</th>
<th>G06G 1/14</th>
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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

#### B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

| U.S. | 705/22 |

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

#### C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>WO0000916A1 (SOLOMON et al) 06 January 2000, See Abstract.</td>
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

02 JUNE 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

26 JUN 2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks

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Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998)