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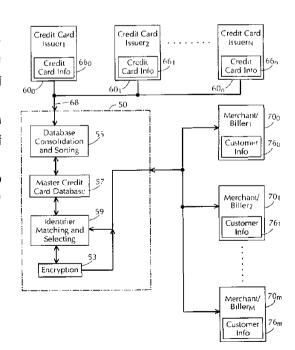
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(54) 【発明の名称】自動支払いシステム

# (57)【要約】

本発明は、複数の金融機関からの顧客の金融アカウント情報(76)をコンパイルする、例えば、クレジットカード用の、自動支払いシステム(50)を提供する。前記システムは、アカウント情報(66)を金融機関から受信し、かつ、情報(76)を中央位置(55)においてコンパイルする。前記システムは、金融アカウント情報(76)を顧客に提示する。次に、前記システムは、顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を受信しかつ記憶し、かつ、選択された金融アカウント情報(76)を、商店主、請求書作成者、または、支払いプロセッサ(70)に提供する。



#### 【特許請求の範囲】

## 【請求項1】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの支払いを容易にするための方法であって、

複数の金融機関からの、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリ内にコンパイルする段階と、

特定の顧客に関連するトランザクション情報を受信しかつ記憶する段階と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する段階と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を受信しかつ記憶する段階と

選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、商店主/請求書作成者に、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサに提供する段階とを具備することを特徴とする方法。

## 【請求項2】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

## 【請求項3】

前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも2つを、1つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合する段階をさらに具備し、

前記回収段階は、前記統合型データベースを検索する段階を含むことを特徴とする請求項 1に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項4】

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択する 段階と、

部分集合を顧客に提示する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項5】

前記アカウントの部分集合は、商店主 / 請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むことを特徴とする請求項 4 に記載の方法。

## 【請求項6】

2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項7】

1つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

# 【請求項8】

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てる段階とをさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

# 【請求項9】

前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも1つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項10】

顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断する段階と、

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顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録する段階と をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

# 【請求項11】

前記顧客を登録する段階は、該顧客のPINおよびバイオメトリック測定値を捕捉する段階をさらに含むことを特徴とする請求項10に記載の方法。

## 【請求項12】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サン プルを含むことを特徴とする請求項11に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項13】

前記PIN、バイオメトリック測定値、または、これらの両方を、PINまたはバイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項11に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項14】

トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント情報からの利用可能 残高値と比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項1に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項15】

前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項14 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項16】

顧客に提示された複数の請求書から選択された請求書についての、顧客の金融アカウントからの支払いを容易にするための方法であって、

複数の金融機関からの、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリ内にコンパイルする段階と、

複数の請求書の各々についての請求書情報を顧客に提示する段階と、

選択された特定の支払うべき請求書を指定する選択情報を、顧客から受信する段階と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する段階と、

選択された請求書を支払うために用いるべき特定のアカウントを指定する選択情報を、顧客から受信する段階と

を具備することを特徴とする方法。

# 【請求項17】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項18】

前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも 2 つを、 1 つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合する段階をさらに具備し、

前記回収段階は、前記統合型データベースを検索する段階を含むことを特徴とする請求項 16に記載の方法。

## 【請求項19】

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択する 段階と、

部分集合を顧客に提示する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

## 【請求項20】

前記アカウントの部分集合は、商店主 / 請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むことを特徴とする請求項 1 9 に記載の方法。

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#### 【請求項21】

2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項22】

1つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法

#### 【請求項23】

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てる段階と をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

# 【請求項24】

前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも 1 つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 1 6 に記載の方法。

## 【請求項25】

顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断する段階と、

顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項26】

前記顧客を登録する段階は、該顧客のPIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値を捕捉する段階をさらに含むことを特徴とする請求項25に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項27】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サン プルを含むことを特徴とする請求項26に記載の方法。

## 【請求項28】

前記 P I N、 P I N アドレス、バイオメトリック測定値のうちの少なくとも 1 つを、 P I N、 P I N アドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 2 6 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項29】

トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント情報からの利用可能 残高値と比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項16に記載の方法。

# 【請求項30】

前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 2 9 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項31】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの、コンピュータネットワークを介しての支払いを容易にするための方法であって、

複数の金融機関から受信される、少なくとも 1 人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を 、支払いサーバーのメモリ内にコンパイルする段階と、

特定の顧客に関連するトランザクション情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、支払いサーバーにおいて受信し、かつ、該トランザクション情報を記憶する段階と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、顧客へ送信する段階と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を、コンピュータネットワークを介して受信し、かつ、該選択を記憶する段階と、

選択された金融アカウント情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、前記商店主/請

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求書作成者へ、または、該商店主 / 請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへ送信する 段階と

を具備することを特徴とする方法。

#### 【請求項32】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項31に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項33】

前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも2つを、1つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合する段階をさらに具備し、

前記回収段階は、前記統合型データベースを検索する段階を含むことを特徴とする請求項3 1 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項34】

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択する 段階と、

部分集合を顧客に提示する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項31に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項35】

前記アカウントの部分集合は、商店主/請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むことを特徴とする請求項34に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項36】

2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項31に記載の方法。

# 【請求項37】

1 つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 3 1 に記載の方法

#### 【請求項38】

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てる段階とをさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 3 1 に記載の方法。

## 【請求項39】

前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも 1 つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 3 1 に記載の方法。

## 【請求項40】

顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断する段階と、

顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項31に記載の方法。

## 【請求項41】

前記顧客を登録する段階は、該顧客のPIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値を捕捉する段階をさらに含むことを特徴とする請求項40に記載の方法。

# 【請求項42】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サン プルを含むことを特徴とする請求項41に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項43】

前記PIN、PINアドレス、バイオメトリック測定値のうちの少なくとも1つを、PI

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N、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項41に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項44】

トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント情報からの利用可能 残高値と比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項31に記載の方法。

## 【請求項45】

前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項44 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項46】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの支払いを容易にするための方法であって、

複数の金融機関から受信される、少なくとも 1 人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を 、支払いサーバーのメモリ内にコンパイルする段階と、

特定の顧客に関連するトランザクション情報を受信する段階と、

前記トランザクション情報を支払いサーバーへ送信し、かつ、該トランザクション情報を 記憶する段階と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、インターフェース上に表示する段階と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を受信し、かつ、該選択を記憶する段階と、

選択された 1 つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者へ、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへ送信する段階と を具備することを特徴とする方法。

#### 【請求項47】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項48】

前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも2つを、1つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合する段階をさらに具備し、

前記回収段階は、前記統合型データベースを検索する段階を含むことを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

## 【請求項49】

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択する 段階と、

部分集合を顧客に提示する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

# 【請求項50】

前記アカウントの部分集合は、商店主 / 請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むことを特徴とする請求項 4 9 に記載の方法。

# 【請求項51】

2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

## 【請求項52】

1つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法

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# 【請求項53】

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てる段階とをさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項54】

前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも1つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項55】

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顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断する段階と、

顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

# 【請求項56】

前記顧客を登録する段階は、該顧客のPIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値を捕捉する段階をさらに含むことを特徴とする請求項55に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項57】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サン プルを含むことを特徴とする請求項56に記載の方法。

# 【請求項58】

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前記PIN、PINアドレス、バイオメトリック測定値のうちの少なくとも1つを、PIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項56に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項59】

トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント情報からの利用可能 残高値と比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

## 【請求項60】

前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 5 9 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項61】

前記インターフェースは、端末、スマート端末、スマートボックス、キーパッド、LCDディスプレイ、磁気カード読み取り装置、または、タッチパッドを含むことを特徴とする請求項46に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項62】

前記商店主 / 請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントのみが、インターフェース上に表示されることを特徴とする請求項 4 6 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項63】

顧客による直接的な請求書の支払いを容易にするための方法であって、

商店主/請求書作成者から、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサから、特定の顧客に関連する請求書情報を受信しかつ記憶する段階と、

複数の金融機関からのコンパイルされた顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、顧客データベースから回収する段階と、

顧客の金融アカウントのうちの 1 つ以上との請求書支払いインターフェースを、顧客に提示する段階と、

顧客による、請求書の支払いについての金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を 受信しかつ記憶する段階と、

選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、商店主/請求書作成者に、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサに提供する段階とを具備することを特徴とする方法。

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#### 【請求項64】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項65】

前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも2つを、1つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合する段階をさらに具備し、

前記回収段階は、前記統合型データベースを検索する段階を含むことを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項66】

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択する 段階と、

部分集合を顧客に提示する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

## 【請求項67】

前記アカウントの部分集合は、商店主 / 請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むことを特徴とする請求項 6 6 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項68】

2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項69】

1 つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 6 3 に記載の方法

#### 【請求項70】

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化する段階と、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てる段階とをさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項71】

前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも 1 つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 6 3 に記載の方法。

## 【請求項72】

顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断する段階と、

顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録する段階と

をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項63に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項73】

前記顧客を登録する段階は、該顧客のPIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値を捕捉する段階をさらに含むことを特徴とする請求項72に記載の方法。

## 【請求項74】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サン プルを含むことを特徴とする請求項73に記載の方法。

# 【請求項75】

前記PIN、PINアドレス、バイオメトリック測定値のうちの少なくとも1つを、PIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項73に記載の方法。

## 【請求項76】

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トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント情報からの利用可能 残高値と比較する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項 6 3 に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項77】

前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示する段階をさらに具備することを特徴とする請求項76に記載の方法。

#### 【請求項78】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの支払いを容易にするための装置であって、

プロセッサと、

プロセッサを制御するための処理命令を記憶するメモリと

を具備し、前記プロセッサは、

複数の金融機関からの、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリ内にコンパイルするための処理命令と、

特 定 の 顧 客 に 関 連 す る ト ラ ン ザ ク シ ョ ン 情 報 を 受 信 し か つ 記 憶 す る た め の 処 理 命 令 と 、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収するための処理命令と、

金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示するための処理命令と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を受信しかつ記憶するための 処理命令と、

選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、商店主/請求書作成者に、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサに提供するための処理命令とによって作用することを特徴とする装置。

#### 【請求項79】

前記金融アカウント情報は、クレジットカード、チャージカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、要求払い預金、銀行当座預金、仮想支払いアカウント、仮想キャッシュアカウント、電信送金ネットワーク、金融電子データ交換(FEDI)、電子小切手、自動手形交換所(ACH)、および、ストアードバリュー型ツールのうちの少なくとも1つに対応することを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

# 【請求項80】

前記プロセッサは、前記複数の金融アカウント情報データベースのうちの少なくとも2つを、1つの統合型金融アカウント情報データベースの形に統合するように作用することを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項81】

前記プロセッサは、

複数の顧客の金融アカウントの中から、 1 つ以上の金融アカウントの部分集合を選択するように作用し、

部分集合を顧客に提示するように作用する

ことを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

## 【請求項82】

前記プロセッサは、商店主/請求書作成者にとって受諾可能な金融アカウントを含むアカウントの部分集合を選択するように作用することを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

## 【請求項83】

前記プロセッサは、2つ以上の金融アカウントが選択される場合に、1つのトランザクションについての支払いを、2つ以上の金融アカウント間で分割するように作用することを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項84】

前記プロセッサは、1つ以上の金融アカウントが顧客に提示される場合の順序を、金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示する前に選択するように作用することを特徴とする請求項78 に記載のシステム。 10

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# 【請求項85】

前記プロセッサは、

前記選択された顧客の金融アカウント情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者に、または、支払いプロセッサに提供する前に暗号化するように作用し、

金融アカウント情報を、顧客に提示される前に暗号化するか、または、切り捨てるように 作用する

ことを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

### 【請求項86】

前記プロセッサは、前記複数の金融機関のうちの少なくとも 1 つからの前記金融アカウント情報を更新するように作用することを特徴とする請求項 7 8 に記載のシステム。

【請求項87】

前記プロセッサは、

顧客が登録された顧客であるか否かを判断するように作用し、

顧客がまだ登録されていなければ、顧客を登録するように作用する

ことを特徴とする請求項78に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項88】

前記プロセッサは、登録の一部として、該顧客のPIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値を捕捉するように作用することを特徴とする請求項87に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項89】

前記バイオメトリック測定値は、音声パターン、指紋、網膜スキャン、または、筆跡サンプルを含むことを特徴とする請求項88に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項90】

前記プロセッサは、前記PIN、PINアドレス、バイオメトリック測定値のうちの少なくとも1つを、PIN、PINアドレス、または、バイオメトリック測定値がそれぞれ記憶されたデータベースと比較するように作用することを特徴とする請求項88に記載のシステム。

#### 【請求項91】

前記プロセッサは、トランザクション情報からのトランザクション値を、金融アカウント 情報からの利用可能残高値と比較するように作用することを特徴とする請求項78に記載 のシステム。

# 【請求項92】

前記プロセッサは、前記トランザクション値以上の個々のまたは組み合わされた利用可能 資金残高を備えた金融アカウントのみを、顧客に提示するように作用することを特徴とす る請求項 9 1 に記載のシステム。

## 【請求項93】

顧客に提示された複数の請求書から選択された請求書についての、顧客の金融アカウントからの支払いを容易にするための装置であって、 プロセッサと、

プロセッサを制御するための処理命令を記憶するメモリと

を具備し、前記プロセッサは、

複数の金融機関からの、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリ内にコンパイルするための処理命令と、

複数の請求書の各々についての請求書情報を顧客に提示するための処理命令と、

選択された特定の支払うべき請求書を指定する選択情報を、顧客から受信するための処理命令と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収するための処理命令と、

金融アカウント情報を顧客に提示するための処理命令と、

選択された請求書を支払うために用いるべき特定のアカウントを指定する選択情報を、顧客から受信するための処理命令と

によって作用することを特徴とする装置。

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### 【請求項94】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの、コンピュータネットワークを介しての支払いを容易にするための装置であって、

プロセッサと、

プロセッサを制御するための処理命令を記憶するメモリと

を具備し、前記プロセッサは、

複数の金融機関から受信される、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を 、支払いサーバーのメモリ内にコンパイルするための処理命令と、

特定の顧客に関連するトランザクション情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、支払いサーバーにおいて受信し、かつ、該トランザクション情報を記憶するための処理命令と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収するための処理命令と、

金融アカウント情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、顧客へ送信するための処理 命令と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を、コンピュータネットワークを介して受信し、かつ、該選択を記憶するための処理命令と、

選択された金融アカウント情報を、コンピュータネットワークを介して、前記商店主/請求書作成者へ、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへ送信するための処理命令と

によって作用することを特徴とする装置。

## 【請求項95】

顧客の金融アカウントから、商店主/請求書作成者への、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへの支払いを容易にするための装置であって、

プロセッサと、

プロセッサを制御するための処理命令を記憶するメモリと

を具備し、前記プロセッサは、

複数の金融機関から受信される、少なくとも1人の顧客についての金融アカウント情報を 、支払いサーバーのメモリ内にコンパイルするための処理命令と、

特定の顧客に関連するトランザクション情報を受信するための処理命令と、

前記トランザクション情報を支払いサーバーへ送信し、かつ、該トランザクション情報を記憶するための処理命令と、

顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、メモリから回収するための処理命令と、

金融アカウント情報を、インターフェース上に表示するための処理命令と、

顧客による、金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を受信し、かつ、該選択を記憶するための処理命令と、

選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、前記商店主/請求書作成者へ、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサへ送信するための処理命令とによって作用することを特徴とする装置。

#### 【請求項96】

顧客による直接的な請求書の支払いを容易にするための装置であって、

プロセッサと、

プロセッサを制御するための処理命令を記憶するメモリと

を具備し、前記プロセッサは、

商店主 / 請求書作成者から、または、該商店主 / 請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサから、特定の顧客に関連する請求書情報を受信しかつ記憶するための処理命令と、

複数の金融機関からのコンパイルされた顧客についての金融アカウント情報を、顧客データベースから回収するための処理命令と、

顧客の金融アカウントのうちの 1 つ以上との請求書支払いインターフェースを、顧客に提示するための処理命令と、

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顧客による、請求書の支払いについての金融アカウントのうちの少なくとも1つの選択を 受信しかつ記憶するための処理命令と、

選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントの情報を、商店主/請求書作成者に、または、該商店主/請求書作成者と関連した支払いプロセッサに提供するための処理命令とによって作用することを特徴とする装置。

#### 【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

# 【発明の属する技術分野】

本発明は、コンピュータ化された請求書作成(billing)および支払いシステムに関する。詳細には、本発明は、顧客の情報、指紋、網膜スキャン、音声、または、他のバイオメトリック(biometric)測定値および/または独自の個人識別子(uniquepersonalidentifier:"UPI")を、多数の金融機関(financial institutions)から統合された金融アカウント情報(financial account information)とマッチングし、かつ、請求書(bills)やインボイスや債務の支払いに用いるための金融アカウントを選択する(または、顧客に選択させることを許容する)自動クレジットカード支払いシステムに関する。

# [0002]

#### 【従来の技術】

継続的なサービスを提供する大部分の会社は、自分たちの顧客に自動的かつ定期的に請求書作成を行うことができる。支払いの確実性の他に、顧客保持率を高めるために、かつ、支払い期限が過ぎた勘定についての請求書作成を反復する必要性を回避するために、会社は、ますます、顧客のクレジットカードを通して支払いを行うという選択肢を顧客に提供する。しかしながら、自分たちが使用を希望するクレジットカードを顧客が回収する必要性は、自分たちのクレジットカード番号を請求書に書き込みかつこれを郵送することが安全ではないという顧客の認識と結びついて、この便利な支払い方法を多数の顧客に使用させることを妨げている。

#### [0003]

第二に、顧客が商品またはサービスをインターネット上で購入することを希望すれば、顧客は、通常は、支払い形式として、自分たちのクレジットカードのアカウント番号を商店主(merchant)に与える。無数の商店主がインターネット上に存在するので、消費者とクレジットカード組織とにとって詐欺行為を規制することは、ますます困難になりつつある。消費者が商店主のサイト上の"送信"を押した瞬間から、消費者のクレジットカードは公表される。消費者のカード番号は、商店主へ行く途中で加害者により傍受され得るか、または、いったん受信されれば商店主のデータベースから"ハッキング"され得る。さらに、無数の商店主が存在し、かつ、その数が指数関数的に増大しているという事実は、商店主が合法的な会社でありかつクレジットカード詐欺行為を犯すために存在しているのではない旨を保証することを事実上不可能にしている。

## [0004]

第三に、従来型の(bricks‐and‐mortal)商店主によって顧客が商品またはサービスを購入する場合に、顧客は自分のクレジットカードを身に着けて持っている必要があり、かつ、顧客は、クレジットカードを処理できるように商店主に渡す必要がある。この従来的なシナリオの場合に、消費者は、クレジットカードが損失したりまたは盗難されたりする被害を受け易い。消費者は、商店主または従業員がクレジットカード番号を詐欺行為的な方法に使用しようと決めた場合にも被害を受け易い。

# [0005]

#### 【発明が解決しようとする課題】

したがって、顧客の金融アカウント情報を該顧客のUPIと効率的にマッチングし、実際のカードを提示せずにクレジットカードまたは他の金融アカウントによって商品またはサービスを購入することを顧客に可能にさせる能力を顧客に提供するシステムの必要性があ

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る。このシステムの目的は、顧客の安全性およびプライバシーの関心を最適化することである。

#### [0006]

【課題を解決するための手段】

本発明は、請求書の支払い、購入、または、他の支払いのためのシステムおよびこれに関連した方法のためのものであり、加入者や、顧客や、潜在的な顧客や、顧客候補や、または、受取勘定(これらについては、本明細で、母べースを、クレジットカードはである。であれてのような金融アカウント情報についての複数の非統合型データベースを、クレジットは、これの形式の形式の形式のから、または、近想支払いでは、から、のいずれかと比較する。(クレジットカード、デビッカード、がカード、がカード、がカード、があるように関連を表別である。では、カード、があるように関連を表別である。では、カードのようなのでは、では、カードのようなのでは、カードのようなが、カードのようなが、カードが、自動手形交換所(ACH)、サードパーティーによる支払い製品、サイバカーを、ウェッシュ社やトランスポイント社(MSFDC社)のようなストアードバリュー型ツールなどを含いたができる。ではない)多くの形式の金融アカウント情報を、支払いを行うために用いることができる。

# [0007]

前記システムは、商店主や請求書作成者や支払いプロセッサのデータベース内に含まれる顧客のUPIまたは顧客識別データを、1つ以上の金融アカウントデータベース内に含まれる金融アカウント情報とマッチングし、かつ、顧客が2つ以上の金融アカウントの保持者である場合には、どの1つ以上の金融アカウントを提示すべきかを選択する。

#### [0008]

前記選択された1つまたは複数の金融アカウントは、送金票、更新申込書、インボイス、または、他の支払いまたは加入を懇請するマーケティングマテリアル(marketing material)のような商業通信上に含めて商店主または請求書作成者に提供される。任意的に、商店主/請求書作成者は、用いられる特定の金融アカウントまたは番号を知る必要はない。例えば、商業通信は、購入について請求すべき顧客についての、クレジットカードのような金融アカウントの発行者と、特定のクレジットカードアカウントのような特定の金融アカウントを含むことができるが、アカウント番号を暗号化された形式でのみ含むことができ、これにより、安全性およびプライバシーが消費者に提供される。(暗号化技術およびレコードロケーター技術の利用を含むが、これらに制限されるものではない)多くの形式の安全性情報が公知であり、かつ、用いられ得る。

## [0009]

例えば、使用される金融アカウントがクレジットカードアカウントである場合のトランザクションにおいて、顧客は、暗号化された形式で提供されたクレジットカード番号を用いることについての自分の承認を示すことができ、したがって、クレジットカードにより支払う場合に自ら情報を提供する必要はない。商店主 / 請求書作成者は、クレジットカードアカウントによる支払いについての顧客の指示または認可によってインボイスまたは他の提案を収集し、かつ、任意的に、これをサービス事務局へ提出し、該サービス事務局は、クレジットカードアカウント番号を解読し、かつ、選択されたクレジットカードアカウントに対する請求書作成を処理する。このことは、顧客のクレジットカードおよびこれに関連した情報における顧客のプライバシーを維持するのに役立つ。

# [0010]

図 2 に示されるように、本発明のシステムは、多数の発行者と多数の商店主との間の媒介として機能する。図 2 に示されるように、発行者は、自分たちのアカウント情報リストを、本発明による中央のアカウント管理 / 統合システムに提供し、該アカウント管理 / 統合システムは、前述したように、顧客識別データを商店主から受信し、かつ、商店主に提供

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するための金融アカウント情報をマッチングしかつ選択する。

#### [0011]

幾つかの実施形態において、前記システムは、例えば多数のクレジットカードアカウント情報を含む。マスター金融アカウントリスータを設まった金融アカウント情報を含む。これた金融アカウント情報を含むれた金融アカウント情報を含むれた金融アカウント情報を含むれた金融アカウント情報を含むれた金融アカウント情報を高された金融アカウント情報を高速が、一夕ではデータで、これにより、金融アカウンステムをでは他のの選択されたの金融アカウンステムをである。前記コンピュータシスをでは他のの選択する。シータンスを表して、一部分とと対する。から高店主には、関連づけられた金融アカウント番号をは、かつて高店主には、関連づけられた金融アカウント番号をの選択および認可の後に、原本の選択された金融アカウント番号を解読することできる。を処理するために、暗号化された金融アカウント番号を解読することできる。

#### [0012]

あるいは、金融アカウント情報のマスター統合型データベースの代わりに、前記システムは、顧客の金融アカウント情報を捜し出すために、内部のまたは遠隔的な複数の金融アカウント情報データベースは、個々の発行者のデータベース、および / または、多数の金融アカウント発行者からの情報を含む部分的統合型データベースを含むことができる。

#### [0013]

## [0014]

あるいは、多数の金融アカウント発行者からの多数の金融アカウント情報を、1つのマスター金融アカウントデータベースまたはリストの形に統合する段階の代わりに、前記方法は、金融アカウントリストの部分集合を統合する段階、このような複数のリストを、商店主/請求書作成者の顧客データベース内の各顧客についての少なくとも1つの金融アカウント番号を関連づけるために、個々の金融アカウント発行者からのリストの他に選択する段階、または、様々な発行者により利用可能にされた個々の金融アカウントリストを複数選択する段階を含むことができる。

#### [0015]

他の実施形態において、本発明は、コンピュータネットワークを介しての(例えば、インターネットを介しての)自動支払いを提供するためのシステムおよび方法に向けられる。 前記システムは、種々の金融機関に接続されており、かつ、種々の顧客についてのアカウ

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ント情報のファイルを作成するために、これらの機関からデータを受信しかつコンパイルする自動支払いサーバーを含む。顧客が商店主のウェブサイトから商品を購入することを、または、請求書を支払うことを希望する場合に、顧客は、支払いサーバーへルーティングされ、かつ、支払いサーバーによりコンパイルされた通りのアカウント情報を提示される。前記顧客は金融アカウントのうちの1つ以上を選択し、かつ、支払いサーバーは、トランザクションを完了するために、適切な金融情報を商店主の支払いプロセッサへ送信する。こうして、クレジットカード番号は、インターネットを介して送信されることもなく、また、商店主のサイト上に記憶されることもなく、好ましくは安全な回線を介して支払いサーバーと支払いプロセッサとの間で送信されるのみである。

## [0016]

【発明の実施の形態】

本発明についてのより十分な理解のために、添付図面と関連して取り上げる以下の説明が参照される。

[0017]

本発明の好ましい実施形態について、今から図面を参照して説明する。簡略化のために、 これらの図面および説明の多くがクレジットカードアカウントを伴う本発明の利用法を説 明しているが、本発明は、決してクレジットカードアカウントに制限されるものではない

[0018]

図3を参照すると、本発明の一実施形態による自動支払いシステム50が示される。このシステム50は、多数の形式の金融アカウントの任意の組み合わせを利用することができ、かつ、簡略化のためにクレジットカードアカウントを参照して説明する。このシステム50については、会社(例えば、事務局(service bureau))により運営することができ、かつ、データベース統合/分類サブシステム55と、マスタークレジットカードデータベース57と、識別子マッチング/選択サブシステム59と、任意的なクレジットカードアカウント番号暗号化サブシステム53とを含む。

[ 0 0 1 9 ]

自動支払いシステム50は、n人のクレジットカード発行者(issuers)60。~60n、と関連して用いられる。n人のクレジットカード発行者の各々は、当業者にはム上に自分のクレジットカード情報リスト66。~66n、を維持する。これらのクレジットカード情報リスト66。~66n、を維持する。これらのクレジットカード情報リスト66。~66n、を維持する。これらのクレジットカード情報リスト660、~66n、を維持する。これらのクレジットカード保持者に関する関連クレジットカード番号や金融機関であれば、(ステアカウント情報や人口統計的(demographic)情報の他に含む。好ましいスをアカウント情報や人口統計的(demographic)情報の他に含む。が、(スマートカード、バンクカード、銀行当座預金(checking accounts)、および、インターネットや他のオンライン商業トランザクション(on‐line commercial transactions)のために用いられる仮想支払いアカウント(Virtual payment account)を含むが、これらに制限されるものにはない)他の金融アカウント情報または装置を、クレジットカードアカウントの代わりに、または、クレジットカードアカウントとの任意の組み合わせで使用できることを理解/認識するだろう。

[0020]

自動支払いシステム50は、クレジットカード情報リスト66を、送信媒体68を介して、n人のクレジットカード発行者60から受信する。媒体68を介したこの情報転送については、(モデム接続、高速データ回線、インターネット、または、テープまたはディスクのような記憶媒体の物理的転送を含むが、これらに制限されるものではない)多くの通信方法により達成することができる。この転送は、契約上の関係により認可され、かつ、金銭上のインセンティブ(financial incentives)を含むことができる。顧客のクレジットカード情報を捜し出す可能性を高めるために、可能な限り多くの

クレジットカード発行者からのクレジットカードアカウント情報を含むことが好ましい。プログラムされたコンピュータシステムの形式であり得るデータベース統合 / 分類サブシステム 5 5 は、クレジットカード発行者 6 0 。~60 n から提供されたクレジットカード情報 6 6 。~66 n を分類しかつ統合し、次に、分類されかつ統合されたデータが、マスタークレジットカード情報データベース 5 7 に記憶される。このデータベースは、コンピュータシステムの大容量記憶装置上に存在することができる。もちろん、処理要素および情報記憶要素は、フォールトトレランス(fault tolerance)やロードバランシングのように、不慮の事故に備えるために多数のコンピューティング装置上に存在することもできる。

#### [0021]

自動支払いシステム50は、クレジットカードアカウント情報を、m人のの1人以下の商店主人情報を、m人のの1人以下のの1人以下のの1人以下のの1人以下の1分に出りません。では、からないに用いられる。m人の商店主人情報をできる。これらのリスト76をコンピュータ上に推持する。これらのリスト76をコンピュータ上に推持する。これらのリスト76をコンピュータ上にができる。これらのリスト76をコンピュータ上にができる。または、社会保障のような情報を含むのである。ないのでは、一次の商店主人情では、できるのは、できるがでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでは、できるのでであるが、コンピュータシステムの形式でであるが、コンピュータシステムの形式でであるが、は、公りにおいて、できるのでは、当時では、できるのででは、からな従来的なマッチングアルゴリズムを用いて実行することができる。

#### [0022]

2つ以上のクレジットカード保持者識別子が所定の顧客とマッチングする(すなわち、顧 客が2つ以上のクレジットカードを有している)場合には、マッチングするクレジットカ ード識別子のうちの1つ以上が、マッチング/選択サブシステム59により選択されかつ 特徴づけられる。この選択は、或る選択/提示規則にしたがって進行する。実例として、 選択されるクレジットカードは、最も多いクレジットカードをデータベース内に有する発 行者により発行されたクレジットカード(すなわち、最も"普及している"または優勢な クレジットカード)であるという簡単な選択規則が用いられる。あるいは、一実施形態に おいては、他の発行者についてのクレジットカードアカウントの数に対する各発行者につ いてのクレジットカードアカウントの総数と、マスタークレジットカードデータベース 5 7内のクレジットカードアカウントの総数とに基づいて、選択は、比例配分(pro r ata)ベースで、または、他のアルゴリズムによって行われる。これにより、例えば、 統合型(consolidated)データベース内においてクレジットカードアカウン トの総数の25%を占めるクレジットカード発行者は、自身と関連するクレジットカード アカウントを、該発行者のものを含む多数のクレジットカードアカウント番号を有する顧 客についての機会の25%だけ選択してもらう。2つ以上のマッチングする関連クレジッ トカードアカウントから、 1 つの関連クレジットカードアカウント番号を選択する他の方 法は、選択される関連クレジットカードアカウント番号とクレジットカード使用量情報と を 比 較 し て 、 使 用 量 に 基 づ き 顧 客 の 主 要 ク レ ジ ッ ト カ ー ド を 判 断 し 、 か つ 、 顧 客 が 最 も 頻 繁 に用いるクレジットカードを選択することである。 アカウントを選択するさらに他の方 法は、金融トランザクションと関連した料金を考慮に入れ、かつ、最も低い料金を請求す る金融機関を選択することができる。あるいは、選択プロセスは、履歴データを考慮に入 れ、かつ、特定の商店主/請求書作成者にとって最善の結果または成功をもたらす金融機 関を選択することができる。最後に、この選択を、選択プロセスにおける優先権を受ける ためにクレジットカード発行者により支払われた料金の結果として行うことができる。

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#### [0023]

代替的実施形態において、2つ以上のクレジットカード、または、全てのクレジットカードを含めて選択することができ、かつ、顧客には、支払いを行うためにどのカードを用いるべきかを選択するオプションが与えられる。この実施形態において、全てのマッチングするクレジットカードアカウント番号を選択しかつ顧客に提示することができる。選択されたクレジットカードアカウントについては、以下の書式のようなチェックボックスを備えたリストの状態で顧客に提示することができる:

支払いを希望するカードを選択して下さい:

シティバンク ビザ(CITIBANK VISA)

ディスカバー(DISCOVER)

アメリカンエキスプレス (AMERICAN EXPRESS)

本発明の好ましい実施形態においては、選択されたクレジットカードアカウントを、クレジットカードの選択を決定するためのシステムにより用いられる基準と同様の基準に基づいて順序づけ、かつ、ユーザーに提示することもできる(例えば、データベース内の最も普及しているカード、顧客が最も頻繁に用いるクレジットカード、最も低い料金を請求するカード、または、最も高い料金を支払った発行者のカードを、他のクレジットカードよりも上位に、または、先立って提示することができる)。

#### [0024]

商業通信(commercial communication)上に含むべき、選択されたクレジットカードアカウントの1つまたは複数の番号は、クレジットカードアカウント番号暗号化システム53により暗号化される。特定の暗号化方法は、ファインダー番号(finder number)、レコードロケーター(record locator)、或る形式の高レベル暗号化、または、他の任意の暗号化技術を含むことができる。暗号化が好ましい実施形態の要素である一方で、暗号化方法は、十分な安全性を達成する任意の方法であってもよく、かつ、特定の暗号化方法は、本明細書内で述べられるシステムおよび方法の物質的要素を構成しない。さらに、クレジットカード情報については、マスタークレジットカード情報データベースに記憶される前に、クレジットカード発行者60からの暗号化形式で暗号化しかつ提供することができる。

# [0025]

図4は、本発明の暗号化されたアカウント情報(簡略化のために、より具体的には、暗号 化されたクレジットカード情報)の使用を示す。一実施形態において、商店主/請求書作 成者の顧客識別データベース76内の各顧客について、顧客と関連する暗号化されたクレ ジットカードアカウント番号は、商店主 / 請求書作成者 7 0 <sub>×</sub> から顧客への通信の一部と して、商店主/請求書作成者70、により顧客に提供される(段階80)。あるいは、本 発明の従来型の(bricks-and-mortal)実施形態において(この場合に 、従来型の商店主は"顧客情報データベース"を有していない)、顧客は、支払い処理イ ン タ ー フ ェ ー ス ( 例 え ば 、 端 末 ま た は コ ン ピ ュ ー タ ) を 経 て 、 中 央 デ ー タ ベ ー ス 5 7 へ 直 接的に通信を行う。段階90において、顧客は、クレジットカードによる支払いを認可す べきか否かを決定する。この認可段階は、2つ以上のクレジットカードが顧客に提示され た場合にどのクレジットカードを用いるべきかを選択することをさらに含むことができる 。 顧 客 が こ の よ う な 支 払 い を 認 可 し か つ 商 業 通 信 を 商 店 主 / 請 求 書 作 成 者 ま た は 他 の 支 払 い処理エンティティへ返信すれば、暗号化されたクレジットカードアカウント番号が、段 階100において解読される。暗号化された番号については、解読および/または支払い 処理のために、システム50により、クレジットカード発行者や支払いプロセッサまたは 商店主へ送信することができる。解読後に、クレジットカードアカウント番号は、商店主 / 請求書作成者への支払いを処理するために用いられ(段階110)、かつ、支払いが、 トランザクション処理の際にシステムを用いるために必要なあらゆる支払いとともに、特 定の商店主/請求書作成者へ行われる。段階90において、顧客が支払いを認可しなけれ ば、段階100,110は単に実行されない。

# [0026]

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本明細書内(例えば、図3および図4)で説明される本発明のシステムおよび方法の要素については、本発明について意図された範囲を保持した状態で修正できることを理解すべきである。例えば、統合型クレジットカードアカウントデータベースは、アカウント情報を含むものとして説明されている。しかしながら、商店主/請求書作成者の顧客識別データについては、あるいは、個々のクレジットカード発行者のクレジットカードアカウントデータベースおよび/または1つ以上の統合型データベースを含む多数のデータベースに対してシリアルにマッチングすることもできる。個々のまたは統合型のデータベースは、全ての発行者の部分集合であるクレジットカード発行者の或る番号を表す。

#### [0027]

図5は、本発明の代替的実施形態の自動支払いシステム50'を示す。この代替的実施形態のシステム50'は、シリアルマッチングサブシステム59'と、選択/提示サ所ステム59'とを含む。シリアルマッチングサブシステムは、商店主から、または、9を介で受信された顧客識別データを、多数の発行者60の多数のクレジットカードデータでス66と比較する。シリアルマッチングサブシステムは、さらに、顧客識別データを、アカウント番号の担か、発行者3、4)から統合された情報を含む統合型データで、タベース58と比較する。シリアルマッチングサブシステムは、前述したように、有ないまず書作成者の顧客識別データと、個々のデータベース66および部分的統合型(partially consolidated)データベース58内に含まれるアカウント保持者識別データとのマッチングを捜し出す。いったん、マッチングは、前述した選択規則にしたがって、アカウント番号のうちの1つ以上を選択する。

# [ 0 0 2 8 ]

今から図6を参照すると、商店主/請求書作成者に適用される際の、本発明の自動クレジ ットカード支払いシステムの実施形態のブロック図が示される。この取り決めにおいて、 多数の商店主/請求書作成者150は、多数のクレジットカードアカウントデータベース 156(このうちの1つ以上が、前述したような部分的統合型データベースであってもよ い)を処理するために本発明のシステムを用いる注文処理所(fulfillment house) 152 およびサービス事務局(service bureau) 154 を用 いる。種々の商店主/請求書作成者および/または商店主/請求書作成者グループに供給 するために、2つ以上の注文処理所152を利用することができ、または、各請求書作成 者 1 5 0 に対して 1 つの注文処理所 1 5 2 を用いることもできる。商店主/請求書作成者 1 5 0 は、自分たちの顧客ファイル 1 5 8 および外部リスト 1 6 0 (例えば、顧客候補の リスト)の各々を、注文処理所152に提供する。サービス事務局154は、商店主/請 求書作成者の顧客ファイル 1 5 8 上の名前を、関連した金融アカウント情報とマッチング するために、本発明のシステムを用いる。クレジットカード情報を含む情報は、サービス 事 務 局 1 5 4 に よ り 多 数 の ク レ ジ ッ ト カ ー ド 発 行 者 1 5 6 か ら 統 合 さ れ 、 か つ 、 マ ス タ ー クレジットカードファイルに記憶される。あるいは、このクレジットカード情報について は、多数のクレジットカード発行者のデータベースからシリアルにアクセスすることがで きる。

# [ 0 0 2 9 ]

商店主 / 請求書作成者の顧客ファイル158および外部リスト160を、関連した金融アカウント情報とマッチングした後に、サービス事務局154は、マッチングするクレジットカードアカウント番号(ブロック162)を暗号化し、かつ、これらの番号を注文処理所152に提供する。図7のフローチャートには、捜し出されたクレジットカード情報の使用が示され、この図において、注文処理所152は、例えば、暗号化されたクレジットカードアカウント番号を商業通信上に提出することにより、暗号化されたクレジットカードアカウント情報を、マーケティングおよび請求書作成および / または更新(renewa1)の行動(efforts)において使用する(段階164)。段階165において、顧客は、自分たちのクレジットカードの使用を認可し、かつ、2つ以上が顧客に提示さ

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れた場合にはどのクレジットカードを用いるべきかを任意的に選択する。

#### [0030]

顧客が、暗号化されたクレジットカードアカウント情報を用いて、商業通信上で注文を行うと、これらの注文は収集され、かつ、暗号化された番号は、統合された注文ファイル内に入力されかつ統合される(段階166)。次に、統合された注文ファイル内の暗号化されたアカウント番号が解読され(段階170)、かつ、支払いが処理される(段階172)。

# [ 0 0 3 1 ]

今から図8および図9を参照すると、本発明の代替的実施形態が示される。この実施形態において、システム200は、コンピュータネットワーク(例えば、インターネット、LAN、WANなど)を介して用いるために設計される。システム200は、処理装置204と該処理装置により維持される顧客データベース206とを含む自動支払いサーバー202を含み、かつ、前述の自動支払いシステム50と多くの点で類似している。データベースは、種々の金融機関からのアカウント情報、および、種々の請求書作成者からの請求書情報を組み合わせる。

#### [0032]

自動支払いサーバー202は、適切な顧客インターフェース210を経て、それぞれの端末208において複数の顧客に接続され、かつ、これらの顧客と相互交流する(図8には、1つの端末のみが概略的に示される)。顧客インターフェースは、支払いオプションを選択するために用いられる基本的なアプリケーション、種々の請求書作成者からの請求書を検討する方法、および/または、これらの機能を組み合わせかつ顧客がアカウントを再構成設定(re‐configure)することを可能にするフルサービス(full‐service)インターフェースであってもよい。種々の形式のインターフェースを利用できることが、当業者には明らかとなるであろう。

#### [0033]

自動支払いサーバー202は、1つ以上の通信回線214を介して、1つ以上の商店主のサイト212とさらに接続される。より詳細に後述するように、少なくとも1つの回線214が、支払い情報の送信のために安全な回線であることが好ましい。

# [0034]

自動支払いサーバー202は、種々の金融機関220と、種々の請求書作成者222とに接続される。自動支払いサーバー202は、自動支払いシステム50と関連して前述したように、更新されたアカウント情報を含むアカウント情報を、送信媒体を介して金融機関から受信し、かつ、請求書作成情報を種々の請求書作成者から受信する。例えば、種々のユーティリティが、支払いサーバー202を経て、自分たちの顧客へ電子的に請求書を送信することができる。プログラムされたコンピュータシステムの形式であってもよいに事かである。プログラムされたコンピュータシステムの形式であってもよいに育動アカウント情報マージ/パージサブシステム226は、金融機関および請求書作成者により動請求書情報マージ/パージサブシステム226は、金融機関および請求書作成者により提供されたアカウント情報および請求書情報を分類しかつ統合し、次に、分類されかつ統合されたデータは、より詳細に後述するように、その後のアクセスのために顧客データベース206に記憶される。

# [ 0 0 3 5 ]

顧客端末208は、多くの様々な形式を取ることができ、かつ、多くの様々な方法で自動支払いサーバー202にアクセスすることができる。例えば、顧客は、従来型の端末や電子メールを経て、または、ウェブサイト上のバナー(banner)をクリックすることによりインターネットを介して、インタラクティブテレビであるウェブTV(登録商標)を通して、電話を介して、ダイレクトメールによって、または、他の任意の適切な方法で購入要請を送信することができる。一実施形態において、商店主のサイト212は、自動支払いサーバー202を通してトランザクションのための支払いを実施できる旨を示すバナーを掲示することができる。次に、より詳細に後述するように、顧客は、バナーをクリックすることができ、かつ、自動支払いサーバー202へ向けられ得る。

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[0036]

顧客インターフェース210は、自動支払いサーバー202が、インターネットまたは他のコンピュータネットワークを介して多数の顧客と同時に通信することを可能にする適切なインターフェースであることが好ましい。

[ 0 0 3 7 ]

今から図9を参照すると、自動支払いサーバー202の工程が、より詳細に示される。工 程は、顧客が商店主212と通信し、かつ、注文を行うかまたは商品またはサービスに対 して請求書を支払うことを要請することによりトランザクションを開始することによって 、段階300において始まる。一実施形態において、商店主のサイトは、自動支払いサー バー 2 0 2 の 埋 め 込 み 式 ( e m b e d d e d ) U R L を 有 す る バ ナ ー を 顧 客 に 提 示 す る か 、あるいは、商店主のサイトは、顧客が注文を行う時に該顧客を自動支払いサーバーへ自 動的に向けることができる。段階302において、顧客は自動支払いサーバー202にリ ンクされ、かつ、段階303において、該サーバーは、顧客がサーバーに登録されている か否かを判断する。顧客が登録されていなければ、工程は段階304へ進行し、かつ、顧 客は支払いサーバーに登録する。登録については、コンピュータネットワークを介して、 電話を介して、メールを介して、または、他の任意の適切な方法で実施することができ、 かつ、その後の全てのトランザクションについて、顧客の身元(identity)を検 証(verify)するために顧客から識別情報を受信することを伴う。例えば、顧客は 、自分たちの名前、住所などを、自分たちの母親の旧姓や社会保障番号などとともに提供 することができる。顧客は、バイオメトリック情報(例えば、指紋サンプル、筆跡サンプ ル、網膜スキャン、または、音声記録/パターン)をさらに提供することができる。いっ たん、顧客の身元が検証されると、従来技術において公知のように、顧客のためのパスワ ードが選択される(顧客により選択されるか、または、支払いサーバーによりランダムに 割り当てられる)。

[0038]

顧客が既に支払いサーバー202に登録されていれば、顧客は、段階303において、自分の名前およびパスワードを入力し、かつ、認証または検証の後に、顧客は、支払いトランザクションを続けることができる。

[0039]

商店主212は、段階305において、注文および/または支払いデータを、自動的にまたは支払いサーバー202により促された後に、支払いサーバー202へ送信する。データは、例えば、注文IDデータおよび/または顧客のUPIを含むことにより顧客を識別し、該注文IDデータおよび/または顧客のUPIもまた、顧客が支払いサーバーにアクセスした時に支払いサーバーへ送信されることが好ましい。あるいは、商店主のサイトは、支払いサーバーが顧客を特定の注文または支払い要請と関連づけることを可能にするために、顧客の名前または他の任意の識別データを送信することができる。

[0040]

て、顧客のUPIが記憶されかつ/または認証される。

#### [0041]

いったん、支払いサーバーが、顧客を注文または支払い要請と関連づけると、工程は段階 3 0 6 へ進行し、かつ、支払いサーバーは、顧客のアカウント情報を回収するために顧客 データベースにアクセスする。顧客のアカウント情報は、前述したように、種々のクレジ ットカード、デビットカード、スマートカード、バンクカード、銀行当座預金(chec king accounts)のような要求払い預金(demand deposit a c c o u n t s ) 、 仮 想 支 払 い ア カ ウ ン ト 、 電 信 送 金 ネ ッ ト ワ ー ク 、 金 融 電 子 デ ー タ 交 換 (financial electronic data interchange: FE DI)、電子小切手(Echeck)、自動手形交換所(Automated Clea ring House: ACH)、サードパーティーによる支払い製品、サイバーキャッ シュ(CyberCash)社やトランスポイント(TransPoint)社(MSF DC社)のようなノンバンク金融機関、ビザキャッシュ(VisaCash)やモンデッ クス (Mondex)のようなストアードバリュー型 (stored value)ツー ルなどという形式である。次に、段階308において、支払いサーバー202は、顧客ア カ ウ ン ト 情 報 を 顧 客 に 提 示 す る ( 図 1 0 ) 。 ア カ ウ ン ト 情 報 は 、 ア カ ウ ン ト 番 号 全 体 を 顧 客へ送信せずに、顧客にとっての種々の金融情報を識別する。例えば、クレジットカード の名前、クレジットカードの最後から数桁の数字など(例えば、"AmEx206543 ")のような一部の識別情報が送信される。アカウント情報は、種々のクレジットカード などを識別することの他に、利用可能残高情報、そのアカウントに対する最終更新日、最 後に支払いを行った日、限度額(credit limit)、トランザクションの詳細 などを含むことができる。

# [ 0 0 4 2 ]

段階310において、顧客は、1つ以上の支払いオプションを選択し、かつ、1つまたは複数の選択が、インターフェース210を経て、支払いサーバーへ送信される。したがって、実際のアカウント番号は、支払いサーバーと顧客との間で送信されない。

## [0043]

顧客は、2つ以上の金融アカウント(例えば、2つ以上のクレジットカード)間で支払いを分割することを選択することができる。さらに、支払いサーバーは、顧客、金融機関、特定の商店主、アカウント使用量、利用可能残高、利率などにより定義されるような或る特定の順序で、アカウントを顧客に提示することができる。

# [0044]

一実施形態において、支払いサーバー202は、適切な支払いオプションのみを顧客に提示する。例えば、購入総額が100ドルでありかつ顧客の銀行当座預金の残高が100ドル未満である場合に、支払いサーバーは、これをオプションとして顧客に提供しないことが好ましい。あるいは、この銀行当座預金を顧客に提示することができるが、この銀行当座預金については、このようなアカウントが特定のトランザクションのために適切ではないが該トランザクションを完了するために他の支払いオプションと関連して用いることができる旨を顧客に示すために、異なる色またはフォントで顧客に提示することができる。

#### [0045]

段階 3 1 2 において、支払いサーバー 2 0 2 は、認可を求める要請を、商店主のサイト 2 1 2 の支払いプロセッサへ送信する。前記支払いプロセッサは、顧客により選択された支払いオプションを含む。段階 3 1 4 において、顧客インターフェースは、支払いオプションが受諾可能であるか否かを判断する。例えば、顧客が、特定の商店主により受諾されないクレジットカードを選択した可能性がある。そうであれば、工程は段階 3 1 6 へ進行し、かつ、顧客には認可が失敗したことが通知される。その結果、フローは、顧客が他の支払いオプションを選択することを可能にするために段階 3 0 8 へ戻る。

## [0046]

段階314において支払いオプションが受諾可能であれば、工程は段階318へ進行し、かつ、かつ、顧客にはトランザクションが承認されたことが通知される。その結果、段階

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3 2 0 において、支払いサーバー 2 0 2 は、承認された注文または承認(Approval)を、好ましくは安全な回線を介して商店主のサイトまたは商店主の支払いプロセッサ 2 1 2 へ送信し、かつ、商店主は、顧客 2 0 8 と相互交流することにより注文に応じる。例えば、商店主のサイトは、商店主がまだ出荷情報を有していなければ該情報を要請することができ、または、トランザクションを完了するために必要な他の情報を要請することができる。次に、段階 3 2 2 において、支払いプロセッサは、適切な金融機関にアクセスしかつ支払い情報を送信し、これにより、顧客の預金口座に借方記入され、かつ、商店主の預金口座に貸方記入される。

[0047]

上記の段階を、音声認識および/またはデュアルトーンマルチ周波数(DTMF)トーン を提供するシステムのような双方向性を可能にする電話ネットワークを介しても実行でき ることが、当業者には明らかとなるであろう。従来技術において公知であるように、顧客 により入力された対応する番号を判断すべくDTMFトーンを解釈するための十分に公知 の適切なハードウェアを支払いサーバーが有している場合に、顧客は、電話機上の適切な キーを押すことによりユーザーIDおよびパスワードを入力することができる。これによ り、 顧客は、電話番号をダイヤルすることができ、入手可能な商品やサービスおよび/ま たは請求書のリストを聞くことができ、かつ、電話機上の適切なキーを押すことにより商 品、サービスおよび/または請求書のうちの1つ以上を選択することができる。支払いサ ーバーは、音声自動応答装置(interactive voice response: IVR)などのような十分に公知のインタラクティブシステムを通して、ユーザー名やP IN番号などのような識別データを入力するように顧客を促すことができる。いったん、 顧客の身元が検証されると、支払いサーバーは、トランザクションを完了するために使用 できるクレジットカードのリストを顧客に提示することができる。例えば、IVRソフト ウェアは、"あなたのビザ(Visa)アカウントを選択するためには1を押し、アメリ カンエキスプレス(American Express)を選択するためには 2 を押して 下さい"などを読み取ることができる。顧客は、自分の選択を支払いサーバーに信号で伝 えるために、電話機上の対応するキーを単に押すことができる。残りの処理は、前述した コンピュータネットワークの場合と同じである。こうして、支払いサーバー202は、電 話ネットワークを介して、顧客にとって利用可能となる。

[0048]

あるいは、通常のメールおよび/または電子メールを通して送信された注文書式を顧客が 返信することにより、メールを通して本発明を実施することができる。こうして、支払い サーバーは、予め印刷された注文書式を潜在的な顧客へ送信し、種々の入手可能な商品、 サービス、および/または、請求書に注意し、かつ、顧客データベース206によりコン パイルされるような該顧客の金融アカウントにも注意する。顧客は、商品、サービス、お よび/または、請求書のうちの1つ以上を選択し、書式上に印刷された顧客に特有の(c ustomer-specific)リストから支払いのための金融アカウントを選択し 、かつ、注文書式を支払いサーバー202へ返信する。次に、支払いサーバー202のオ ペレータはデータを入力し、または、このような電子メールを電子的に転送する場合には データがアップロードされる。支払いサーバーは、適切な商店主へデータを転送する。顧 客により選択された支払いオプションが適切でない場合(例えば、商店主がこの支払い形 式を受諾しない場合、または、利用可能残高が低過ぎる場合)には、顧客には、メール( 電子または通常)を通して、または、電話を経て通知が行われ、かつ、顧客は、他の支払 いオプションを選択することができる。いったん、支払いオプションが選択されると、残 りのトランザクションは、前述したコンピュータネットワークの場合の回線に沿って完了 する。

[0049]

代替的実施形態において、注文書式または請求書を受信した顧客は、前述し多内容と同じ方法で、書式上に提供された電話番号に電話することができ、かつ、電話を介してトランザクションを完了することができる。

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[0050]

他の実施形態において、端末208における顧客は、最初に商店主のサイトにアクセスせずに、支払いサーバー202にアクセスすることができる。次に、顧客には、自動請求書情報マージ / パージサブシステム226によりコンパイルされるような未処理の請求書を提示することができる(図11)。顧客は、支払うべき請求書のうちの1つ以上を選択することができ、次に、顧客には、図9に関して前述した工程と同様に、アカウント情報が提示される。

[0051]

本発明のシステムおよび方法が、顧客208と商店主212との間で、または、顧客208と支払いサーバー202との間でクレジットカード番号などを直接的に送信することを必要とせずに、コンピュータネットワークを介して、支払いトランザクションを実行することを可能にする旨が明らかとなるであろう。したがって、インターネットのような公衆ネットワークを介して、いかなるアカウント情報も送られない。アカウント情報は、金融機関と支払いサーバー202との間における安全な回線と、支払いサーバーと商店主の支払いプロセッサまたは商店主のサイトとの間における安全な回線とを介して送信される。さらに、多数の商店主はアカウント番号のデータベースを維持する必要がなくなり、これにより、情報は支払いサーバー202において維持される。個々の商店主にではなく1つの場所にデータベースを維持することは、詐欺行為の可能性をさらに低減させる。

[0052]

図12を参照すると、バイオメトリック識別子および/またはPINの使用を実施する一 実施形態による自動支払いシステム50が示される。バイオメトリック識別子および/ま たはPINは、従来型の(bricks-and-mortal)端末において収集され る。従来型の端末は、コンピュータ、ディジタルカメラ、スキャナ、レコーダー、または このような情報を捕捉することが可能な他の装置を含むことができる。自動支払いシス テム 5 0 は、バイオメトリック識別子および / またはPINを従来型の端末 8 4 、から受 信し、マッチング/選択サブシステム59は、マッチングするクレジットカード保持者識 別データを捜し出すために、バイオメトリック識別子および/またはPIN88、を、マ ス タ ー ク レ ジ ッ ト カ ー ド 情 報 デ ー タ ベ ー ス 5 7 内 の 記 録 と 比 較 す る 。 マ ッ チ ン グ / 選 択 サ ブシステム 5 9 は、データベース統合 / 分類サブシステム 5 5 のために用いられるものと 同じであるか、または、それとは別の、プログラムされたコンピュータシステムの形式で あってもよい。マッチング/選択サブシステム59において、商店主/請求書作成者のデ ー タ ベ ー ス か ら の 顧 客 と 、 ク レ ジ ッ ト カ ー ド ア カ ウ ン ト 保 持 者 と を マ ッ チ ン グ す る プ ロ セ スについては、当業者には公知であるような従来的なマッチングアルゴリズムを用いて実 行 す る こ と が で き る 。 マ ス タ ー ク レ ジ ッ ト カ ー ド 情 報 デ ー タ ベ ー ス 5 7 内 で マ ッ チ ン グ が 見つけられれば、PINが有効化(validate)される。

[0053]

本発明についての上記の説明から理解できるように、本発明は、(クレジットカード使用者のような)顧客や金融機関や商店主や請求書作成者にとっての多数の利点を提供する。金融機関にとっての利点は、詐欺行為の減少、クレジットカード使用量の増加、顧客保持率の上昇、および、料金収益の増加を含む。顧客にとっての利点は、便利さ、プライバシー、および、効率を含む。商店主/請求書作成者にとっての利点は、詐欺行為および窃盗の減少、顧客保持率の上昇、不良債権の減少、郵送費用の節約、および、顧客との関係の改善を含む。

[ 0 0 5 4 ]

本発明のシステムおよび方法については、支払いサーバーにより購入行動を識別しかつ記録できる目標マーケティングまたはクーポン計画と関連して用いることもできる。考えられ得る一実施形態において、支払いサーバー上に(クレジットカードアカウントを含む)金融アカウントを有する顧客は、自分たちの購入行動が追跡されかつ多種多様なビジネスおよび産業に提供されることに同意することができる。次に、これらのビジネスおよび産業は、割引、クーポン、または、消費者による過去の購入に基づく他の市場取引と引き換

えに、種々の顧客を目標とすることが好ましい。

[0055]

本発明により提供される他の利点は、消費者のための安全性および、消費者との関係ををしたがって、本明細書における本発明の好ましい実施形態によれば、消費者との関係を金融である金融機関および消費者を除いては、中央集権型の組織により実行されば、特定の立ち、実際には別々のエンティティ間できることを理解すべとである。である。でき、その一方で、他のエンティティが過程をである。でき、その一方で、他のエンティティが過程をである。でき、その一方で、他のエンティティが暗号化されたアカウントが直接的に主が書作成者に提供されるが、商店主/請求書作成者へアカウントが直接的にて用いるに、該商店主/請求書作成者は、本発明の範囲、おいての顧客の承認を受信すると、該商店主/請求書作成者は、解読に取りかかることができ、かつ、金融機関からの支払いを直接的処理することができる。

[0056]

例えば、ユーザーが自分の登録情報を変更することを可能にする能力のような、従来技術において公知である他の多くのユーザー機能を実施することができる。

[0057]

本発明についての幾つかの形式ついて説明してきた一方で、本発明の真意および範囲から 逸脱することなく種々の変更および改善を行うことができる旨が、当業者には明らかとな るであろう。

【図面の簡単な説明】

- 【図1】自動支払いシステムにおいて、多数の金融アカウント発行者を多数の商店主/請求書作成者とマッチングする場合に遭遇する問題を示すブロック図である。
- 【図2】自動支払いシステムにおいて、多数の金融アカウント発行者を多数の商店主/請求書作成者に効率的とマッチングする本発明の使用法を示すブロック図である。
- 【図3】本発明の自動クレジットカード支払い方法およびシステムを実行するための装置の好ましい実施形態のブロック図である。
- 【図4】図3の装置の使用法を示すフローチャートである。
- 【図5】本発明の代替的実施形態のブロック図である。
- 【図 6 】本発明の好ましい実施形態による、請求書作成者のために用いられる自動支払い システムのブロック図である。
- 【図7】図6の装置の使用法を示すフローチャートである。
- 【図8】本発明の代替的実施形態のブロック図である。
- 【図9】図8の装置の使用法を示すフローチャートである。
- 【 図 1 0 】 本 発 明 の 一 特 徴 に よ る 、 支 払 い サ ー バ ー へ の ア ク セ ス に 基 づ い て 顧 客 に 提 示 さ れ る イ ン タ ー フ ェ ー ス 表 示 を 示 す 図 で あ る 。
- 【図11】図10と同様の図である。
- 【図12】従来型の端末と、バイオメトリック識別子および / またはPINとを用いた、本発明の自動クレジットカード支払い方法およびシステムを実行するための装置の実施形態のブロック図である。

【符号の説明】

- 50,50',200 自動支払いシステム
- 5 3 クレジットカードアカウント番号暗号化サブシステム
- 5 5 データベース統合 / 分類サブシステム
- 57 マスタークレジットカードデータベース
- 5 9 識別子マッチング/選択サブシステム
- 59' シリアルマッチングサブシステム
- 5 9 " 選択/提示サブシステム

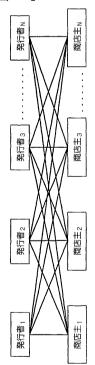
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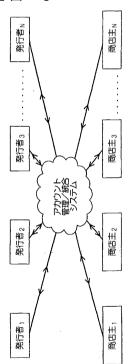
50

- 60 クレジットカード発行者
- 6 6 クレジットカード情報リスト
- 6 9 送信媒体
- 70 商店主/請求書作成者
- 7 6 顧客識別データリスト
- 84 従来型の端末
- 88 バイオメトリック識別子および/またはPIN
- 150 多数の商店主/請求書作成者
- 152 注文処理所
- 154 サービス事務局
- 156 多数のクレジットカードアカウントデータベース
- 158 顧客ファイル
- 160 外部リスト160
- 2 0 2 自動支払いサーバー
- 2 0 4 処理装置
- 206 顧客データベース
- 2 0 8 顧客端末
- 2 1 0 顧客インターフェース
- 2 1 2 商店主のサイト
- 2 1 4 回線
- 2 2 0 金融機関
- 222 請求書作成者
- 2 2 4 自動アカウント情報マージ/パージサブシステム
- 2 2 6 自動請求書情報マージ/パージサブシステム

# 【図1】

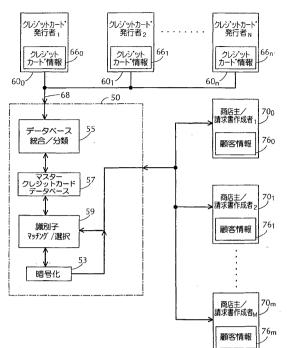


# 【図2】

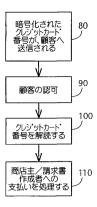


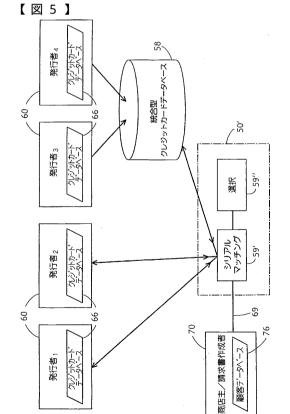
10



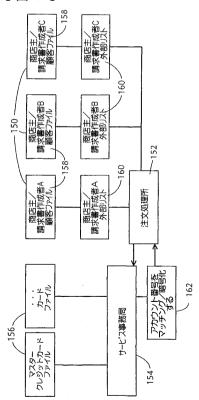


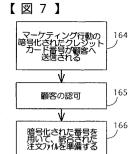
# 【図4】





# 【図6】



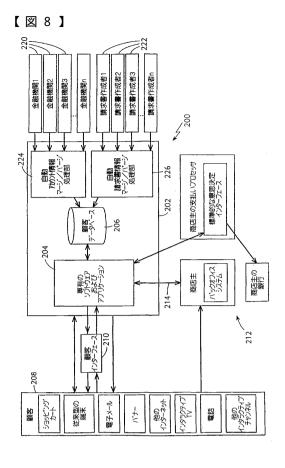


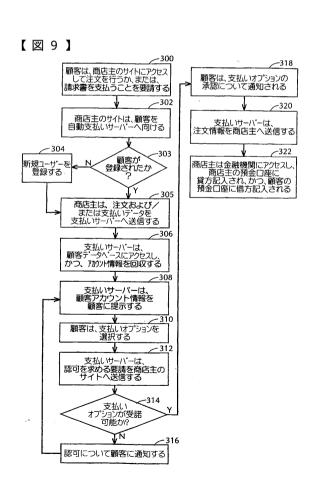
アカウント番号を 解読する

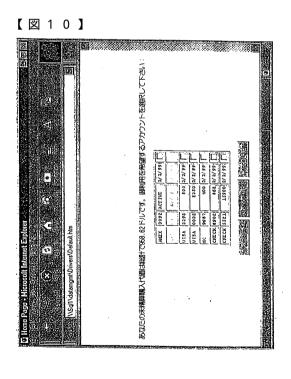
支払いを処理する

170

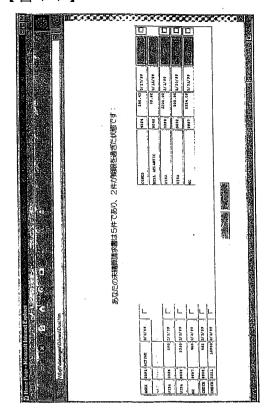
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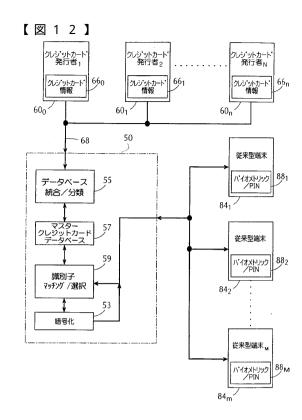






【図11】





# 【国際公開パンフレット】

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17 August 2000 (17.08.2000) US

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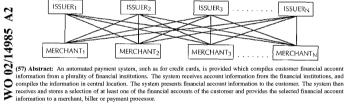
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WO 02/14985

PCT/US01/25888

5

#### AUTOMATED PAYMENT SYSTEM

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#### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to computerized billing and payment systems. In particular, the invention relates to an automated credit card payment system that matches a 20 customer's information, fingerprint, retina scan voice, or other biometric measurement and/or a unique personal identifier ("UPI") with financial account information consolidated from multiple financial institutions and selects, or allows customers to select, a financial account for use in paying bills, invoices and other obligations.

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# BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Most companies that provide continual services can automatically bill their customers on a regular basis. To increase customer retention, as well as reliability in payments, and also to avoid the need for repeated billings of past due accounts, companies

WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888

2

increasingly offer customers the option of making payments through the customer's credit card. However, the need for customers to retrieve the credit card they wish to use, coupled with the customer's perception that writing their credit card account number on a bill and mailing it is not secure, hinders many customers from taking advantage of this convenient payment method.

Second, when a customer desires to purchase goods or services on the Internet, they usually give the merchant their credit card information as a form of payment. Since there are millions of merchants on the Internet, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the consumer and for credit card organizations to control fraud. From the moment the consumer presses "send" on the merchant's website, their credit card is exposed. Their card number can be 10 intercepted by perpetrators en route to the merchant, or it can be "hacked" from the merchant's database once it is received. In addition, the fact that there are millions of merchants and that that number is growing exponentially, makes it virtually impossible to ensure that the merchant is a legitimate company and not merely in existence to perpetrate credit card fraud.

Third, when a customer purchases goods or services with a traditional bricks15 and-mortar merchant, they must have their credit card with them, and they must give it to the
merchant so that the credit card can be processed. Given this conventional scenario, the
consumer is vulnerable when the credit card is lost or stolen. They are also vulnerable if the
merchant or any employee decides to use the credit card number in a fraudulent manner.

Thus, there is a need for a system that provides customers the ability to 20efficiently match their financial account information with their UPI, allowing them to purchase goods or services with their credit card or other financial account, without presenting the actual card. The aim of this system is to optimize customer security and privacy interests.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

25 The present invention is for a system and related method for payment of bills, purchases, or other payments which compares a UPI or a merchant/biller's database of subscribers, customers, potential customers, prospects, or accounts receivables, sometimes referred to herein collectively as "customers", either with a consolidated database of financial account information, or with a plurality of non-30consolidated databases of financial account information, or with a combination of the two types. Many types of financial account information may be used to make the payments,

WO 02/14985

PCT/US01/25888

3

including, but not limited to, credit cards, charge cards, debit cards, smart cards, bank cards, demand deposit accounts such as checking accounts, virtual payment accounts, virtual cash account numbers such as those provided for commercial transactions over the Internet, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), E-check, Automated Clearing 5House (ACH), payment products from third party, non-bank financial institutions such as CyberCash and TransPoint (MSFDC), stored value tools such as VisaCash and Mondex, and the like.

The system matches the customer's UPI or the customer identification data contained in a merchant, biller or payment processor's database with the financial account 10 information contained in the one or more financial account databases and selects which one or more financial accounts to present when the customer is a holder of more than one financial account.

The financial account or accounts selected are provided to the merchant or biller for inclusion on a commercial communication, such as a payment stub, renewal form, invoice, 15or other marketing material soliciting payment or subscription. Optionally, the merchant/biller need not know the particular financial account or number being used. For example, a commercial communication may indicate the issuer of the financial account, such as a credit card, and a particular financial account, such as a particular credit card account, for the customer to charge the purchase to, but include the account number only in encrypted form, 20thus offering security and privacy to the consumer. Many forms of securing information are known and may be used, including but not limited to the use of encryption techniques and record locator techniques.

For example, in a transaction where the financial account utilized is a credit card account, the customer can indicate his approval to use the credit card number provided in 25encrypted form and thus does not have to provide the information himself when paying by credit card. The merchant/biller collects the invoices or other offers with the customer's indication or authorization of payment from the credit card account and, optionally, submits it to a service bureau which decrypts the credit card account number and processes billing to the selected credit card account. This helps preserve the customer's privacy in his or her credit 30card and related information.

As shown in Fig. 2, the system of the present invention serves as an

WO 02/14985

PCT/US01/25888

4

intermediary between a large number of issuers and a large number of merchants. As shown in Fig. 2, issuers provide their account information lists to the central account management and consolidation system of the present invention, which in turn receives customer identification data from merchants, and matches and selects financial account information to provide to 5merchants, as described above.

In some embodiments, the system includes a memory device which stores consolidated multiple financial account information, such as a master financial account list, which includes, for example, credit card account information from multiple credit card issuers. A computer system or other processing unit matches customer identification data from the 10stored consolidated financial account information to a UPI or to a database of a merchant/biller's customer identification data in order to associate a financial account number with a selected member of the customer database. The computer system or processing unit selects one or more specific associated financial account numbers when more than one financial account number matches the selected member of the merchant/biller's customer database. If 15not previously encrypted, the associated financial account number is encrypted and provided to the merchant/biller for inclusion on the customer's commercial communication, such as a bill, payment stub, renewal form or invoice, which is then sent to the customer. After selection and authorization by the customer, the system may also decrypt the encrypted financial account number for processing payment to the merchant/biller from the selected 20financial account of the customer.

Alternatively, in lieu of including a master consolidated database of financial account information, the system may be comprised of a plurality of databases of financial account information either internal or remote, and a mechanism for searching the various databases to locate a customer's financial account information. The various financial account 25information databases may include databases of individual issuers and/or partially consolidated databases containing information from a number of financial account issuers.

A method in accordance with one embodiment of the invention includes the steps of consolidating multiple financial account information lists from multiple financial account issuers into a master financial account list, receiving a UPI or a merchant/biller's customer 30database, and matching information from the master financial account list to the customer's UPI or to the master/biller's database to associate at least one financial account number for

PCT/US01/25888

WO 02/14985

5

each customer. In accordance with desired selection rules, one or more of the matching financial account number(s) is selected, if more than one financial account number is found for a particular customer. The selected financial account number is encrypted, or may be provided already encrypted in the financial account databases. The encrypted financial account number for numbers are provided to the merchant/biller for inclusion on the merchant/biller's commercial communication to the customer, thus providing the customer with a means for authorizing payment for purchase to the associated financial account number, such as a particular credit card. Payment for the purchase is processed and made to the merchant/biller from the financial account of the authorizing member. Of course, a financial account number 10can be any unique encrypted identifier, even those including letters as well as numbers.

Alternatively, instead of consolidating multiple financial account information from a number of financial account issuers into a single master financial account database or list, the method may include consolidating some subset of financial account lists and searching a plurality of such lists as well as lists from individual financial account issuers in order to 15 associate at least one financial account number for each customer in the merchant/biller's customer database, or searching a plurality of individual financial account lists made available by different issuers.

WO 02/14985

PCT/US01/25888

6

In another embodiment, the present invention is directed to a system and method for providing automated payments over a computer network, for example, over the Internet. The system includes an automated payment server which is connected to various financial institutions and which receives and compiles data from those institutions to create files of 5account information for various customers. When a customer desires to purchase goods from a merchant's web site, or to pay bills, the customer is routed to the payment server, and is presented with the account information as compiled by the payment server. The customer selects one or more of the financial accounts, and the payment server transmits the appropriate financial information to the merchant's payment processor to complete the transaction. In this 10manner, credit card numbers are not transmitted over the Internet or stored on a merchant's site, but are only transmitted between the payment server and the payment processor, preferably over a secure line.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- 15 For a fuller understanding of the invention, reference is made to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, in which:
- Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the problems encountered in matching a large number of financial account issuers to a large number of merchants/billers in an automated payment system;
- 20 Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the use of the present invention in efficiently matching a large number of financial account issuers to a large number of merchants/billers in an automated payment system;
  - Fig. 3 is a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of an apparatus for carrying out the automated credit card payment method and system of the present invention;
- 25 Fig. 4 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the apparatus of Fig. 3;
  - Fig. 5 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the present invention;

    Fig. 6 is a block diagram of an automated payment system used for billers in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the invention;
    - Fig. 7 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the system of Fig. 6;
- Fig. 8 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the present invention;
  Fig. 9 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the system of Fig. 8;

WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888

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Figs. 10 and 11 are representations of an interface presented to a customer upon accessing a payment server according to one aspect of the invention; and

Fig. 12 is a block diagram of an embodiment of an apparatus for carrying out the automated credit card payment method and system of the present invention using a bricks-5and-mortar terminal and a biometric identifier and/or PIN.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Preferred embodiments of the invention are now described with reference to the drawings. Although many of the drawings and descriptions illustrate the use of the invention 10 with credit card accounts for the sake of simplicity, the invention is in no way meant to be limited to credit card accounts.

Referring to Fig. 3, an automatic payment system 50 according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown. The system 50 may utilize any combination of many types of financial accounts and is described with reference to credit card accounts for 15simplicity. The system 50 may be operated by a company, such as a service bureau, and includes a database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, a master credit card database 57, an identifier matching and selecting subsystem 59, and an optional credit card account number encryption subsystem 53.

The automatic payment system 50 is used in conjunction with n number of credit 20card issuers  $60_0$  to  $60_n$ . Each of the n credit card issuers 60 maintains on a computer system its own credit card information list  $66_0$  to  $66_n$  in accordance with one of a number of conventional format types known to those of skill in the art. These credit card information lists 66 typically contain account holder identification data, such as the name and address of each account holder, as well as the associated credit card number, name of financial institution, 25account information and demographic information pertaining to each card holder. One skilled in the art will recognize that although the preferred embodiments are described with reference to the use of credit cards, other financial account information or devices, including but not limited to smart cards, bank cards, checking accounts, and virtual payment accounts used for Internet and other on-line commercial transactions, may be used instead of or in any 30combination with credit card accounts.

The automated payment system 50 receives credit card information lists 66 over

8

a transmission medium 68 from the n credit card issuers 60. This transfer of information over medium 68 may be achieved by many communications methods, including but not limited to modem connections, high speed data lines, the Internet, or the physical transfer of storage media, such as tapes or disks. This transfer is authorized by contractual relationships and may 5include financial incentives. In order to increase the likelihood of locating customer credit card information, it is preferable to include the credit card account information from as many credit card issuers as possible. The database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, which may be in the form of a programmed computer system, sorts and consolidates the credit card information  $66_0$  to  $66_n$  provided by the credit card issuers  $60_0$  to  $60_n$ , and the sorted and 10consolidated data is then stored in the master credit card information database 57. This database may reside on a mass storage unit of the computer system. Of course, the processing elements and information storage elements may reside on multiple computing devices to provide for contingencies such as fault tolerance and load balancing.

The automated payment system 50 is used to provide credit card account 15information to one or more of *m* number of merchants/billers 70<sub>o</sub> to 70<sub>m</sub>. Each of the *m* merchants/billers may maintain on a computer its own list 76 of customer identification data. These lists 76<sub>o</sub> to 76<sub>m</sub> include customer identification data such as names and addresses of customers or additional information, such as social security numbers and demographic information. The automatic payment system 50 receives the customer identification data from 20a given merchant/biller 70<sub>x</sub>, and the matching and selecting subsystem 59 compares the customer identification data supplied by merchants/billers 70<sub>x</sub> with the records in the master credit card information database 57 to locate matching credit card holder identification data. The matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be in the form of a preprogrammed computer system which is either the same as the one used for the database consolidation and sorting 25subsystem 55, or separate therefrom. The process of matching customers from a merchant/biller database to credit card account holders in the matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be performed using conventional matching algorithms as known to those of skill in the art.

If more than one credit card holder identifier matches a given customer (i.e., 30the customer has more than one credit card), one or more of the matching credit card identifiers is selected or featured by the matching and selecting subsystem 59. This selection

PCT/US01/25888

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proceeds in accordance with certain selection and presentation rules. As an illustrative example, a simple selection rule is used wherein the selected credit card is the one issued by the issuer having the most credit cards in the database, i.e., the most "popular" or predominant credit card. Alternatively, in one embodiment, the selection is made on a pro rata basis or 5other algorithm based on the total number of credit card accounts for each issuer in relation to the number of credit card accounts for the other issuers and the total number of credit card accounts in the master credit card database 57. Thus, for example, a credit card issuer which accounts, for example, for 25% of the total number of credit card accounts in the consolidated database, will have its associated credit card account selected 25% of the time for customers 10who have multiple credit card number accounts including that issuer. Another method of selecting one associated credit card account number from more than one matching associated credit card account is to compare the selected associated credit card account numbers with credit card usage information to determine the customer's primary credit card, based on amount of use, and selecting the customer's most often used credit card. Yet another method 15of selecting an account may take into consideration the fees associated with financial transactions and select the financial institution that charges the lowest fees. Alternatively, the selection process may take into account historical data and select the financial institution that yields the best results or success for a particular merchant/biller. Finally, the selection may be made as a result of fees paid by the credit card issuer to receive priority in the selection 20process.

In alternative embodiments, more than one credit card, or all of the credit cards, may be selected for inclusion, and the customer is given the option of selecting which one of the cards is to be used for making payment. In this embodiment, all matching credit card account numbers may be selected and presented to the customer. The selected credit card 25accounts may be presented to the customer in a list with a check box, such as in the following form:

	Choose the card(s) with which you wish to pay:
	CITIBANK VISA
	DISCOVER
30	AMERICAN EXPRESS

PCT/US01/25888

10

In a more preferred embodiment of the present invention, the selected credit card accounts can also be ordered and presented to the user, based on similar criteria as that used by the system to determine the selection of credit cards, e.g., the most popular card in the database, the customer's most often used credit card, the card that charges the lowest fees, or the card whose 5 issuer has paid the highest fee, can be presented above or ahead of other credit cards.

The selected credit card account number or numbers which are to be included on a commercial communication are encrypted by a credit card account number encryption subsystem 53. The particular method of encryption may include a finder number, record locator, some form of high level encryption, or any other encryption technique. While 10 encryption is an element of the preferred embodiment, the method of encryption may be any method which achieves adequate security and the specific method of encryption does not constitute a material element of the system and method set forth herein. Moreover, credit card information may be encrypted and provided in encrypted form from the credit card issuers 60 before being stored in the master credit card information database.

15 Fig. 4 illustrates the use of encrypted account information of the present invention, and specifically, encrypted credit card information for the sake of simplicity. In one embodiment, for each customer in a merchant/biller's customer identification data database 76, the encrypted credit card account number associated with the customer is provided by merchant/biller 70x to the customer (step 80) as part of the communication to the customer 20from merchant/biller 70x. Alternatively, in a bricks-and-mortar embodiment of the present invention where the bricks-and-mortar merchant does not have a "customer information database," the customer communicates directly to the central database 57 via a payment process interface, e.g., a terminal or computer. At step 90, the customer decides whether to authorize payment by credit card. This authorization step may also include selecting which 25credit card(s) to use if the customer is presented with more than one. If the customer authorizes such payment and returns the commercial communication to the merchant/biller or other payment processing entity, the encrypted credit card account number is decrypted at step 100. The encrypted number may be sent by the system 50 to the credit card issuer, a payment processor or merchant for decryption and/or payment processing. After decryption the credit 30card account number is used to process payment to merchant/biller (step 110) and payment is made to the particular merchant/biller, along with any required payments for use of the system

PCT/US01/25888

11

in handling the transaction. If the customer 90 does not authorize payment, steps 100 and 110 are simply not performed.

It should be understood that elements of the system and method of the present invention described herein, such as in Figures 3 and 4, may be modified in keeping with the 5intended scope of the invention. For example, the consolidated credit card account database has been described as containing account information from multiple credit card account issuers. However, the merchant/biller's customer identification data may alternatively be matched serially against multiple databases, including individual credit card issuers' credit card account databases and/or one or more consolidated database. Each individual or consolidated database 10represents some number of credit card issuers which is a subset of all the issuers.

Fig. 5 shows an alternative embodiment of an automated payment system 50' according to the present invention. The system 50' of this alternative embodiment includes a serial matching subsystem 59' and a selection/presentation subsystem 59''. The serial matching subsystem compares customer identification data, received over transmission medium 1569 from a merchant or one or more customer databases 76 of a given merchant/biller 70, to a number of credit card databases 66 of a number of issuers 60. The serial matching subsystem may also compare the customer identification data with a consolidated database 58 containing information consolidated from a limited number of issuers 60, in this case, issuers 3 and 4. The serial matching subsystem locates matches of the merchant/biller's customer identification 20data with account holder identification data contained in the individual and partially consolidated databases 66 and 58, as discussed above. Once a set of matching credit card account numbers is located, the selection subsystem 59'' selects one or more of the account numbers, in accordance with the selection rules discussed above.

Referring now to Fig. 6, therein is shown a block diagram of an embodiment 25of the automated credit card payment system of the present invention as applied to merchant/billers. In this arrangement, multiple merchant/billers 150 use a fulfillment house 152 and a service bureau 154 employing the system of the present invention to deal with multiple credit card account databases 156, one or more of which may be partially consolidated databases as explained above. More than one fulfillment house 152 may be utilized to serve 30the various merchant/billers and/or groups of merchant/billers, or one fulfillment house 152 may be used for each biller 150. Merchant/billers 150 provide the fulfillment house 152 with

PCT/US01/25888

12

each of their customer files 158 and outside lists 160 (e.g., lists of prospective customers). The service bureau 154 uses the system of the present invention to match the names on the merchant/billers' customer files 158 with associated financial account information. This information, including credit card information, is consolidated by the service bureau 154 from 5multiple credit card issuers 156 and is stored in a master credit card file. Alternatively, this credit card information can be accessed serially from databases of the multiple credit card issuers.

After matching the merchant/billers' customer files 158 and outside lists 160 with associated financial account information, the service bureau encrypts the matching credit 10card account numbers (block 162) and provides them to the fulfillment house 152. The use of the located credit card information is shown in the flow chart of Fig. 7, where fulfillment house 152 uses the encrypted credit card account information in marketing, billing and/or renewal efforts (step 164), such as by placing encrypted credit card account numbers on commercial communications. At step 165, customers authorize the use of their credit card, 15 and optionally select which credit card to use if more than one is presented to the customer.

When customers place orders using the encrypted credit card account information on the commercial communication, the orders are collected and the encrypted number entered and consolidated into a consolidated order file (step 166). The encrypted account numbers in the consolidated order file are then decrypted (step 170) and payments are processed (step 172).

Referring now to Figs. 8 and 9, there is shown another embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the system 200 is designed for use over a computer network, for example, over the Internet, a LAN, WAN, or the like. The system 200 includes an automated payment server 202 that includes a processing unit 204 and a customer database 25206 maintained by the processing unit, and is similar in many respects to the automated payment system 50 described above. The database combines account information from various financial institutions, as well as bill information from various billers.

The automated payment server 202 connects to a plurality of customers at respective terminals 208, and interacts with those customers via a suitable customer interface 30210 (only one terminal is shown schematically in FIG. 8). The customer interface can be a basic application used to select payment options, a method of viewing bills from various

PCT/US01/25888

13

billers, and/or a full-service interface that combines those functions and allows the customer to re-configure the account. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various forms of interface may be employed.

The automated payment server 202 further connects to one or more merchant 5sites 212 over one or more communication lines 214. Preferably, at least one of the lines 214 is a secure line for transmission of payment information, as is described in greater detail below.

The automated payment server 202 is connected to various financial institutions 220 and to various billers 222. The automated payment system 202 receives account 10 information, including updated account information, over a transmission medium from the financial institutions, and receives billing information from the various billers, as described above in connection with the automated payment server 50. For example, various utilities may transmit bills electronically to their customers via the payment server 202. An automated account information merge/purge subsystem 224 and an automated bill information 15 merge/purge subsystem 226, which may be in the form of programmed computer systems, sort and consolidate the account and bill information provided by the financial institutions and billers, and the sorted and consolidated data is then stored in the customer database 206 for subsequent access, as is described in greater detail below.

The customer terminals 208 can take many different forms, and can access the 20automated payment server 202 in many different ways. For example, the customer may transmit purchase requests via a brick-and-mortar terminal, E-mail, or over the Internet by clicking on a banner on a web site, through interactive television, WebTV\*, over the telephone, by direct mail, or in any other suitable manner. In one embodiment, the merchant site 212 may post a banner indicating that payment for a transaction may be conducted through 25the automated payment server 202. The customer can then click on the banner and be directed to the automated payment server, as is described in greater detail below.

The customer interface 210 is preferably a suitable interface that allows the automated payment server 202 to simultaneously communicate with multiple customers over the Internet or other computer network.

Referring now to Fig. 9, the operation of the automated payment server 202 is described in more detail. Operation begins at step 300, with a customer beginning the

14

transaction by communicating with a merchant 212 and either placing an order or requesting to pay a bill for goods or services. In one embodiment, the merchant site presents the customer with a banner having an embedded URL of the automated payment server 202, or alternatively the merchant site can automatically direct the customer to the automated payment 5server when the customer places an order. At step 302, the customer is linked to the automated payment server 202, and at step 303 the server determines whether the customer is registered with the server. If the customer is not registered, operation proceeds to step 304, and the customer registers with the payment server. Registration can be conducted over the computer network, over the telephone, through the mail, or in any other suitable manner, and 10involves receiving identifying information from the customer to verify the identity of the customer for all subsequent transactions. For example, the customer may provide their name, address, etc., along with their mother's maiden name, a social security number, or the like. The customer may also provide biometric information, e.g., fingerprint sample, handwriting sample, retina scan, or voice recording/pattern. Once the customer's identity has been 15verified, a password is selected for the customer (either chosen by the customer or randomly assigned by the payment server), as is well known in the art.

If the customer is already registered with the payment server 202, the customer inputs his or her user name and password at step 303, and after authentication or verification, the customer is allowed to continue with the payment transaction.

202 The merchant 212 transmits order and/or payment data to the payment server 202, either automatically or after being prompted by the payment server, at step 305. The data preferably identifies the customer, for example by including order ID data and/or a customer UPI, which is also transmitted to the payment server when the customer accesses the payment server. Alternatively, the merchant site may transmit the customer's name or any other 25identifying data to allow the payment server to associate the customer with the particular order or payment request.

The customer's UPI or other identifying information is associated with the customer's financial account(s). The UPI can be in the form of a name, password, PIN, ID number, or other unique identifier. Alternatively, the UPI can take the form of a fingerprint, 30 retina scan, voice pattern, handwriting sample, or other unique "biometric" identifier. These biometric identifiers, in some cases, can be used in conjunction with a password or PIN. The

15

recording, capturing, and storing of unique biometric identifiers such as retina scans, iris scans, voice patterns, digital handwriting samples or digitally scanned fingerprints are described in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,047,281; 6,038,334 and 5,991,408, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. In one possible embodiment of the invention, the 5customer's UPI is recorded and/or authenticated using prior art devices, such as digital scanners, cameras or recorders, attached to the consumer's computer or located at a bricks-and-mortar or other merchant terminal as exemplified in Fig. 12.

Once the payment server has associated the customer with the order or payment request, operation proceeds to step 306, and the payment server accesses the customer database 10to retrieve the customer's account information, which as described above is in the form of various credit cards, debit cards, smart cards, bank cards, demand deposit accounts such as checking accounts, virtual payment accounts, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), payment products from third party, non-bank financial institutions such as CyberCash and TransPoint (MSFDC), stored 15value tools such as VisaCash and Mondex, and the like. Then, at step 308, the payment server 202 presents the customer account information to the customer (Fig. 10). The account information identifies the various financial to the customer, without transmitting entire account numbers to the customer. For example, some identifying information is transmitted, such as the name of the credit card, the last several digits of a credit card, or the like (e.g., "AmEx 206543"). The account information may include, in addition to identifying the various credit cards and the like, available balance information, date of the last update to that account, date of last payment, credit limit, transaction detail, and the like.

At step 310, the customer selects one or more payment options, and that selection (or selections) is transmitted to the payment server via the interface 210. Thus, the 25actual account numbers are not transmitted between the payment server and the customer.

The customer may choose to split a payment between two or more financial accounts, for example, two or more credit cards. In addition, the payment server can present the accounts to the customer in some specific order, as defined by the customer, the financial institutions, particular merchants, account usage, available balances, interest rates, and the blike.

In one embodiment, the payment server 202 presents the customer only with

PCT/US01/25888

WO 02/14985

16

appropriate payment options. For example, if the purchase amount is \$100, and the customer's checking account has a balance less than \$100, the payment server preferably does not provide that as an option to the customer. Alternatively, the checking account may be presented to the customer, but in a different color or font to indicate to the customer that such account is not 5suitable for the particular transaction, but can be used in connection with another payment option to complete the transaction.

At step 312, the payment server 202 transmits a request for authorization to the payment processor of the merchant site 212, which includes the payment option selected by the customer. At step 314, the customer interface determines whether the payment option is 10acceptable. For example, the customer may have selected a credit card that is not accepted by the particular merchant. If so, operation proceeds to step 316, and the customer is informed that the authorization failed. Operation then flows back to step 308, to allow the customer to select another payment option.

If the payment option is acceptable at step 314, operation proceeds to step 318, 15 and the customer is notified that the transaction has been approved. Then, at step 320, the payment server 202 transmits the approved order or Approval to the merchant site or to the merchant's payment processor 212, preferably over a secure line, and the merchant fills the order by interacting with the customer 208. For example, the merchant site may request shipping information if they do not already have it or other required information to complete 20 the transaction. Then, at step 322, the payment processor accesses the appropriate financial institution and transmits the payment information, so that the customer's account is debited and the merchant's account is credited.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the above steps may also be carried out over a telephone network that allows for interactivity, such as those systems 25offering voice recognition and/or dual tone multi-frequency (DTMF) tones. As is well known in the art, the customer may enter a user ID and password by pressing the appropriate keys on the telephone, with the payment server including the appropriate, well-known hardware to interpret the DTMF tones to determine the corresponding numbers entered by the customer. Thus, a customer may dial a telephone number, listen to a list of available goods, services 30and/or bills, and select one or more of the goods, services and/or bills by pressing appropriate keys on the telephone. The payment server, through a well-known interactive system such as

PCT/US01/25888

17

interactive voice response (IVR) or the like, then prompts the customer to enter identification data, such as a user name and PIN number, or the like. Once the identity of the customer is verified, the payment server may then present the customer with a list of credit cards that may be used to complete a transaction. For example, the IVR software may read "Press 1 to select 5your Visa account, press 2 to select American Express," or the like. The customer may simply press the corresponding key on the telephone to signal the payment server of the customer's choice. The remainder of the process is the same as the computer network version described above. Thus, in this manner the payment server 202 is available to customers over a telephone network.

Alternatively, the present invention may be implemented through the mail, by the customer returning an order form sent through regular mail and/or electronic mail. In this manner, the payment server sends a preprinted order form to potential customers, listing various goods, services and/or bills available, and also listing that particular customer's financial accounts as compiled by the customer database 206. The customer selects one or 15more of the goods, services and/or bills, selects a financial account for payment from the customer-specific list printed on the form, and returns the order form to the payment server 202. An operator at the payment server then enters the data, or in the case of electronic transfer such as email, the data is uploaded. The payment server forwards the data to the appropriate merchant. If the payment option selected by the customer is not appropriate (e.g., 20the merchant does not accept that type of payment or the available balance is too low), the customer is notified, either through the mail (electronic or regular) or via telephone, and may select another payment option. Once a suitable payment option is selected, the remainder of the transaction is completed along the lines of the computer network version described above.

In an alternative embodiment, the customer who receives the order form or bill 25may call a telephone number provided on the form and complete the transaction over the telephone, in the same manner as described above.

In another embodiment, the customer at terminal 208 may access the payment server 202 directly without initially accessing a merchant's site. The customer then may be presented with outstanding bills, as compiled by the automated bill information merge/purge 30subsystem 226 (Fig. 11). The customer may select one or more of the bills to be paid, and is then presented with the account information, similar to the process described above with

PCT/US01/25888

18

respect to Fig. 9.

It will be apparent that the system and method of the present invention allow payment transactions to be performed over a computer network without requiring any credit card numbers or the like to be transmitted directly between the customer 208 and merchant 5212, or between the customer 208 and the payment server 202. Thus, no account information passes over a public network such as the Internet. The account information is transmitted over secure lines between the financial institutions and the payment server 202, and between the payment server and the merchant's payment processor or the merchant's site. In addition, multiple merchants do not need to maintain a database of account numbers, as such information 10 is maintained at the payment server 202. Maintaining the database at one location rather than at each individual merchant further reduces the likelihood of fraud.

Referring to Fig. 12, an automatic payment system 50 is shown according to an embodiment that implements use of biometric identifiers and/or PINs. A biometric identifier and/or PIN is collected at a bricks-and-mortal terminal. A bricks-and-mortar terminal may 15include a computer, digital camera, scanner, recorder or other device capable of capturing such information. The automatic payment system 50 receives the biometric identifier and/or PIN from the bricks-and-mortar terminals 84<sub>x</sub>, and the matching and selecting subsystem 59 compares the biometric identifier and/or PIN 88<sub>x</sub> with the records in the master credit card information database 57 to locate matching credit card holder identification data. The matching 20and selecting subsystem 59 may be in the form of a preprogrammed computer system which is either the same as the one used for the database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, or separate therefrom. The process of matching customers from a merchant/biller database to credit card account holders in the matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be performed using conventional matching algorithms as known to those of skill in the art. If a match is 25found in the master credit card database 57, then the PIN is validated.

As can be understood from the above description of the present invention, the present invention provides a number of benefits to customers (such as credit card users), financial institutions, merchants and billers. Benefits for the financial institutions include reduced fraud, more credit card usage, higher retention rates, and increased fee income. 30Benefits for the customer include convenience, privacy, and efficiency. Benefits to the merchant/billers are reduced fraud and theft, higher retention rates, less bad debt, savings on

PCT/US01/25888

19

mailing expense, and better customer relationships.

The system and method of the present invention may also be used in conjunction with a targeted marketing or coupon plan in which purchasing behavior can be identified and recorded by the payment server. In one possible embodiment, consumers with financial 5accounts (including credit card accounts) on the payment server can acquiesce in having their purchasing behavior tracked and provided to a wide variety of businesses and industries. These business and industries can then preferentially target various consumers for discounts, coupons, or other marketing deals based on their past purchases.

Another benefit provided by the present invention is the security and privacy 10 for consumers. Therefore, in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention herein, a centralized organization or company is the only party, aside from the financial institutions with relationships with the consumers, as well as the consumers themselves, that has access to the specific financial account information. It should be understood that the functions performed by the central organization may actually be divided between separate 15 entities. For example, one entity may perform processing, while another entity performs encryption/decryption. As described above, only encrypted account information is provided to the merchants/billers; however, it is within the scope of the present invention to provide a system in which accounts are provided to merchants/billers directly, and the merchant/biller or other company encrypts such account information for use in its billing materials. In such 20a case, once the merchant/biller receives the customer's approval for charging a particular account, it can proceed to decrypt and process the payment from the financial institution directly.

Many other user functions known in the art can be implemented such as the ability to allow a user to modify his user registration information.

While several forms of the invention have been described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and improvements may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

PCT/US01/25888

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## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

 A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller, comprising the steps of:

compiling in a memory financial account information for at least one customer from a plurality of financial institutions;

receiving and storing transaction information relating to a particular

customer;

retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the

customer;

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presenting the financial account information to the customer;

receiving and storing a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts; and

providing the selected financial account(s) information either to the merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.

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- 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- The method of claim 4, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of dividing payment
  2 for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account
  3 is selected
  - 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of updating said 2 financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
  - 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and
- 3 registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.
  - The method of claim 10, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN and a biometric measurement of the customer.

	12. The method of claim 11, wherein the diometric measurement include
!	voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
	13. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of comparing the PIN
	biometric measurement, or both, against a respective stored database of PINs or biometric
;	measurements.
l	14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of comparing
2	transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the
3	financial account information.
l	15. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of presenting t
2	customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance
į	equal to or greater than the transaction value.
L	16. A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account for
2	a bill selected from a plurality of bills presented to the customer, the method comprising the
3	following steps:
ŀ	compiling in a memory financial account information for at least on
5	customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
5	presenting the customer with bill information for each of a plurality of
7	bills;
3	receiving selection information from the customer specifying a particular
;	selected bill which is to be paid;
)	retrieving from the memory the financial account information for th
l	customer;
2	presenting the financial account information to the customer; and
3	receiving selection information from the customer specifying a particular
1	account to be used to pay the selected bill.

23

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said financial account corresponds t
at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand depos
account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer network
financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), an
stored value tools.

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- 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.
- 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- $20. \hspace{0.5cm} The \, method \, of \, claim \, 19, wherein \, the \, subset \, of \, accounts \, includes \, financial \, accounts \, acceptable \, to \, the \, merchant/biller.$
- The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of dividing payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
  - 22. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 23. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is

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24.	The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of updating sai	ic
financial account in	formation from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.	

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 The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and

registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.

- 1 26. The method of claim 25, wherein the step of registering a customer further 2 includes capturing a PIN, an IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.
- 1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 28. The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of comparing at least
   one of the PIN, IP address, biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs,
   IP addresses or biometric measurements.
  - 29. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of comparing a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
  - 30. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.

PCT/US01/25888

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1	31. A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account t
2	a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant biller over a compute
3	network, comprising the steps of:
4	compiling in a memory at a payment server financial account informatio
5	for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financia
6	institutions;
7	receiving over the computer network transaction information at th
8	payment server relating to a particular customer and storing the transaction information;
9	retrieving from the memory the financial account information for th
10	customer;
11	transmitting the financial account information over the computer network
12	to the customer;
13	receiving over the computer network a selection by the customer of on
14	or more of the financial accounts and storing the selection; and
15	transmitting the selected financial account information over the compute
16	network to said merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.
1	32. The method of claim 31, wherein said financial account corresponds t

32. The method of claim 31, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit  $account, checking \, account, virtual \, payment \, account, virtual \, cash \, account, wire \, transfer \, networks,$ financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.

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33. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.

34. The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.

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- The method of claim 34, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 1 36. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of dividing payment
  2 for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account
  3 is selected.
- 1 37. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of selecting the order
  2 in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the
  3 financial account information to the customer.
  - 38. The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
  - The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 1 40. The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of determining 2 whether a customer is a registered customer; and 3 registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.
  - The method of claim 40, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.

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	42.	The method of claim 41, wherein the biometric measurement includes
voice pattern	s, finge	prints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.

- 1 43. The method of claim 41, further comprising the step of comparing at least 2 one of the PIN, IP address, and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of 3 PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
- 1 44. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of comparing a 2 transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the 3 financial account information.
- 1 45. The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance qual to or greater than the transaction value.

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PCT/US01/25888

1	46.	A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to
2	a merchant/biller or	a payment processor associated with a merchant biller, comprising the steps
3	of:	
4		compiling in a memory at a payment server financial account information
5	for at least one co	astomer, said information being received from a plurality of financial
6	institutions;	
7	;	receiving transaction information relating to a particular customer;
8		transmitting said transaction information to the payment server and storing
9	the transaction info	rmation;
10		retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the
ij1	customer;	
12		displaying the financial account information on an interface;
13		receiving a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial
14	accounts and storin	g the selection; and
15		transmitting the selected financial account(s) information either to the
16	merchant/biller or t	o a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.

1 48. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of consolidating at
2 least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated
3 financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of
4 searching said consolidated database.

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PCT/US01/25888

49. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.

- The method of claim 49, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 1 51. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of dividing payment
  2 for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account
  3 is selected.
- 52. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 53. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 54. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of updating said
   financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
  - 55. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.
- 56. The method of claim 55, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.

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PCT/US01/25888

	57.	. The method	of claim 56, w	herein the	biometric	measurement	include
!	voice patterns, fin	gerprints, retina s	cans, or handw	riting samp	les.		

- 58. The method of claim 56, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
- 1 59. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of comparing a 2 transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the 3 financial account information.
- 1 60. The method of claim 59, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.
  - 61. The method of claim 46, wherein the interface includes a terminal, smart terminal, smart box, keypad, LCD display, cardswipe device or touchpad.
  - 62. The method of claim 46, wherein only those financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller are displayed on the interface.

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1	<ol> <li>A method for facilitating direct bill payment by a customer, comprising</li> </ol>
2	the steps of:
3	receiving and storing billing information from a merchant/biller of
4	merchant payment processor relating to a particular customer;
5	retrieving from a customer database financial account information for the
6	customer compiled from a plurality of financial institutions;
7	presenting to the customer a bill payment interface with one or more
8	the customer's financial accounts;
9	receiving and storing a selection by the customer of at least one of the
10	financial accounts for payment of the bill; and
11	providing the selected financial account(s) information either to the
12	merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

- 64. The method of claim 63, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.
- 65. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.
- 66. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- The method of claim 66, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.

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68.	The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of dividing payment
for a single transaction a	mong more than one financial account if more than one financial account
is selected.	

- 69. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 70. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 71. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 1 72. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.
- The method of claim 72, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.
- 74. The method of claim 73, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 75. The method of claim 73, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address or biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.

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76. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of comparing a			
transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the			
financial account information.			
77. The method of claim 76, further comprising the step of presenting to			
customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance			
agual to an greater than the transaction relye			

- 78. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller, comprising:
- a processor; and
- a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the processor operative with the processing instructions to:
- compile in a memory financial account information for at least one customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
  - receive and storing transaction information relating to a particular
- 9 customer; 10 retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
- 11 customer;
  12 present the financial account information to the customer;
- receive and store a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts; and
- provide the selected financial account(s) information either to the merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.
  - 79. The system of claim 78, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools

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- 80. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to consolidate at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database.
- 81. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and to present the subset to the customer.
- 82. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select a subset of accounts that includes financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 1 83. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to divide a 2 payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one 3 financial account is selected.
  - 84. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
  - 85. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to encrypt said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller or to said payment processor, and to encrypt or truncate the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 86. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to update said
   financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
  - 87. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to determine whether a customer is a registered customer, and to register the customer if the customer is not yet registered.

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88.	The system of claim 87, wherein the processor is operative to capture
PIN, IP address or a b	ometric measurement of the customer as part of the registration.

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- 1 89. The system of claim 88, wherein the biometric information includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
  - 90. The system of claim 88, wherein the processor is operative to compare at least one of the PIN, IP address and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
- 1 91. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to compare a 2 transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the 3 financial account information.
- 1 92. The system of claim 91, wherein the processor is operative to present to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance qual to or greater than the transaction value.

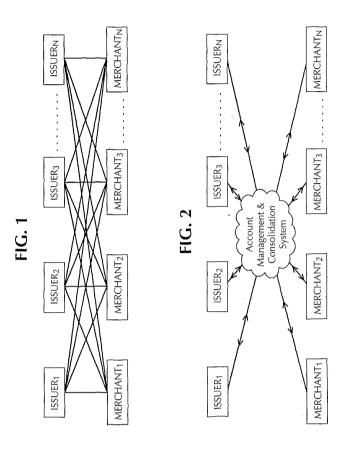
1	<ol> <li>An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account</li> </ol>
2	for a bill selected from a plurality of bills presented to the customer, comprising:
3	a processor; and
4	a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
5	processor operative with the processing instructions to:
6	compile in a memory financial account information for at least one
7	customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
8	present the customer with bill information for each of a plurality of bills;
9	receive selection information from the customer specifying a particular
10	selected bill which is to be paid;
11	retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
12	customer;
13	present the financial account information to the customer; and
14	receive selection information from the customer specifying a particular
15	account to be used to pay the selected bill.

1	94. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account
2	to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller over a computer
3	network, comprising:
4	a processor; and
5	a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
6	processor operative with the processing instructions to:
7	compile in a memory at a payment server financial account information
8	for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financial
9	institutions;
10	receive over the computer network transaction information at the payment
11	server relating to a particular customer and storing the transaction information;
12	retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
13	customer;
14	transmit the financial account information over the computer network to
15	the customer;
16	receive over the computer network a selection by the customer of one or
17	more of the financial accounts and storing the selection; and
18	transmit the selected financial account information over the computer
19	network to said merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

1	95. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account		
2	to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant biller, comprising:		
3	a processor; and		
4	a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, th		
5	processor operative with the processing instructions to:		
6	compile in a memory at a payment server financial account information		
7	for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financia		
8	institutions;		
9	receive transaction information relating to a particular customer;		
10	transmit said transaction information to the payment server and storing th		
11	transaction information;		
12	retrieve from the memory the financial account information for th		
13	customer;		
14	display the financial account information on an interface;		
15	receive a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial account		
16	and storing the selection; and		
17	transmit the selected financial account(s) information either to the		
18	merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.		
I	96. An apparatus for facilitating direct bill payment by a customer		
2	comprising:		
3	a processor; and		
4	a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, th		
5	processor operative with the processing instructions to:		
6	receive and store billing information from a merchant/biller or merchan		
7	payment processor relating to a particular customer;		
8	retrieve from a customer database financial account information for th		
9	customer compiled from a plurality of financial institutions;		
10	present to the customer a bill payment interface with one or more of th		
11	customer's financial accounts;		

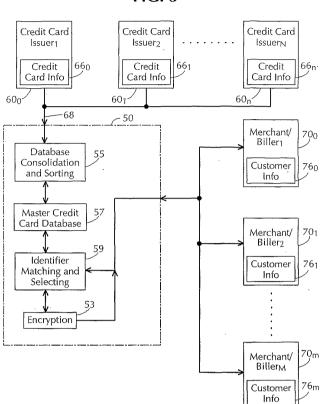
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		39	
12	receive ar	nd store a selection by the c	customer of at least one of the fina
13	accounts for payment of the bill	; and	
14	provide	the selected financial ac	ccount(s) information either to
15	merchant/hiller or to a payment	processor associated with	the merchant/biller

WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888 1/10

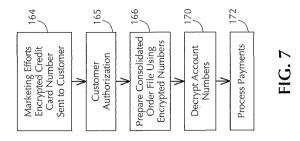


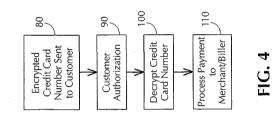
WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888 2/10

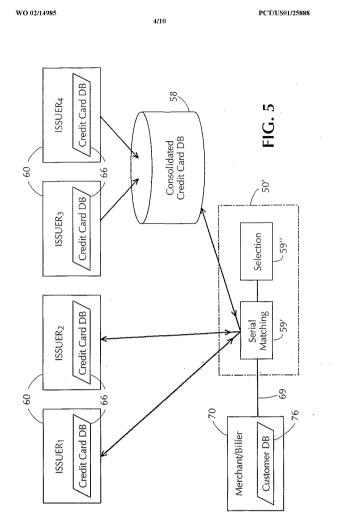
FIG. 3

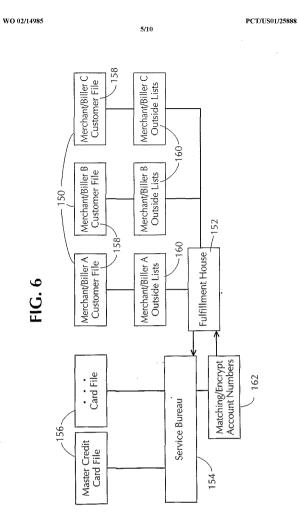


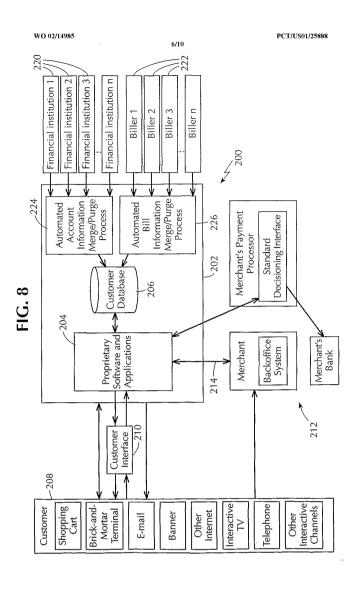
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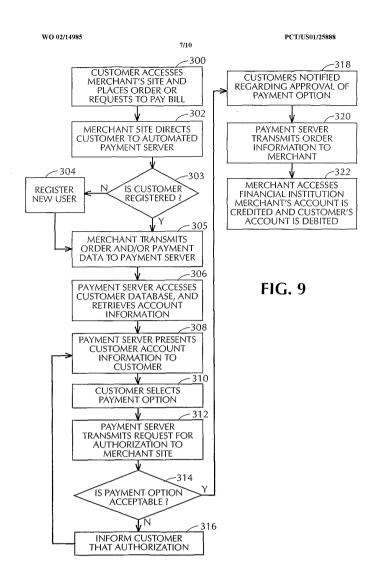






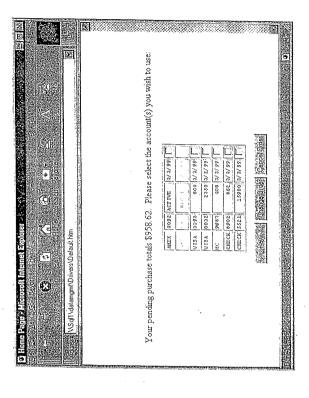


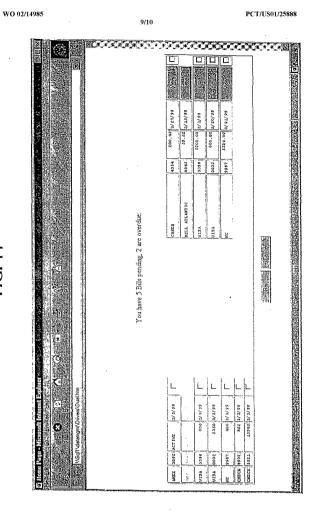




WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888 8/10

FIG. 10

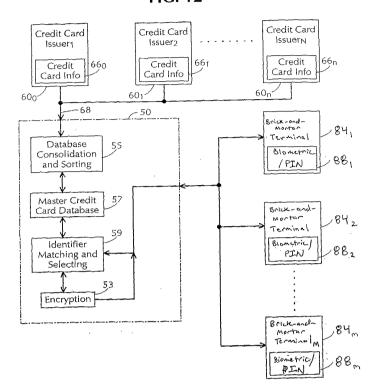




FG. 17

WO 02/14985 PCT/US01/25888

FIG. 12



## 【国際公開パンフレット(コレクトバージョン)】

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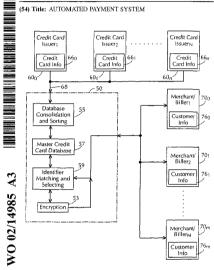
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with international search report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: AUTOMATED PAYMENT SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: An automated payment system (50), such as for credit cards, is provided which compiles customer financial account information (76) from a plurality of financial institutions. The system receives account information (56) from the financial institutions, and compiles the information (76) in a central location (55). The system presents financial account information (76) to the customer. The system then receives and stores a selection of at least one of the financial account information to control the customer and provides the selected financial account information (76) to a merchant, biller or payment processor (70). a merchant, biller or payment processor (70).

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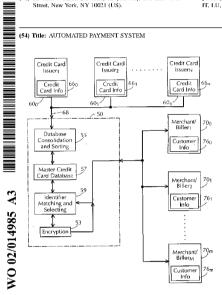
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(54) Title: AUTOMATED PAYMENT SYSTEM

(71) Applicant and(72) Inventor: KERN, Daniel, A. [US/US]; 201 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10021 (US).



(57) Abstract: An automated payment system (50), such as for credit cards, is provided which compiles customer linancial account information (76) from a plurality of financial institutions. The system receives account information (66) from the financial institutions, and compiles the information (76) in a central location (55). The system presents financial account information (76) to the customer. The system then receives and stores a selection of at least one of the financial account of the customer and provides the selected financial account information (76) to a merchant, biller or payment processor (70).

# WO 02/014985 A3

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WO 02/014985 PCT/US01/25888

5

### AUTOMATED PAYMENT SYSTEM

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## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to computerized billing and payment systems. In particular, the invention relates to an automated credit card payment system that matches a 20 customer's information, fingerprint, retina scan voice, or other biometric measurement and/or a unique personal identifier ("UPI") with financial account information consolidated from multiple financial institutions and selects, or allows customers to select, a financial account for use in paying bills, invoices and other obligations.

25

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Most companies that provide continual services can automatically bill their customers on a regular basis. To increase customer retention, as well as reliability in payments, and also to avoid the need for repeated billings of past due accounts, companies

PCT/US01/25888

2

increasingly offer customers the option of making payments through the customer's credit card. However, the need for customers to retrieve the credit card they wish to use, coupled with the customer's perception that writing their credit card account number on a bill and mailing it is not secure, hinders many customers from taking advantage of this convenient payment method.

Second, when a customer desires to purchase goods or services on the Internet, they usually give the merchant their credit card information as a form of payment. Since there are millions of merchants on the Internet, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the consumer and for credit card organizations to control fraud. From the moment the consumer presses "send" on the merchant's website, their credit card is exposed. Their card number can be 10 intercepted by perpetrators en route to the merchant, or it can be "hacked" from the merchant's database once it is received. In addition, the fact that there are millions of merchants and that that number is growing exponentially, makes it virtually impossible to ensure that the merchant is a legitimate company and not merely in existence to perpetrate credit card fraud.

Third, when a customer purchases goods or services with a traditional bricks15 and-mortar merchant, they must have their credit card with them, and they must give it to the
merchant so that the credit card can be processed. Given this conventional scenario, the
consumer is vulnerable when the credit card is lost or stolen. They are also vulnerable if the
merchant or any employee decides to use the credit card number in a fraudulent manner.

Thus, there is a need for a system that provides customers the ability to 20 efficiently match their financial account information with their UPI, allowing them to purchase goods or services with their credit card or other financial account, without presenting the actual card. The aim of this system is to optimize customer security and privacy interests.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

25 The present invention is for a system and related method for payment of bills, purchases, or other payments which compares a UPI or a merchant/biller's database of subscribers, customers, potential customers, prospects, or accounts receivables, sometimes referred to herein collectively as "customers", either with a consolidated database of financial account information such as credit card account information, or with a plurality of non-30consolidated databases of financial account information, or with a combination of the two types. Many types of financial account information may be used to make the payments,

PCT/US01/25888

3

including, but not limited to, credit cards, charge cards, debit cards, smart cards, bank cards, demand deposit accounts such as checking accounts, virtual payment accounts, virtual cash account numbers such as those provided for commercial transactions over the Internet, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), E-check, Automated Clearing 5House (ACH), payment products from third party, non-bank financial institutions such as CyberCash and TransPoint (MSFDC), stored value tools such as VisaCash and Mondex, and the like.

The system matches the customer's UPI or the customer identification data contained in a merchant, biller or payment processor's database with the financial account 10information contained in the one or more financial account databases and selects which one or more financial accounts to present when the customer is a holder of more than one financial account.

The financial account or accounts selected are provided to the merchant or biller for inclusion on a commercial communication, such as a payment stub, renewal form, invoice, 15or other marketing material soliciting payment or subscription. Optionally, the merchant/biller need not know the particular financial account or number being used. For example, a commercial communication may indicate the issuer of the financial account, such as a credit card, and a particular financial account, such as a particular credit card account, for the customer to charge the purchase to, but include the account number only in encrypted form, 20thus offering security and privacy to the consumer. Many forms of securing information are known and may be used, including but not limited to the use of encryption techniques and record locator techniques.

For example, in a transaction where the financial account utilized is a credit card account, the customer can indicate his approval to use the credit card number provided in 25encrypted form and thus does not have to provide the information himself when paying by credit card. The merchant/biller collects the invoices or other offers with the customer's indication or authorization of payment from the credit card account and, optionally, submits it to a service bureau which decrypts the credit card account number and processes billing to the selected credit card account. This helps preserve the customer's privacy in his or her credit 30card and related information.

As shown in Fig. 2, the system of the present invention serves as an

5merchants, as described above.

PCT/US01/25888

intermediary between a large number of issuers and a large number of merchants. As shown in Fig. 2, issuers provide their account information lists to the central account management and consolidation system of the present invention, which in turn receives customer identification data from merchants, and matches and selects financial account information to provide to

In some embodiments, the system includes a memory device which stores consolidated multiple financial account information, such as a master financial account list, which includes, for example, credit card account information from multiple credit card issuers. A computer system or other processing unit matches customer identification data from the 10stored consolidated financial account information to a UPI or to a database of a merchant/biller's customer identification data in order to associate a financial account number with a selected member of the customer database. The computer system or processing unit selects one or more specific associated financial account numbers when more than one financial account number matches the selected member of the merchant/biller's customer database. If 15not previously encrypted, the associated financial account number is encrypted and provided to the merchant/biller for inclusion on the customer's commercial communication, such as a bill, payment stub, renewal form or invoice, which is then sent to the customer. After selection and authorization by the customer, the system may also decrypt the encrypted financial account number for processing payment to the merchant/biller from the selected 20financial account of the customer.

Alternatively, in lieu of including a master consolidated database of financial account information, the system may be comprised of a plurality of databases of financial account information either internal or remote, and a mechanism for searching the various databases to locate a customer's financial account information. The various financial account 25information databases may include databases of individual issuers and/or partially consolidated databases containing information from a number of financial account issuers.

A method in accordance with one embodiment of the invention includes the steps of consolidating multiple financial account information lists from multiple financial account issuers into a master financial account list, receiving a UPI or a merchant/biller's customer 30database, and matching information from the master financial account list to the customer's UPI or to the master/biller's database to associate at least one financial account number for

PCT/US01/25888

5

each customer. In accordance with desired selection rules, one or more of the matching financial account number(s) is selected, if more than one financial account number is found for a particular customer. The selected financial account number is encrypted, or may be provided already encrypted in the financial account databases. The encrypted financial account number 5or numbers are provided to the merchant/biller for inclusion on the merchant/biller's commercial communication to the customer, thus providing the customer with a means for authorizing payment for purchase to the associated financial account number, such as a particular credit card. Payment for the purchase is processed and made to the merchant/biller from the financial account of the authorizing member. Of course, a financial account number 10can be any unique encrypted identifier, even those including letters as well as numbers.

Alternatively, instead of consolidating multiple financial account information from a number of financial account issuers into a single master financial account database or list, the method may include consolidating some subset of financial account lists and searching a plurality of such lists as well as lists from individual financial account issuers in order to 15 associate at least one financial account number for each customer in the merchant/biller's customer database, or searching a plurality of individual financial account lists made available by different issuers.

PCT/US01/25888

6

In another embodiment, the present invention is directed to a system and method for providing automated payments over a computer network, for example, over the Internet. The system includes an automated payment server which is connected to various financial institutions and which receives and compiles data from those institutions to create files of 5account information for various customers. When a customer desires to purchase goods from a merchant's web site, or to pay bills, the customer is routed to the payment server, and is presented with the account information as compiled by the payment server. The customer selects one or more of the financial accounts, and the payment server transmits the appropriate financial information to the merchant's payment processor to complete the transaction. In this 10manner, credit card numbers are not transmitted over the Internet or stored on a merchant's site, but are only transmitted between the payment server and the payment processor, preferably over a secure line.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

15 For a fuller understanding of the invention, reference is made to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating the problems encountered in matching a large number of financial account issuers to a large number of merchants/billers in an automated payment system;

20 Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the use of the present invention in efficiently matching a large number of financial account issuers to a large number of merchants/billers in an automated payment system;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of an apparatus for carrying out the automated credit card payment method and system of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the apparatus of Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a block diagram of an automated payment system used for billers in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the system of Fig. 6;

Fig. 8 is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of the present invention;
Fig. 9 is a flow chart illustrating the use of the system of Fig. 8;

WO 02/014985 PCT/US01/25888

7

Figs. 10 and 11 are representations of an interface presented to a customer upon accessing a payment server according to one aspect of the invention; and

Fig. 12 is a block diagram of an embodiment of an apparatus for carrying out the automated credit card payment method and system of the present invention using a bricks-5and-mortar terminal and a biometric identifier and/or PIN.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Preferred embodiments of the invention are now described with reference to the drawings. Although many of the drawings and descriptions illustrate the use of the invention 10 with credit card accounts for the sake of simplicity, the invention is in no way meant to be limited to credit card accounts.

Referring to Fig. 3, an automatic payment system 50 according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown. The system 50 may utilize any combination of many types of financial accounts and is described with reference to credit card accounts for 15simplicity. The system 50 may be operated by a company, such as a service bureau, and includes a database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, a master credit card database 57, an identifier matching and selecting subsystem 59, and an optional credit card account number encryption subsystem 53.

The automatic payment system 50 is used in conjunction with n number of credit 20card issuers 60<sub>0</sub> to 60<sub>0</sub>. Each of the n credit card issuers 60 maintains on a computer system its own credit card information list 66<sub>0</sub> to 66<sub>n</sub> in accordance with one of a number of conventional format types known to those of skill in the art. These credit card information lists 66 typically contain account holder identification data, such as the name and address of each account holder, as well as the associated credit card number, name of financial institution, 25account information and demographic information pertaining to each card holder. One skilled in the art will recognize that although the preferred embodiments are described with reference to the use of credit cards, other financial account information or devices, including but not limited to smart cards, bank cards, checking accounts, and virtual payment accounts used for Internet and other on-line commercial transactions, may be used instead of or in any 30combination with credit card accounts.

The automated payment system 50 receives credit card information lists 66 over

PCT/US01/25888

- 8

a transmission medium 68 from the n credit card issuers 60. This transfer of information over medium 68 may be achieved by many communications methods, including but not limited to modem connections, high speed data lines, the Internet, or the physical transfer of storage media, such as tapes or disks. This transfer is authorized by contractual relationships and may 5 include financial incentives. In order to increase the likelihood of locating customer credit card information, it is preferable to include the credit card account information from as many credit card issuers as possible. The database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, which may be in the form of a programmed computer system, sorts and consolidates the credit card information  $66_0$  to  $66_0$  provided by the credit card issuers  $60_0$  to  $60_0$ , and the sorted and 10 consolidated data is then stored in the master credit card information database 57. This database may reside on a mass storage unit of the computer system. Of course, the processing elements and information storage elements may reside on multiple computing devices to provide for contingencies such as fault tolerance and load balancing.

The automated payment system 50 is used to provide credit card account 15information to one or more of *m* number of merchants/billers  $70_{\rm o}$  to  $70_{\rm m}$ . Each of the *m* merchants/billers may maintain on a computer its own list 76 of customer identification data. These lists  $76_{\rm o}$  to  $76_{\rm m}$  include customer identification data such as names and addresses of customers or additional information, such as social security numbers and demographic information. The automatic payment system 50 receives the customer identification data from 20a given merchant/biller  $70_{\rm x}$ , and the matching and selecting subsystem 59 compares the customer identification data supplied by merchants/billers  $70_{\rm x}$  with the records in the master credit card information database 57 to locate matching credit card holder identification data. The matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be in the form of a preprogrammed computer system which is either the same as the one used for the database consolidation and sorting 25subsystem 55, or separate therefrom. The process of matching customers from a merchant/biller database to credit card account holders in the matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be performed using conventional matching algorithms as known to those of skill in the art.

If more than one credit card holder identifier matches a given customer (i.e., 30the customer has more than one credit card), one or more of the matching credit card identifiers is selected or featured by the matching and selecting subsystem 59. This selection

PCT/US01/25888

proceeds in accordance with certain selection and presentation rules. As an illustrative example, a simple selection rule is used wherein the selected credit card is the one issued by the issuer having the most credit cards in the database, i.e., the most "popular" or predominant credit card. Alternatively, in one embodiment, the selection is made on a pro rata basis or 5other algorithm based on the total number of credit card accounts for each issuer in relation to the number of credit card accounts for the other issuers and the total number of credit card accounts in the master credit card database 57. Thus, for example, a credit card issuer which accounts, for example, for 25% of the total number of credit card accounts in the consolidated database, will have its associated credit card account selected 25% of the time for customers 10who have multiple credit card number accounts including that issuer. Another method of selecting one associated credit card account number from more than one matching associated credit card account is to compare the selected associated credit card account numbers with credit card usage information to determine the customer's primary credit card, based on amount of use, and selecting the customer's most often used credit card. Yet another method 15of selecting an account may take into consideration the fees associated with financial transactions and select the financial institution that charges the lowest fees. Alternatively, the selection process may take into account historical data and select the financial institution that yields the best results or success for a particular merchant/biller. Finally, the selection may be made as a result of fees paid by the credit card issuer to receive priority in the selection 20process.

In alternative embodiments, more than one credit card, or all of the credit cards, may be selected for inclusion, and the customer is given the option of selecting which one of the cards is to be used for making payment. In this embodiment, all matching credit card account numbers may be selected and presented to the customer. The selected credit card 25accounts may be presented to the customer in a list with a check box, such as in the following form:

	Choose the card(s) with which you wish to pay
	CITIBANK VISA
	_ DISCOVER
30	AMERICAN EXPRESS

PCT/US01/25888

10

In a more preferred embodiment of the present invention, the selected credit card accounts can also be ordered and presented to the user, based on similar criteria as that used by the system to determine the selection of credit cards, e.g., the most popular card in the database, the customer's most often used credit card, the card that charges the lowest fees, or the card whose 5 issuer has paid the highest fee, can be presented above or ahead of other credit cards.

The selected credit card account number or numbers which are to be included on a commercial communication are encrypted by a credit card account number encryption subsystem 53. The particular method of encryption may include a finder number, record locator, some form of high level encryption, or any other encryption technique. While 10 encryption is an element of the preferred embodiment, the method of encryption may be any method which achieves adequate security and the specific method of encryption does not constitute a material element of the system and method set forth herein. Moreover, credit card information may be encrypted and provided in encrypted form from the credit card issuers 60 before being stored in the master credit card information database.

Fig. 4 illustrates the use of encrypted account information of the present invention, and specifically, encrypted credit card information for the sake of simplicity. In one embodiment, for each customer in a merchant/biller's customer identification data database 76, the encrypted credit card account number associated with the customer is provided by merchant/biller 70, to the customer (step 80) as part of the communication to the customer 20from merchant/biller 70<sub>x</sub>. Alternatively, in a bricks-and-mortar embodiment of the present invention where the bricks-and-mortar merchant does not have a "customer information database," the customer communicates directly to the central database 57 via a payment process interface, e.g., a terminal or computer. At step 90, the customer decides whether to authorize payment by credit card. This authorization step may also include selecting which 25credit card(s) to use if the customer is presented with more than one. If the customer authorizes such payment and returns the commercial communication to the merchant/biller or other payment processing entity, the encrypted credit card account number is decrypted at step 100. The encrypted number may be sent by the system 50 to the credit card issuer, a payment processor or merchant for decryption and/or payment processing. After decryption the credit 30card account number is used to process payment to merchant/biller (step 110) and payment is made to the particular merchant/biller, along with any required payments for use of the system

PCT/US01/25888

1

in handling the transaction. If the customer 90 does not authorize payment, steps 100 and 110 are simply not performed.

It should be understood that elements of the system and method of the present invention described herein, such as in Figures 3 and 4, may be modified in keeping with the 5 intended scope of the invention. For example, the consolidated credit card account database has been described as containing account information from multiple credit card account issuers. However, the merchant/biller's customer identification data may alternatively be matched serially against multiple databases, including individual credit card issuers' credit card account databases and/or one or more consolidated database. Each individual or consolidated database 10 represents some number of credit card issuers which is a subset of all the issuers.

Fig. 5 shows an alternative embodiment of an automated payment system 50' according to the present invention. The system 50' of this alternative embodiment includes a serial matching subsystem 59' and a selection/presentation subsystem 59''. The serial matching subsystem compares customer identification data, received over transmission medium 1569 from a merchant or one or more customer databases 76 of a given merchant/biller 70, to a number of credit card databases 66 of a number of issuers 60. The serial matching subsystem may also compare the customer identification data with a consolidated database 58 containing information consolidated from a limited number of issuers 60, in this case, issuers 3 and 4. The serial matching subsystem locates matches of the merchant/biller's customer identification 20data with account holder identification data contained in the individual and partially consolidated databases 66 and 58, as discussed above. Once a set of matching credit card account numbers is located, the selection subsystem 59'' selects one or more of the account numbers, in accordance with the selection rules discussed above.

Referring now to Fig. 6, therein is shown a block diagram of an embodiment 25of the automated credit card payment system of the present invention as applied to merchant/billers. In this arrangement, multiple merchant/billers 150 use a fulfillment house 152 and a service bureau 154 employing the system of the present invention to deal with multiple credit card account databases 156, one or more of which may be partially consolidated databases as explained above. More than one fulfillment house 152 may be utilized to serve 30the various merchant/billers and/or groups of merchant/billers, or one fulfillment house 152 may be used for each biller 150. Merchant/billers 150 provide the fulfillment house 152 with

PCT/US01/25888

12

each of their customer files 158 and outside lists 160 (e.g., lists of prospective customers). The service bureau 154 uses the system of the present invention to match the names on the merchant/billers' customer files 158 with associated financial account information. This information, including credit card information, is consolidated by the service bureau 154 from 5multiple credit card issuers 156 and is stored in a master credit card file. Alternatively, this credit card information can be accessed serially from databases of the multiple credit card issuers.

After matching the merchant/billers' customer files 158 and outside lists 160 with associated financial account information, the service bureau encrypts the matching credit 10card account numbers (block 162) and provides them to the fulfillment house 152. The use of the located credit card information is shown in the flow chart of Fig. 7, where fulfillment house 152 uses the encrypted credit card account information in marketing, billing and/or renewal efforts (step 164), such as by placing encrypted credit card account numbers on commercial communications. At step 165, customers authorize the use of their credit card, 15and optionally select which credit card to use if more than one is presented to the customer.

When customers place orders using the encrypted credit card account information on the commercial communication, the orders are collected and the encrypted number entered and consolidated into a consolidated order file (step 166). The encrypted account numbers in the consolidated order file are then decrypted (step 170) and payments are 20 processed (step 172).

Referring now to Figs. 8 and 9, there is shown another embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the system 200 is designed for use over a computer network, for example, over the Internet, a LAN, WAN, or the like. The system 200 includes an automated payment server 202 that includes a processing unit 204 and a customer database 25206 maintained by the processing unit, and is similar in many respects to the automated payment system 50 described above. The database combines account information from various financial institutions, as well as bill information from various billers.

The automated payment server 202 connects to a plurality of customers at respective terminals 208, and interacts with those customers via a suitable customer interface 30210 (only one terminal is shown schematically in FIG. 8). The customer interface can be a basic application used to select payment options, a method of viewing bills from various

PCT/US01/25888

13

billers, and/or a full-service interface that combines those functions and allows the customer to re-configure the account. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various forms of interface may be employed.

The automated payment server 202 further connects to one or more merchant 5sites 212 over one or more communication lines 214. Preferably, at least one of the lines 214 is a secure line for transmission of payment information, as is described in greater detail below.

The automated payment server 202 is connected to various financial institutions 220 and to various billers 222. The automated payment system 202 receives account 10information, including updated account information, over a transmission medium from the financial institutions, and receives billing information from the various billers, as described above in connection with the automated payment server 50. For example, various utilities may transmit bills electronically to their customers via the payment server 202. An automated account information merge/purge subsystem 224 and an automated bill information 15merge/purge subsystem 226, which may be in the form of programmed computer systems, sort and consolidate the account and bill information provided by the financial institutions and billers, and the sorted and consolidated data is then stored in the customer database 206 for subsequent access, as is described in greater detail below.

The customer terminals 208 can take many different forms, and can access the 20automated payment server 202 in many different ways. For example, the customer may transmit purchase requests via a brick-and-mortar terminal, E-mail, or over the Internet by clicking on a banner on a web site, through interactive television, WebTV\*, over the telephone, by direct mail, or in any other suitable manner. In one embodiment, the merchant site 212 may post a banner indicating that payment for a transaction may be conducted through 25the automated payment server 202. The customer can then click on the banner and be directed to the automated payment server, as is described in greater detail below.

The customer interface 210 is preferably a suitable interface that allows the automated payment server 202 to simultaneously communicate with multiple customers over the Internet or other computer network.

Referring now to Fig. 9, the operation of the automated payment server 202 is described in more detail. Operation begins at step 300, with a customer beginning the

WO 02/014985 PCT/US01/25888

Ì1

transaction by communicating with a merchant 212 and either placing an order or requesting to pay a bill for goods or services. In one embodiment, the merchant site presents the customer with a banner having an embedded URL of the automated payment server 202, or alternatively the merchant site can automatically direct the customer to the automated payment 5server when the customer places an order. At step 302, the customer is linked to the automated payment server 202, and at step 303 the server determines whether the customer is registered with the server. If the customer is not registered, operation proceeds to step 304, and the customer registers with the payment server. Registration can be conducted over the computer network, over the telephone, through the mail, or in any other suitable manner, and 10 involves receiving identifying information from the customer to verify the identity of the customer for all subsequent transactions. For example, the customer may provide their name, address, etc., along with their mother's maiden name, a social security number, or the like. The customer may also provide biometric information, e.g., fingerprint sample, handwriting sample, retina scan, or voice recording/pattern. Once the customer's identity has been 15verified, a password is selected for the customer (either chosen by the customer or randomly assigned by the payment server), as is well known in the art.

If the customer is already registered with the payment server 202, the customer inputs his or her user name and password at step 303, and after authentication or verification, the customer is allowed to continue with the payment transaction.

20 The merchant 212 transmits order and/or payment data to the payment server 202, either automatically or after being prompted by the payment server, at step 305. The data preferably identifies the customer, for example by including order ID data and/or a customer UPI, which is also transmitted to the payment server when the customer accesses the payment server. Alternatively, the merchant site may transmit the customer's name or any other 25identifying data to allow the payment server to associate the customer with the particular order or payment request.

The customer's UPI or other identifying information is associated with the customer's financial account(s). The UPI can be in the form of a name, password, PIN, ID number, or other unique identifier. Alternatively, the UPI can take the form of a fingerprint, 30 retina scan, voice pattern, handwriting sample, or other unique "biometric" identifier. These biometric identifiers, in some cases, can be used in conjunction with a password or PIN. The

PCT/US01/25888

15

recording, capturing, and storing of unique biometric identifiers such as retina scans, iris scans, voice patterns, digital handwriting samples or digitally scanned fingerprints are described in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,047,281; 6,038,334 and 5,991,408, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. In one possible embodiment of the invention, the 5customer's UPI is recorded and/or authenticated using prior art devices, such as digital scanners, cameras or recorders, attached to the consumer's computer or located at a bricks-and-mortar or other merchant terminal as exemplified in Fig. 12.

Once the payment server has associated the customer with the order or payment request, operation proceeds to step 306, and the payment server accesses the customer database 10to retrieve the customer's account information, which as described above is in the form of various credit cards, debit cards, smart cards, bank cards, demand deposit accounts such as checking accounts, virtual payment accounts, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), payment products from third party, non-bank financial institutions such as CyberCash and TransPoint (MSFDC), stored 15value tools such as VisaCash and Mondex, and the like. Then, at step 308, the payment server 202 presents the customer account information to the customer (Fig. 10). The account information identifies the various financial to the customer, without transmitting entire account numbers to the customer. For example, some identifying information is transmitted, such as the name of the credit card, the last several digits of a credit card, or the like (e.g., "AmEx 206543"). The account information may include, in addition to identifying the various credit cards and the like, available balance information, date of the last update to that account, date of last payment, credit limit, transaction detail, and the like.

At step 310, the customer selects one or more payment options, and that selection (or selections) is transmitted to the payment server via the interface 210. Thus, the 25actual account numbers are not transmitted between the payment server and the customer.

The customer may choose to split a payment between two or more financial accounts, for example, two or more credit cards. In addition, the payment server can present the accounts to the customer in some specific order, as defined by the customer, the financial institutions, particular merchants, account usage, available balances, interest rates, and the Olike

In one embodiment, the payment server 202 presents the customer only with

PCT/US01/25888

16

appropriate payment options. For example, if the purchase amount is \$100, and the customer's checking account has a balance less than \$100, the payment server preferably does not provide that as an option to the customer. Alternatively, the checking account may be presented to the customer, but in a different color or font to indicate to the customer that such account is not 5 suitable for the particular transaction, but can be used in connection with another payment option to complete the transaction.

At step 312, the payment server 202 transmits a request for authorization to the payment processor of the merchant site 212, which includes the payment option selected by the customer. At step 314, the customer interface determines whether the payment option is 10acceptable. For example, the customer may have selected a credit card that is not accepted by the particular merchant. If so, operation proceeds to step 316, and the customer is informed that the authorization failed. Operation then flows back to step 308, to allow the customer to select another payment option.

If the payment option is acceptable at step 314, operation proceeds to step 318, 15 and the customer is notified that the transaction has been approved. Then, at step 320, the payment server 202 transmits the approved order or Approval to the merchant site or to the merchant's payment processor 212, preferably over a secure line, and the merchant fills the order by interacting with the customer 208. For example, the merchant site may request shipping information if they do not already have it or other required information to complete 20 the transaction. Then, at step 322, the payment processor accesses the appropriate financial institution and transmits the payment information, so that the customer's account is debited and the merchant's account is credited.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the above steps may also be carried out over a telephone network that allows for interactivity, such as those systems 25offering voice recognition and/or dual tone multi-frequency (DTMF) tones. As is well known in the art, the customer may enter a user ID and password by pressing the appropriate keys on the telephone, with the payment server including the appropriate, well-known hardware to interpret the DTMF tones to determine the corresponding numbers entered by the customer. Thus, a customer may dial a telephone number, listen to a list of available goods, services 30and/or bills, and select one or more of the goods, services and/or bills by pressing appropriate keys on the telephone. The payment server, through a well-known interactive system such as

WO 02/014985 PCT/US01/25888

interactive voice response (IVR) or the like, then prompts the customer to enter identification data, such as a user name and PIN number, or the like. Once the identity of the customer is verified, the payment server may then present the customer with a list of credit cards that may be used to complete a transaction. For example, the IVR software may read "Press 1 to select 5your Visa account, press 2 to select American Express," or the like. The customer may simply press the corresponding key on the telephone to signal the payment server of the customer's choice. The remainder of the process is the same as the computer network version described above. Thus, in this manner the payment server 202 is available to customers over a telephone network.

Alternatively, the present invention may be implemented through the mail, by the customer returning an order form sent through regular mail and/or electronic mail. In this manner, the payment server sends a preprinted order form to potential customers, listing various goods, services and/or bills available, and also listing that particular customer's financial accounts as compiled by the customer database 206. The customer selects one or 15more of the goods, services and/or bills, selects a financial account for payment from the customer-specific list printed on the form, and returns the order form to the payment server 202. An operator at the payment server then enters the data, or in the case of electronic transfer such as email, the data is uploaded. The payment server forwards the data to the appropriate merchant. If the payment option selected by the customer is not appropriate (e.g., 20the merchant does not accept that type of payment or the available balance is too low), the customer is notified, either through the mail (electronic or regular) or via telephone, and may select another payment option. Once a suitable payment option is selected, the remainder of the transaction is completed along the lines of the computer network version described above.

In an alternative embodiment, the customer who receives the order form or bill 25may call a telephone number provided on the form and complete the transaction over the telephone, in the same manner as described above.

In another embodiment, the customer at terminal 208 may access the payment server 202 directly without initially accessing a merchant's site. The customer then may be presented with outstanding bills, as compiled by the automated bill information merge/purge 30subsystem 226 (Fig. 11). The customer may select one or more of the bills to be paid, and is then presented with the account information, similar to the process described above with

PCT/US01/25888

18

respect to Fig. 9.

It will be apparent that the system and method of the present invention allow payment transactions to be performed over a computer network without requiring any credit card numbers or the like to be transmitted directly between the customer 208 and merchant 5212, or between the customer 208 and the payment server 202. Thus, no account information passes over a public network such as the Internet. The account information is transmitted over secure lines between the financial institutions and the payment server 202, and between the payment server and the merchant's payment processor or the merchant's site. In addition, multiple merchants do not need to maintain a database of account numbers, as such information 10 is maintained at the payment server 202. Maintaining the database at one location rather than at each individual merchant further reduces the likelihood of fraud.

Referring to Fig. 12, an automatic payment system 50 is shown according to an embodiment that implements use of biometric identifiers and/or PINs. A biometric identifier and/or PIN is collected at a bricks-and-mortal terminal. A bricks-and-mortar terminal may 15include a computer, digital camera, scanner, recorder or other device capable of capturing such information. The automatic payment system 50 receives the biometric identifier and/or PIN from the bricks-and-mortar terminals 84<sub>x</sub>, and the matching and selecting subsystem 59 compares the biometric identifier and/or PIN 88<sub>x</sub> with the records in the master credit card information database 57 to locate matching credit card holder identification data. The matching 20and selecting subsystem 59 may be in the form of a preprogrammed computer system which is either the same as the one used for the database consolidation and sorting subsystem 55, or separate therefrom. The process of matching customers from a merchant/biller database to credit card account holders in the matching and selecting subsystem 59 may be performed using conventional matching algorithms as known to those of skill in the art. If a match is 25found in the master credit card database 57, then the PIN is validated.

As can be understood from the above description of the present invention, the present invention provides a number of benefits to customers (such as credit card users), financial institutions, merchants and billers. Benefits for the financial institutions include reduced fraud, more credit card usage, higher retention rates, and increased fee income. 30Benefits for the customer include convenience, privacy, and efficiency. Benefits to the merchant/billers are reduced fraud and theft, higher retention rates, less bad debt, savings on

PCT/US01/25888

19

mailing expense, and better customer relationships.

The system and method of the present invention may also be used in conjunction with a targeted marketing or coupon plan in which purchasing behavior can be identified and recorded by the payment server. In one possible embodiment, consumers with financial 5accounts (including credit card accounts) on the payment server can acquiesce in having their purchasing behavior tracked and provided to a wide variety of businesses and industries. These business and industries can then preferentially target various consumers for discounts, coupons, or other marketing deals based on their past purchases.

Another benefit provided by the present invention is the security and privacy 10 for consumers. Therefore, in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the invention herein, a centralized organization or company is the only party, aside from the financial institutions with relationships with the consumers, as well as the consumers themselves, that has access to the specific financial account information. It should be understood that the functions performed by the central organization may actually be divided between separate 15 entities. For example, one entity may perform processing, while another entity performs encryption/decryption. As described above, only encrypted account information is provided to the merchants/billers; however, it is within the scope of the present invention to provide a system in which accounts are provided to merchants/billers directly, and the merchant/biller or other company encrypts such account information for use in its billing materials. In such 20a case, once the merchant/biller receives the customer's approval for charging a particular account, it can proceed to decrypt and process the payment from the financial institution directly.

Many other user functions known in the art can be implemented such as the ability to allow a user to modify his user registration information.

While several forms of the invention have been described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and improvements may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

PCT/US01/25888

20

#### WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller, comprising the steps

compiling in a memory financial account information for at least one customer from a plurality of financial institutions;

receiving and storing transaction information relating to a particular customer:

retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the customer;

presenting the financial account information to the customer; receiving and storing a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts; and

providing the selected financial account(s) information either to the merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

- The method of claim 1, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account,  $checking \, account, virtual \, payment \, account, virtual \, cash \, account, \, wire \, transfer \, networks, \, financial \, account, \, virtual \, cash \, account, \, virtual \,$  $electronic\ data\ interchange\ (FEDI), Echeck, Automated\ Clearing\ House\ (ACH), and\ stored\ value$ tools.
- 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.

PCT/US01/25888

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- 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- The method of claim 4, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of dividing payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
- 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and

registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN and a biometric measurement of the customer.

PCT/US01/25888

- 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 13. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of comparing the PIN, biometric measurement, or both, against a respective stored database of PINs or biometric measurements.
- 14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of comparing a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
- 15. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.
- 16. A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account for a bill selected from a plurality of bills presented to the customer, the method comprising the following steps:
- compiling in a memory financial account information for at least one customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
- presenting the customer with bill information for each of a plurality of bills;
- receiving selection information from the customer specifying a particular selected bill which is to be paid;
- retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the customer;
- presenting the financial account information to the customer; and receiving selection information from the customer specifying a particular account to be used to pay the selected bill.

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PCT/US01/25888

23

- 17. The method of claim 16, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.
- 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.
- 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- The method of claim 19, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial
  accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of dividing payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
- 22. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 23. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.

PCT/US01/25888

24

- 24. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 25. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and

registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.

- 26. The method of claim 25, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, an IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.
- 27. The method of claim 26, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 28. The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address, biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
- 29. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of comparing a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
- 30. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.

2

PCT/US01/25888

31. A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to
a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant biller over a computer
network, comprising the steps of:
compiling in a memory at a payment server financial account information
for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financial
institutions;
receiving over the computer network transaction information at the
payment server relating to a particular customer and storing the transaction information;
retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the
customer;
transmitting the financial account information over the computer network
to the customer;
receiving over the computer network a selection by the customer of one
or more of the financial accounts and storing the selection; and

transmitting the selected financial account information over the computer network to said merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

- 32. The method of claim 31, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.
- 33. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.

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PCT/US01/25888

26

- 34. The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- 35. The method of claim 34, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 1 36. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of dividing payment
  2 for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account
  3 is selected.
  - 37. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
  - 38. The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
  - 39. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
  - The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and

registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.

 $41. \qquad \text{The method of claim 40, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.}$ 

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PCT/US01/25888

- 1 42. The method of claim 41, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
  - 43. The method of claim 41, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address, and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
  - 44. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of comparing a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
  - 45. The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.

PCT/US01/25888

28

46. A method for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant biller, comprising the steps of:

compiling in a memory at a payment server financial account information for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financial institutions;

receiving transaction information relating to a particular customer;

transmitting said transaction information to the payment server and storing the transaction information;

retrieving from the memory the financial account information for the customer;

displaying the financial account information on an interface;

receiving a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts and storing the selection; and

 $transmitting \ the \ selected \ financial \ account(s) \ information \ either \ to \ the \\ merchant/biller \ or \ to \ a \ payment \ processor \ associated \ with \ the \ merchant/biller.$ 

- 47. The method of claim 46, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.
- 48. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.

PCT/US01/25888

- 49. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- $50. \qquad \text{The method of claim 49, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial} \ accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.}$
- 51. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of dividing payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
- 52. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 53. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 54. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
  - 55. The method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and
    - registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.
- 56. The method of claim 55, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.

PCT/US01/25888

- 57. The method of claim 56, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 58. The method of claim 56, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
- 59. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of comparing a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
- 60. The method of claim 59, further comprising the step of presenting to customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance equal to or greater than the transaction value.
- 61. The method of claim 46, wherein the interface includes a terminal, smart terminal, smart box, keypad, LCD display, cardswipe device or touchpad.
- $\begin{tabular}{ll} 62. & The method of claim 46, wherein only those financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller are displayed on the interface. \\ \end{tabular}$

PCT/US01/25888

31

 ${\bf 63.} \qquad {\bf A} \ {\bf method} \ {\bf for} \ {\bf facilitating} \ {\bf direct} \ {\bf bill} \ {\bf payment} \ {\bf by} \ {\bf a} \ {\bf customer}, \ {\bf comprising} \ {\bf the} \ {\bf steps} \ {\bf of:}$ 

receiving and storing billing information from a merchant/biller or merchant payment processor relating to a particular customer;

retrieving from a customer database financial account information for the customer compiled from a plurality of financial institutions;

presenting to the customer a bill payment interface with one or more of the customer's financial accounts;

receiving and storing a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts for payment of the bill; and

 $providing \ the \ selected \ financial \ account(s) \ information \ either \ to \ the \\ merchant/biller \ or \ to \ a payment \ processor \ associated \ with the merchant/biller.$ 

- 64. The method of claim 63, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value tools.
- 65. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of consolidating at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database and wherein said retrieving step includes the step of searching said consolidated database.
- 66. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of selecting a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and presenting the subset to the customer.
- 67. The method of claim 66, wherein the subset of accounts includes financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.

PCT/US01/25888

32

- 68. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of dividing payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
- 69. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of selecting the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 70. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of encrypting said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller, or payment processor, and encrypting or truncating the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 71. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of updating said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 72. The method of claim 63, further comprising the steps of determining whether a customer is a registered customer; and

registering a customer if the customer is not yet registered.

- 73. The method of claim 72, wherein the step of registering a customer further includes capturing a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer.
- 74. The method of claim 73, wherein the biometric measurement includes voice patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
- 75. The method of claim 73, further comprising the step of comparing at least one of the PIN, IP address or biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.

PCT/US01/25888

	33
1	76. The method of claim 63, further comprising the step of comparing
2	transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the
3	financial account information.
1	77. The method of claim 76, further comprising the step of presenting t
2	customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance
3	equal to or greater than the transaction value.

- 78. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller, comprising:
- a processor; and
- a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the processor operative with the processing instructions to:
- compile in a memory financial account information for at least one customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
- s receive and storing transaction information relating to a particular
- customer;
  retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
- customer;
- 2 present the financial account information to the customer;
- receive and store a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial
   accounts; and
- provide the selected financial account(s) information either to the merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.
- 79. The system of claim 78, wherein said financial account corresponds to at least one of a credit card, charge card, debit card, smart card, bank card, demand deposit account, checking account, virtual payment account, virtual cash account, wire transfer networks, financial electronic data interchange (FEDI), Echeck, Automated Clearing House (ACH), and stored value

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#### PCT/US01/25888

- 80. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to consolidate at least two of said plurality of financial account information databases into a single consolidated financial account information database.
- 81. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select a subset of one or more financial accounts from among a plurality of customer financial accounts, and to present the subset to the customer.
- 82. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select a subset of accounts that includes financial accounts acceptable to the merchant/biller.
- 83. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to divide a payment for a single transaction among more than one financial account if more than one financial account is selected.
- 84. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to select the order in which one or more financial accounts are presented to the customer before presenting the financial account information to the customer.
- 85. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to encrypt said selected customer financial account information prior to providing it to said merchant/biller or to said payment processor, and to encrypt or truncate the financial account information before it is presented to the customer.
- 86. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to update said financial account information from at least one of said plurality of financial institutions.
- 87. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to determine whether a customer is a registered customer, and to register the customer if the customer is not yet registered.

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#### PCT/US01/25888

- 88. The system of claim 87, wherein the processor is operative to capture a PIN, IP address or a biometric measurement of the customer as part of the registration.
- 1 89. The system of claim 88, wherein the biometric information includes voice
  2 patterns, fingerprints, retina scans, or handwriting samples.
  - 90. The system of claim 88, wherein the processor is operative to compare at least one of the PIN, IP address and biometric measurement, against a respective stored database of PINs, IP addresses or biometric measurements.
  - 91. The system of claim 78, wherein the processor is operative to compare a transaction value from the transaction information to an available balance value from the financial account information.
- 1 92. The system of claim 91, wherein the processor is operative to present to
  2 customers only those financial accounts with an individual or combined available fund balance
  3 equal to or greater than the transaction value.

## PCT/US01/25888

93. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial accoun
for a bill selected from a plurality of bills presented to the customer, comprising:
a processor; and
a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
processor operative with the processing instructions to:
compile in a memory financial account information for at least one
customer from a plurality of financial institutions;
present the customer with bill information for each of a plurality of bills
receive selection information from the customer specifying a particula
selected bill which is to be paid;
retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
customer;
present the financial account information to the customer; and
receive selection information from the customer specifying a particula
account to be used to pay the selected bill.

PCT/US01/25888

94. An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial account
to a merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with a merchant/biller over a compute
network, comprising:
a processor; and
a memory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
processor operative with the processing instructions to:
compile in a memory at a payment server financial account information
for at least one customer, said information being received from a plurality of financia
institutions;
receive over the computer network transaction information at the paymen
server relating to a particular customer and storing the transaction information;
retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
customer;
transmit the financial account information over the computer network to
the customer;
receive over the computer network a selection by the customer of one o
more of the financial accounts and storing the selection; and
transmit the selected financial account information over the compute
network to said merchant/biller or a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.

## PCT/US01/25888

95.	An apparatus for facilitating payment from a customer's financial accoun
to a merchant/biller or	a payment processor associated with a merchant biller, comprising:
a proce	essor; and
a mem	ory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
processor operative w	ith the processing instructions to:
	compile in a memory at a payment server financial account information
for at least one cust	omer, said information being received from a plurality of financia
institutions;	
	receive transaction information relating to a particular customer;
	transmit said transaction information to the payment server and storing the
transaction informatio	n;
	retrieve from the memory the financial account information for the
customer;	
	display the financial account information on an interface;
	receive a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial account
and storing the selecti	on; and
	transmit the selected financial account(s) information either to the
merchant/biller or to a	payment processor associated with the merchant/biller.
96.	An apparatus for facilitating direct bill payment by a customer
comprising:	
a proce	essor; and
a mem	ory storing processing instructions for controlling the processor, the
processor operative w	ith the processing instructions to:
	receive and store billing information from a merchant/biller or merchan
payment processor rel	ating to a particular customer;
	retrieve from a customer database financial account information for the
customer compiled fro	om a plurality of financial institutions;
	present to the customer a bill payment interface with one or more of the
customer's financial a	accounts;

## PCT/US01/25888

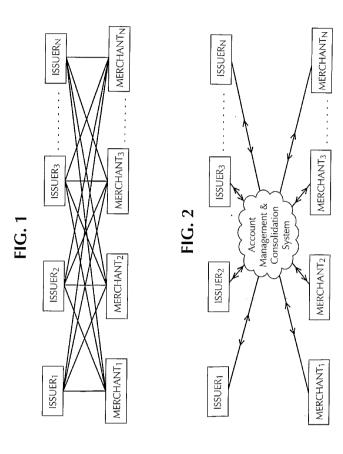
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: receive and store a selection by the customer of at least one of the financial accounts for payment of the bill; and

provide the selected financial account(s) information either to the

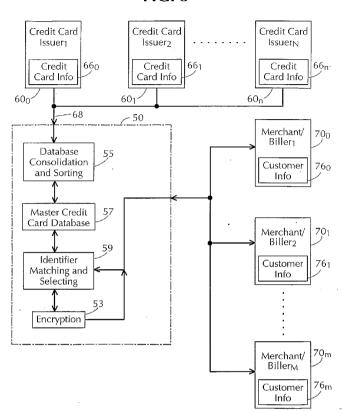
merchant/biller or to a payment processor associated with the merchant/biller. -.

WO 02/014985 PCT/US01/25888 1/10





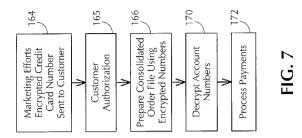
**FIG.** 3

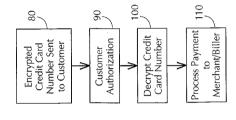


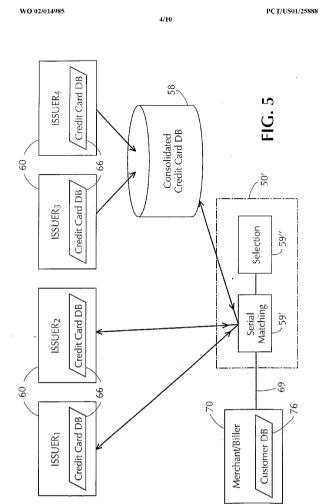
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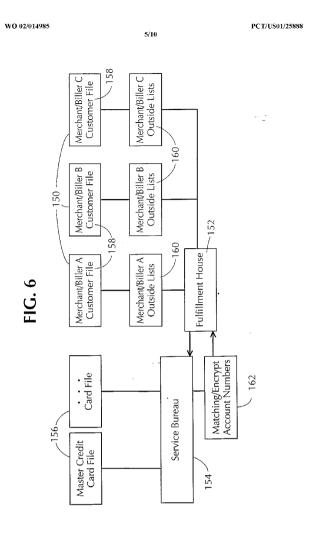
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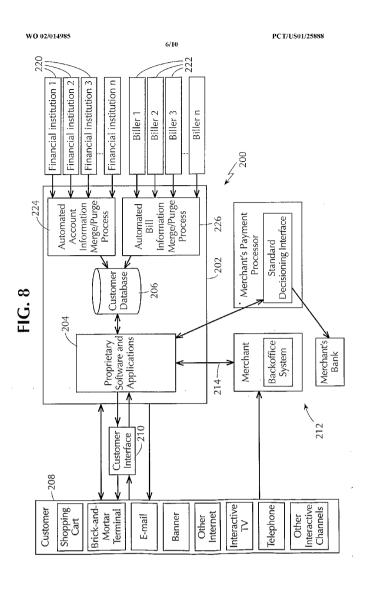
FIG. 4

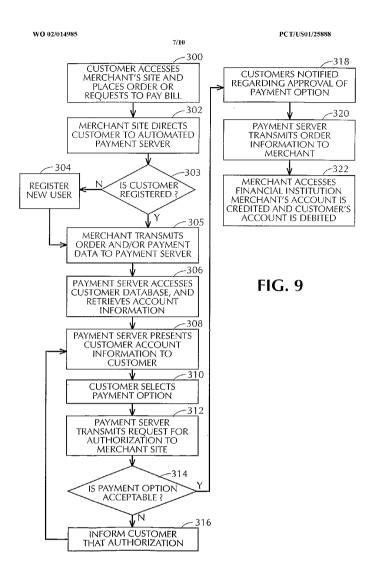






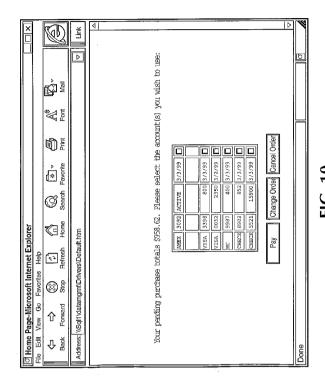




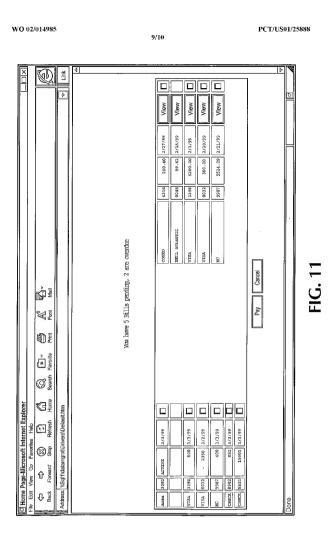


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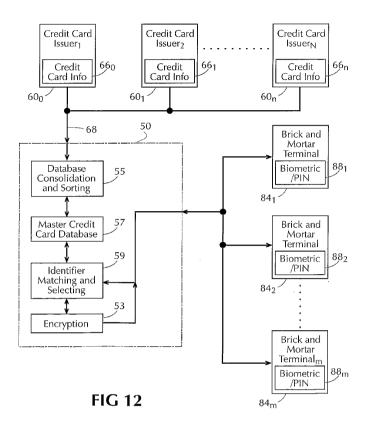


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	INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT	г	International app	
			PCT/US01/958	
IPC(7) :	SSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER G06F 17/50 :705/55 to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to bot	h national classificati	ion and IPC	
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U.S. :	ocumentation searched (classification system followe 705/35, 39			
searched	tion searched other than minimum documentation to			
	lata base consulted during the international search (t DERWENT, WORLD WIDE WEB, EAST	ame of data base an	d, where practicable	e, search terms used)
C. DOC	UMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where ap	propriate, of the rel	evant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X,P	US 2001/0001321 A1 (RESNICK et al.) 17 May 2001, see entire document.			1-96
х	US 5,987,132 A (ROWNEY) 16 November 1999, see entire document.			
Y	US 5,963,926 A (KUMOMURA) 05 October 1999, see entire document.  US 5,757,917 A (ROSE et al.) 26 May 1998, see entire document.			
Y				1-96
☐ Furtl	her documents are listed in the continuation of Box	٠ ل	ent family annex.	
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Date of the actual completion of the international search  p+ JANUARY 9008  Date of mailing of the international search  1 3 FEB 2002				
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