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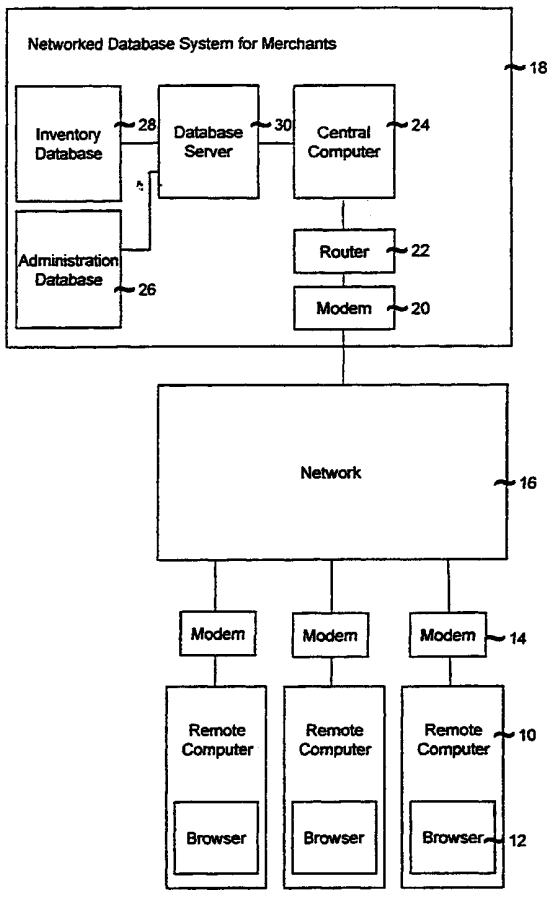

(57) Abstract: An improved method and system for presenting and vending items such as collectibles permits viewing of images of the item before making a purchasing decision. A seller who desires to sell an item provides personal contact information and an inventory listing to a database (28) of a networked transaction system (18). The system receives a request from a potential buyer using the unique identifier that corresponds to an item of interest. The system, upon receiving the request, accesses its inventory database using the unique identifier as a key that is associated with a record referencing the image of the collectible, and other helpful information. After determining that the record of interest exists, the system displays one or more images that accurately represent the appearance of the item.

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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONDUCTING TRANSACTIONS

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a method and apparatus for conducting transactions for items posted for sale on a computerized system, especially for the buying and selling of collectibles.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Collectibles such as coins, stamps, comic books, sports cards and the like are unique in that each individual collectible may have a value which varies as compared to other items of the same type and series. Factors such as rarity, popularity, age, physical condition and the number of items in the same class currently available for sale all contribute to a collectible's current market value. The condition of a rare stamp or coin will have a profound impact on its value, but can only be judged by close inspection. Accordingly, sales of such items usually require the buyer to personally inspect the item unless it has been pre-certified by a grading service. Graded coins are sealed into a labeled, transparent, plastic case after grading, removing the need for a buyer to inspect the actual item prior to purchase.

The established methods for procuring collectibles are shopping in-person and shopping via a communication device such as a telephone or computer. Shopping in-person permits a personal inspection of the item to be purchased, but the set of items for sale is limited to the actual inventory of the dealer visited, and the buyer may not want to travel in unsecured areas with potentially highly-valued collectibles. While shopping via telephone or computer eliminates the need for physical contact, it requires either the buyer or seller to initiate contact with the other party. As such the buyer cannot browse the inventory of a number of different sellers at the same time or make a market-specific search.

Internet commerce has become increasingly common, yet the buying and selling of collectibles via the Internet or a similar network is difficult because of the

unique nature of each collectible. A need has arisen for a system that will allow a potential buyer of a collectible to easily and readily access information that accurately reflects current attributes of a particular collectible, and then purchase that item through the Internet or a comparable network. The present invention addresses this need.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an improved method and apparatus for presentation and vending of collectibles that have each been assigned a unique identifier such as a serial number. According to a first aspect of the invention, a method for identification of items of a type wherein each item has a unique, preassigned identifier includes an initial step of receiving from a user a requested identifier which corresponds to an item of interest. A computerized database of item information is then accessed. This database includes unique identifiers for the items and an image file name, which may be the same as or different from the unique identifier for each item. It is then determined if the entered identifier is present in the database, and if the identifier is present, a display is presented to the user who entered the identifier. The display contains one or more images of the item, which images accurately represent the appearance of the actual item associated with the identifier received from the user. In this manner the user, generally a prospective purchaser, can view and inspect the item prior to attempting to purchase it. The transaction between buyer and the seller of the displayed item may then be consummated by one of the traditional methods described above, or by one of the on line methods discussed hereafter.

A second aspect of the invention provides a method for distributing information concerning an item having a value, wherein the item is one of a class of a limited number of items each having a unique value that is influenced by the total number of items in the class, such as a type of collectible. Such a method includes the steps of displaying an image of one of the items for inspection by an interested user, displaying in association with the image an abridged report containing information about other items in the same class as the displayed item or, providing a selectable option to the

user viewing the abridged report display to select a full report of information about other items in the same class as the displayed item, and providing, in response to the user's selection of the option, information permitting the user to obtain the full report. The user may be called upon to become a registered user in order to obtain the full report, may be asked to pay a fee, or may be solicited to order further information from a vendor.

A further aspect of the invention provides for a labeled collectible suitable for use with a computerized transaction system for collectibles. Such a labeled collectible includes the collectible item, first indicia secured to the collectible item of a unique identifier associated with the collectible, and second indicia secured to the collectible item of location information at which an image of the collectible item may be viewed on the computerized transaction system (for example, an Internet URL). Although the indicia may be provided as tags or labels, it is preferred for small collectibles such as coins to include a case which unites the collectible item and first and second indicia. The case may be made of a transparent material so that the indicia may be viewed within.

According to a further method of the invention, a seller who desires to sell a collectible will provide personal contact information and an inventory listing to a networked database system. The transaction system will receive from a potential buyer a request using the unique identifier that corresponds to a collectible of interest. The system, upon receiving the request, will access its records using the unique identifier as a key that is associated with a record referencing an image of the collectible. The image file name may conveniently use the unique identifier as a whole or a part of the file name to allow for easy storage and access. After determining that the record of interest exists, the database system will provide to the potential buyer for display one or more images that accurately represent the appearance of the item. The potential buyer may further be presented with context-sensitive choices that will allow registered buyers to purchase or make a counteroffer upon the collectible. The seller is allowed to accept or reject the buyer's counteroffer and make a counteroffer if the seller desires. The networked transaction system will close the transaction and later solicit personal opinions of the users concerning the transaction. These and other features of the

invention are described in the detailed description which follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings, wherein like numerals indicate like elements:

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of a transaction system according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a front view of an encased, graded collectible of a kind known in the art and used in the invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of a screen display for a collectible presented to a user for possible purchase;

Figure 4 is a top-level flowchart of a transaction process according to the invention;

Figure 5 is a flowchart of a seller add/update inventory process;

Figure 6 is a flowchart of a create buyer account process;

Figure 7 is a flowchart of a buyer inventory search process;

Figure 8 is a flowchart of a want list update process;

Figure 9 is a flowchart of a create seller account process;

Figure 10 is a flowchart of a purchase process;

Figure 11 is a flowchart of an offer process;

Figure 12 is a first advanced buyer search query menu;

Figure 13 is a second advanced buyer search query menu; and

Figure 14 is a search results display.

While the making and using of various embodiments of the present invention are discussed in detail below, it should be appreciated that the present invention provides many applicable inventive concepts which can be embodied in a wide variety of specific contexts. The specific embodiments discussed herein are merely illustrative of specific ways to make and use the invention and are not to delimit the scope of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Figure 1 illustrates a system according to the invention for storing and accessing attributes of collectibles posted for sale and for selling such collectibles. A

buyer or seller of a collectible, using a remote terminal or computer 10 running browser software 12 and having a suitable communications device such as a modem 14, uses browser 12 to communicate through a network 16 such as the Internet to a networked transaction system 18. Transaction system 18 will ideally communicate with network 16 through a communications connection 20 such as a T1 line or modem. Connection 20 communicates through an optional router 22 with a central computer 24. Computer 24 has access to an administration database 26, which stores information related to buyers and sellers, and to an inventory database 28, which stores information related to the collectibles or other items to be offered for sale. A database server 30 operated by central computer 24 may be used to access administration database 26 and inventory database 28 which are stored on a suitable data mass storage device such as a hard disk drive, read-write CD drive, or the like. Databases 26, 28 are preferably relational databases having records and data fields which can be searched, printed, and the like according to predetermined rules.

Inventory database 28 contains relevant sales information related to each collectible 32, and such information is preferably maintained permanently for a collectible once it has entered the database, rather than re-created each time a new seller wishes to offer the item for sale. In this manner, a sales history for each collectible 32 will be generated. The database entry is described below for a coin, but the system will work equally well with other types of collectibles such as postage stamps, comic books, and sports cards.

Figure 2 illustrates a coin which has been graded and encased by the Numismatic Guaranty Corporation of America. More generally, for purposes of the present invention, a collectible item such as a coin 32 is placed in a transparent or partially transparent container or case 34 for protection against altering its condition or tampering with its certification. Case 34 is preferably sealed so that it cannot be opened without substantially destroying case 34. Case 34 is made of a material substantially free from substances that may alter the quality of the coin, stamp, or other collectible item over a long period. Case 34 has an internal label 38 showing the unique identifier, such as a serial number 36. The serial number or similar marking 36 may be indelibly printed or embossed on case 34, or otherwise affixed so that it cannot

be tampered with, so that it permanently identifies the case and enclosed item. Preferably, the coin or other collectible 32 is graded just prior to placement in case 34, and label 38 is printed and placed along with coin 32 at the same time inside of a transparent portion of the case 34. The unique identifier may also include a scanable identifier such as a bar code 40, scanable chip of the like for convenient identification by machines. The present invention takes advantage of the sealed, certified nature of the collectible 32 to permit sales via a network such as the Internet as described hereafter.

A coin 32 that has not yet been entered into database 28 is first inspected. Methods of inspection and appraisal can take many forms, but coin grades are ranked progressively according as "About Good" (AG-3), "Good" (G-4), "Very Good" (VG-8), "Fine" (F-12), "Very Fine" (VF-20), "Extremely Fine" (EF-40 or XF-40), and "About Uncirculated" (AU-50,53,55,or 58). Uncirculated coins fall into the "Brilliant Uncirculated" (BU), "UNC" or "Mint State" (MS 60 through 70) designation. Other designations are used to describe characteristics of the coin such as coloring, finish, qualities of minting, specific gravity, and population. Population is the number of coins of a particular type that a given grading service (such as the American Numismatic Association Certification Service, the Numismatic Guaranty Corporation of America, or the Professional Coin Grading Service) has rated at a particular numerical evaluation. The "Amount Higher" is the number of coins of a particular type that a given grading service has rated more highly (i.e. the sum of the populations of coins of a particular type that have higher ratings).

The relationship between the collectible and its unique identifier is established by associating unique identifier 36, 40 and collectible 32 with the same case 34. Label 38 may further include a legend indicating where the collectible may be found on the network and advertising the availability of the automated transaction system. In this instance, the legend could read: "View this coin at:" followed by the web address (URL) unique to the coin, or the home page or another web page of the transaction provider. If the collectible was already sealed in a case prior to being introduced into system 18, a label 39 containing the foregoing legend may be applied to the outside of case 34 (see Figure 3).

Once the coin has been inspected, graded, assigned an identifier and encased, one or more images of the collectible are created, preferably immediately after the preceding steps. These images may be scans or photographs taken before the collectible is placed in case 34, but it is strongly preferred to use images showing coin 32 inside of case 34 at the time of certification, since this provides the buyer with the most reliable view of the coin's actual condition. The label with the unique identifier should be clearly visible. If the collectible is a coin, at least two images should be provided showing the obverse and reverse faces of the coin.

The unique identifier, condition information, and image files are stored in database 28 of transaction system 18, whereby the stored information may be conveniently accessed. The availability of the images and associated information facilitates the buying and selling of collectibles because it provides assurance of the condition of the collectibles. Allowing a user to compare the image from transaction system 18 would allow the user to more easily detect fraud by comparing the actual collectible with an image retrieved from transaction system 18. The system may also be used for insurance and proof of title purposes. In the case of collectibles being held for investment purposes, the collectible 32 may be stored in a secure location maintained by a storage vendor and might even remain in storage between transactions.

Software run by computer 24 interacts with a series of web pages or similar screen displays presented to a prospective user, who may be a buyer or seller. Figure 3 illustrates a main "for sale" screen 40 for a coin 32. Web page 46 shows the images of the obverse ("heads") 42 and reverse ("tails") 44 views of coin 32 encapsulated within case 34. The URL 48 associated with page 46 preferably contains the unique identifier therein as part of the specific file name so as to allow for easy reference to page 46 via the Internet.

Page 46 further contains fields 50, 52, 54, and 56 that use text, hypertext, and icons to describe coin 32 and to perform related actions. Coin field 50 contains text describing the year of minting, description, denomination, mint location, variety (if present), coin identification number, and dealer comments related to the coin. Any text within the field may be presented as a hypertext link ("hyperlink") wherein activating the hyperlink (by locating on the hyperlink the pointer icon directed by the mouse and

clicking a mouse button) would direct the browser to load another web page with content directed to the subject implicated by the hyperlink. Seller field 52 contains text describing the name of the coin dealer, the date that the coin was added to transaction system 18, the date in which information related to the coin was last modified, and the asking price for the coin, if any. The text associated with the name of the coin dealer may have a hyperlink directed towards a web page listing the dealer rating (see below) and terms. A hyperlink such as "ask the dealer a question" may be presented in order to bring up a conventional "send email" window giving the dealer's email address as recipient.

Seller field 52 also contains icons and/or hypertext used for accepting the seller's price ("add item to cart for $...") or for making a counteroffer to the seller ("Make an offer to the dealer"). The icon used for accepting the seller's price would only be presented if the coin were actually being offered for sale, and likewise the icon used to make an offer or counteroffer would only be presented if the seller had previously so indicated when entering the coin as for sale on the system. The icon and/or hypertext for making counteroffers would provide means for the buyer to enter the amount of the counteroffer.

The foregoing is superior to current existing methodologies because it facilitates commerce through multiple trade methods while not requiring auction or option-pricing practices.

Coin certification field 54 contains text documenting the name of the company that graded coin 32, the grade given to coin 32, the serial number or unique identifier assigned to coin 32, and variety if such variety copy exists. Preferably, the name of the grading company, grade, serial number, and variety each provide hyperlinks to web pages for providing further specific information to the user.

The coin data field 56 preferably presents certain contextually sensitive data, preferably only to registered users. In this instance, "contextually sensitive data" refers to information that is specifically relevant to the coin being displayed, especially information about other members of the type or class to which the coin belongs. According to a preferred embodiment of the invention, certain screens and/or functions on screens are available only to registered users. If a user has not been identified as

being registered by means such as by having a cookie, coin data field 56 will only depict text and hypertext extending an invitation to become registered. If the user is registered, then additional text and hypertext describing the coin history, coin specifications, total minted, and coin population census are presented or made available through a link. For investors, population census information, which may include data concerning recent past sales prices for members of the same class, is particularly useful. Thus, if a coin 32 has a price and ownership history, a hyperlink will be displayed that would direct the registered user to a web page presentation of such information.

Coin specifications may also be accessed via a hyperlink, and if a representative picture of the type of coin 32 exists, the hyperlink may additionally contain the words "with picture". The population census may be presented as a table representing the number of coins of a particular type that have been certified (or graded) at various levels by dominant grading services. The coin identification numbers given by the coin grading services for a particular type of coin are displayed for each of the coin grading services that have graded coins of the particular type of coin. The numbers of coins graded at the same level as coin 32 by each coin grading service are provided, as well as the total number of coins graded by all listed coin grading services. In like manner, the numbers of coins graded at a higher level are presented in a second row, as well as the numbers of coins graded at a lower level might be presented in a third row. Alternatively, information such as an abridged census report could be presented to the buyer if, for example, the buyer was not a registered user. In such a case, coin data field 56 may provide a hyperlink that would allow a user to order a full report for the coin and type of coin desired directly from the report publisher.

Figure 5 describes a software routine whereby an item is offered for sale by a seller. Upon receiving a initial request 68 from a seller to list an item for sale, the system makes a check 70 of administration database 26 in to determine if the seller's account exists. If the seller's account does not exist in step 70, routine 72 is invoked wherein a seller account will be created. The registration criteria applied by the manager of the transaction system may require off-line verification steps before the

new account becomes active, such as a telephone call and background check. One goal of the system according to the invention is to screen out dishonest and poorly performing sellers. Membership criteria might even limit seller membership to dealers and exclude individual collectors.

If the seller's account is verified or is created during the online session, the seller may proceed to originate a new inventory item (step 78) or select an update option 74 which permits editing criteria of items already for sale (changing price, for example.) In step 74, a seller may upload a text object file of the seller's inventory to a folder in administrative database 26 that is associated with the seller. Such information will be in the form of records that each relate to a single collectible and include the unique identifier (serial number), type, variety, date, condition, and other information customarily presented for that type of collectible. Other input options may be offered, such as filling in an input questionnaire screen. Upon completion, a seller via step 76 may return to start 68 or quit.

Referring to Figure 5, after creating a text object file from their inventory management system (step 78), the seller updates inventory listing in step 79 by logging into the system and selecting the UPDATE INVENTORY button in step 80. The seller then in step 81 chooses between ADD TO INVENTORY (or APPEND) to add the new data file to existing inventory listings, or REPLACE INVENTORY (RENEW) to overwrite any old inventory information with the new listings. After entering the path and filename for the text file in step 82, an error check 84 determines whether the file is able to be imported. If the file is able to be imported, step 86 executes and the newly-posted listings are placed in the text object file of the seller's inventory. Upon completion of the update, the system executes a return 88. If the text object file of the seller's inventory cannot be imported in decision 84, system 18 will in step 90 generate a message to the seller that provides notice that the uploaded file could not be imported, and gives the reasons for the errors. Contact information for available support is also provided, after which the system executes a return 92.

Figure 9 describes routine 72 for creating a seller account. Routine 136 starts at initialization 170 and proceeds to step 172 wherein the seller enters an email address,

billing address and optionally additional personal information. If in decision 174 the entered email address is a duplicate of a preexisting email address contained within the seller account email list, an error message is sent to the seller in step 176, and the process executes a return 178, such as to step 172, or terminates, at the seller's option. If the email address is unique, the account is added to administration database 26 in step 180. The email address is checked in step 182 by sending an email message containing a password and login information to the seller. The transmission of the email is verified and the receipt of a confirmation message from the seller or the seller's domain is logged in decision 184. If a confirmation message has not been received from the seller within a period of time reasonable for a response (three days, for example), the account is removed from administration database 26 in step 186. A courtesy email message may then be sent to the same email address notifying the seller that the account has been deleted and soliciting the seller to reapply. In step 188, routine 72 ends and the processor returns to executing other tasks. If the receipt of a confirmation message is logged in decision 184, routine 72 ends at step 190 without deleting the seller's account, and the process then terminates.

Once a sufficient number of sellers and collectibles have been registered, the system is made continuously available to prospective purchasers, with only occasional downtime due to system maintenance. Figure 4 provides a top-level logic flow diagram of a software transaction system for collectibles such as coins 32 with the goal of processing transactions centered on the screen of Figure 3 and other related screens as described hereafter. While the system is described herein in a linear fashion for convenience, the system is capable of handling multiple requests simultaneously from buyers and sellers, and will often execute multiple tasks in various portions of the logic flow simultaneously. Following a system initialization 58, it is determined which collectibles in inventory database 28 are currently for sale (routine 60). A user enters search parameters which result in one or more "hits" including entries for various collectibles 32 offered for sale, or may directly enter the URL for a unique item of interest. Upon deciding to look at a specific collectible (routine 62), the user proceeds to the screen of Fig. 3 and has the options of making a purchase at the offered price (routine 64) or, in some instances, making an offer to seller (routine 66).

Figure 7 illustrates a search and selection routine 62. A buyer enters routine 62 at initialization step 111 which displays a search criteria input screen (see Figure 12). The buyer enters search criteria for desired collectibles. Such search criteria may include any information about the collectible which has been stored in a searchable format in database 28, for example, seller/dealer, type, date, source (mint), variety, condition, price, or items within a certain range of one or more of the foregoing. Either simple or advanced boolean search logic may be applied, and after a preliminary search input screen, the user may be presented with a "Submit Query" screen (Figure 13) wherein the results may be limited from the broad criteria previously entered before submitting the query to the database. After the search criteria have been entered in step 113, the search criteria are tested in check 116 for completeness and correctness. If the search criteria are defective or incomplete, an error message in step 118 is transmitted to the buyer summarizing the reason for the rejection of the search criteria. In step 120, the buyer is given the option to return to step 113 to reenter search criteria or exit the routine.

If the search request is free of errors, the system determines if any of the active inventory items match the search criteria. If not, routine 124 is executed, prompting the user to create a want list, or to update a buyer want list if the buyer has already established such a list. The want list is a stored list containing items a specific buyer wants, but which are (usually) not listed within inventory database 28. The search results including any hits are displayed to the buyer in step 126; Figure 14 is an example of a search results display. In step 128, the buyer can select a listed item, view details of the requested item(s) from inventory database 28, and inquire concerning a listed item.

Inquiry actions include requests for information concerning the item, purchases and purchase offers as described in connection with Figure 3. If the selected inquiry actions do not require a login for the buyer, e.g., the buyer is not requesting a history of the collectible or a population census, the buyer is allowed to view inquiry information in step 132 and is given the option to take further inquiry actions, enter more search criteria, or exit the program. If in step 130 the inquiry actions require the buyer to log in, the buyer is requested to do so in step 134 by entering a user name and password,

whereupon it is determined whether the buyer's account exists. If the buyer's account does not exist, a routine 136 is invoked whereby a new buyer account can be created. If the buyer's account exists and password information is correct, the buyer is shown in step 138 the information pertaining to all inquiry actions available to registered buyers. If the user has already entered a valid login and password combination during the session, the system may recall that information (through a "cookie" routine) and eliminate the need for redundant data entry. A membership fee may be charged as part of the buyer account creation process, and additional verification such as a credit check may also be required. In step 140, routine 62 may terminate or proceed to routines 64 or 66 if a purchase or offer action has been selected.

Figure 6 illustrates routine 136 for creating a buyer account. Routine 136 proceeds from initialization step 94 to an input step 96 wherein a buyer enters an email address, billing information, and optional personal information. System 18 then makes a check 98 to determine if the entered email address is unique to the list of already registered buyers in administrative database 26. If not, in step 100 the system transmits an error message and then terminates the routine or executes a return 102, such as to step 96. If the email address is unique, the account is added to administration database 26 in step 104. The email address is checked in step 106 by sending an email message containing a password and login information to the buyer. The transmission of the email is verified, and the receipt of a confirmation message from the buyer or buyer's domain is determined in decision 108. If a confirmation message has not been received from the buyer within a period of time reasonable for a response from the buyer (three days, for example), the account is removed from administration database 26 in step 112 and the routine executes a return 114, e.g. to a home state or to start 94. A courtesy email message may be sent to the same email address notifying the buyer that the account has been deleted and soliciting the buyer to reapply. If the receipt of a confirmation message is logged in step 108, routine 72 executes a return 110 to home state or to start 94 without deleting the buyer's account. As noted in connection with a new seller, a waiting period may be imposed before the new account becomes active to permit time for verification actions, such as credit checks. In the alternative, the buyer may be permitted to place an order immediately,

(the seller is alerted to the fact that they buyer is new to the system), and the return is then executed to step 138 after the email is sent in step 106.

Registered buyers are encouraged to maintain a want list, which itself may be made searchable by prospective sellers in a like manner to inventory database 28, but with more limited detail. Figure 8 describes a routine 124 for updating the want list. Routine 124 starts with an initialization 142 and proceeds to an input step 144 wherein the description of the desired collectible(s) and user name information as provided by the buyer are entered into the want list. In decision 146 it is then determined whether a change has been made to inventory database 28 subsequent to the last time the want list was updated. If no change has been made, no further action is required, and the process returns to start 112 or terminates. If a change has been made to database 28, the want list criteria are compared to items listed within inventory database 28 (step 150). Steps 150 and following may also be invoked directly whenever inventory database 28 is updated (event 149), or at predetermined time intervals such as once per day or week, if updates to database 28 are very frequent.

In decision 152, it is then determined whether a new or modified listing within inventory database 28 matches the want list requests of more than one buyer. If so, an email message is sent to such buyers notifying them that a want-list item has been identified, and that multiple buyers are being notified (step 154). The process then executes a return 156 to step 126 or terminates, if the process was run in response to an inventory update or timed cycle. If a new or modified listing does not match the want-list requests for two or more buyers, it is then determined at decision 158 whether a new or modified listing within inventory database 28 matches the want-list request of one buyer. If so, an email message is sent to that buyer notifying the buyer that the want list item has been identified (step 160). The process then executes a return 162 in the same manner as return 156.

If a new or modified listing does not match the want-list request of any buyer, it is determined in decision 164 whether thirty days have elapsed since the want list has been edited by the buyer, or since a want list match to that list has been found. If thirty days have not elapsed since the want list has been edited or a since want-list match has been found, no further action is required relative to the want-list and the logic flow

returns as before via step 166. If thirty days have elapsed since the want-list has been edited or since a want-list match has been found, an email message containing a summary of the current want-list is sent to each active user (step 168). This may also serve as a reminder to the buyer originating the list to update or delete it. The process then executes a return 169 as described above for returns 156, 162, 166. Decision 164 and the steps following may also be executed for all buyers maintaining want lists, on a periodic basis (step 163), such as every thirty days.

Figure 10 illustrates routine 64 allowing a buyer to purchase a collectible for the price asked by the seller. The routine begins at initialization 192 and proceeds to a step 194 wherein the status field of the record in inventory database 28 for the desired collectible that is to be purchased is updated with a "hold" entry. The hold status is used to disable the presentation of the icons in seller field 52 that is used to allow a buyer to purchase or to make an offer on the desired collectible. A "shopping basket" approach may be used to allow a buyer to select a plurality of desired collectibles before submitting an order to the one or more sellers of the collectibles. After a hold is placed on the collectible, an email message is generated and sent to the seller of the desired collectible notifying the seller of the purchase request (step 196). The seller then logs in to transaction system 18 and makes a decision 197 whether or not to accept the purchase offer. If the seller accepts, he selects an option presented to sellers entitled "Purchase Request Accepted" in step 198. Thereupon, transaction system 18 removes the desired collectible from inventory database 28 in step 200, debits the seller's account in administration database 26 in step 202, sends the buyer a confirmation notice via email of acceptance by the seller in step 204, and sends the buyer and seller fifteen days after the date of the purchase a request for comments and "feedback" relative to the transaction in step 206. The routine then returns (207) to start 192, awaiting the next request.

If the seller does not want the sale to proceed in decision 197, he selects an option presented to sellers entitled "Item No Longer Available". Thereupon, transaction system 18 removes the desired collectible from inventory database 28 in step 212, and updates a seller rating system contained within administration database 26 in step 214 to reflect the fact that the seller had maintained an inaccurate inventory

within transaction system 18. Additionally, the buyer is advised by email that the purchase request was not granted, whereon the system returns (216) to start 192, awaiting the next request.

A seller transaction rating based on the number of times the seller indicates that an item is no longer available in response to a purchase request is calculated and may be displayed to users, or registered users only. Similar ratings may also be maintained on sales performance factors recorded at the time of each sale. For example, seller popularity may be determined by ranking sellers by the number of transactions per unit time (day, month, year). Staleness of inventory may also be ranked by tracking the dates an item was first offered for sale by the seller. Popular collectibles, either individual ones or all of certain type, may be tracked by recording the number of sales of that item or item type as defined (gold U.S. dollars, for example). These tracking features, combined with the ability to search the inventory of many sellers, provides a large advantage over the traditional methods of buying and selling collectibles as discussed above in that buyers have a wider range of choices and much better information concerning both the seller and the rarity/investment potential of a particular collectible.

Figure 11 displays a routine 66 for allowing a buyer to make an offer upon a desired collectible which may differ from the seller's asking price. Routine 66 starts at initialization 218. The buyer fills in the amount of the offer in an input box and clicks on an "Offer" icon presented in seller field 52 to submit the offer (step 222). No change is made to the status of the item in inventory database 28 because the seller might refuse the offer. Alternatively, inventory database 28 could be modified to reflect the presence of one or more unexpired offers, which would then be listed as "offer pending" if located in a buyer search query made while the offer is pending. If such a modification is made, the status is later modified to reflect the ultimate disposition of the offer. In step 224, transaction system 18 generates an email message that notifies the seller of the terms of the offer.

The offer may have a predetermined expiration time that is determined by the system. However, according to a preferred option of the invention, the user is permitted to enter the expiration time, which is typically specified in hours or days

from the time the offer was made. For example, a buyer might be choosing between two nearly identical coins, and she offers one dealer 10% less for a cash transaction. She wants a response quickly, so she sets the offer to expire after 6 hours. In another case, a collector is looking for 20% off on a coin. The collector has watched it on the site for weeks, and figures it won't sell at the asking price. He puts in his offer at 80% of the asking price, and sets the expiration period to 30 days, since he's in no rush to buy, and he accompanies his offer with a message to the dealer to the effect "Please note that this is a longstanding offer - if you don't sell it in the next few weeks, I'd like to buy it at the offered price". The expiration time is disclosed to the dealer together with the amount of the offer.

In the first of four alternatives for the seller, in step 226 the seller may elect to reject all offers by logging into transaction system 18, entering a seller response menu and selecting the "Item No Longer Available" option. Thereupon, system 18 removes the desired collectible from inventory database 28 in step 228, and the system executes a return 230 to start 218. The seller may then be flagged for not having the displayed inventory in stock.

In the second alternative, in step 232 a seller may reject the offer by selecting a "Reject Offer" option that allows the seller make a counteroffer to the buyer, if desired. System 18 generates an email message that is sent to the buyer notifying the buyer that the buyer's offer has been rejected (step 234). The email message may contain comments from the seller, the amount of a counteroffer, if any, and further instructions to the buyer directing the buyer on how to respond. If an icon indicating a pending offer was displayed in the search results pages for other possible buyers viewing the same item, such icon is disabled in step 236 if no counteroffer was made, and the system executes a return 238 to start 218.

In the third alternative, in step 240 the seller may accept the buyer's offer by selecting a "Purchase Request Accepted" option. System 18 removes the desired collectible from inventory database 28 in step 242, debits the commission from a seller's account in administration database 26 in step 244, sends the buyer a confirmation notice via email of acceptance by the seller in step 246, and sends the buyer and seller fifteen days after the date of the purchase a request for comments and

feedback concerning the transaction in step 248. After the purchase and comments have been completed, the system executes a return 250 to start 218.

In the final alternative, if in step 252 the system determines that the seller has taken no action after a period of time in which it is reasonable for the seller to respond, such as thirty-six hours, system 18 generates an email message that it sends to both the buyer and seller notifying them that the offer has expired (step 254). If an icon indicating a pending offer was displayed in the search results pages for other possible buyers viewing the same item, such icon is disabled in step 256, and the system executes a return 258 to its home state or start 218.

The following Table 1 illustrates a summary presented to the buyer following several purchases. A series of input screens are provided to solicit details such as payment information, delivery instructions, address information for a gift recipient, and the like:

Table 1 - Sample Order Page

Susan, below you will find all of the information pertaining to your order. If you need to correct any part of this order please do so before submitting. This is the final step in the order process. We will also be sending an e-mail to susan@aol.com that contains all the information seen below.

We will only send the pertinent information that each individual dealer requires to process your order. Each dealer will not receive all the information on this page.

Click here to modify any of the following addresses.

Main Billing Address	Shipping (Work)	Shipping (Brother)
First: Susan Last: Murphy Address: 123 Main Street City: Newton State: Massachusetts Country: United States Zip: 02154 Telephone 617-555-1212 Fax: E-Mail: susan@aol.com	First: Susan Last: Murphy Address: 333 Moody Street Suite 207 City: Waltham State: Massachusetts Country: United States Zip: 02154 Telephone:781-788-9382 Fax: 55-654-1654 E-Mail:susan@1stomn.com	First: Mike Last: Jones Address: 125 Atlantic Ave Apt. 334 City: San Francisco State: California Country: United States Zip: 33547 Telephone650-555-1212 Fax: E-Mail: mike@aol.com

COINS							
#	Type	Dealer	Coin	Method Change	Ship To Add or modify	Price	Total
				Comments - Gift Message Add or modify			
1	Buy	Heritage Coin	1809 Copper Indian Head Cent - M65 - NGC # 122234-001	MasterCard ****0007	Ship to Work (*1)	$2,500	$2,500
				Let me know if you ever get this coin in a better grade			
				AbaCoin Part #22511134			
1	Offer	Atlantic Coins	1902 Quarter - M65 -PCGS # 2234456662.1234	Money Order	Ship to Work	$500	$500
				Please call me if there is any problem with this order.			
				ABACoin Part # 22366598			
3	Buy	Heritage Coin	1965 Silver Dollar - M55 – NGC #0025547-003	MasterCard ****0007	Ship to Brother	$75	$225
				Please do not call or notify anyone at this shipping address . . . it's a surprise.			
				Your gift message Happy Birthday Mike! I know you have been looking for this coin for years . . . enjoy. Love, Your favorite sister, Susan :-)			
				AbaCoin Part #633321			
1	Buy	World Wide	1650 Gold Coin - M65 - NGC #15441-03	C.O.D.	Ship to Work	$10,000	$10,000
				AbaCoin Part #00255487			
Total potential sale excluding shipping, taxes and insurance.							$13,225
To modify your current cart contents and/or quantity click here.							
[Check out now] Next							

The foregoing system 18 according to the invention allows buyers to search the inventory using a search engine that has been designed for the particular collectible being sold. Rather than relying on just key words, the users can enter criteria for parameters such as type, variety, condition and the like based on industry standards by selecting search criteria from drop-down menus and text boxes. This ensures accurate inventory recording, and improves the ability for buyers to locate the collectible that they seek. Prospective buyers have great flexibility in that they can view images of the items for sale, query the sellers about the items for sale, forward a summary of the item (its description, price, and related information) to any email address to inform them of the item's availability, make offers to purchase at a price below the listing price, purchase items at the listing price, provide feedback on the buying transaction, viewable by other buyers and by the seller they have transacted with, view (and respond to) feedback provided by sellers they have transacted with, view information that pertains to their historical purchasing transactions (how many have been completed, dollar-total of purchases, etc., which records can readily be maintained in administration database 26), and post want lists for items they intend to purchase but cannot locate within the current inventory. As discussed above, the system automatically notifies the buyer when an item matching their want list criteria is added to the inventory.

System 18 allows sellers a variety of options as well. A seller can post inventory changes (modification of listing information like description and price) continuously,

post inventory updates (addition/removal of items for sale) continuously, accept purchase offers or transmit counteroffers, confirm purchase requests, provide feedback on the selling transaction viewable by other sellers and the buyer they have transacted with,

view (and respond to) feedback provided by buyers they have transacted with, view information that pertains to their historical selling transactions (how many have been completed, dollar-total of sales, etc.) Buyers are provided with a large, diverse set of items to view and purchase, whereas sellers are exposed to buyers that they could not have contacted without this system.

The system and method of the invention improves upon traditional methods of shopping in person and shopping via communication device (telephone/computer). As compared to shopping in-person, the invention exposes the buyer to a larger and broader set of items for sale, and presents the seller with a larger set of potential buyers. By not requiring that the buyer and seller be in physical contact, it removes the barriers associated with shopping in person. This invention also provides increased privacy and security as compared to a public sale. The transaction record is only seen by the buyer, seller, and system administrators. In addition, neither the buyer nor the seller have to travel in unsecured areas with potentially highly-valued collectibles.

While shopping via telephone or computer eliminates the need for physical contact, it requires either the buyer or the seller to initiate contact with the other party. The invention consolidates the inventories of multiple sellers into one set of inventory that is viewable through a browser using a market-specific search engine. By maintaining the system on a computer network, buyers and sellers are able to communicate readily. Once a buyer or seller begins using the system, they are immediately exposed to a broad set of participating buyers and sellers.

The system of the invention dynamically manages inventory to drive market equilibrium by automatically monitoring inventory changes and alerting sellers when another seller's listing price for a similar collectible is lower. Sellers are alerted to the lower price, and provided with a link to log in and lower their price to match or beat the lower price. The system may be programmed to notify a seller when an item has failed to sell after a pre-set time without a price change. This notification prompts the seller to take action by lowering their selling price or modifying the listing description to accurately reflect the value.

The invention further provides an improved rating and feedback system. Current technology implemented in comparable systems only provides an open-ended feedback system that allows free-form text comments to be entered by any registered user. The invention improves on current practice by allowing trading partners (and preferably only trading partners) to comment at the close of each transaction. It is, therefore, preferably a closed-feedback system. Further, the system records and reports information on buyers and sellers. This information is kept private (not disclosed to

anyone, including the other party) until both parties enter their feedback on the other, at which time the data is shared. This system diminishes fear of "feedback reprisals" and fosters more candid and credible feedback.

Tables 2 and 3 are representative tables of criteria that are reported and recorded in database 26:

Table 2

Buyer Criteria	Measure	Last 30 Days	Last 90 Days	Total
Purchases	Number Completed			
	Total $ Value			
Offers	Number Tendered			
	Total $ Value			
	Number Accepted			
	Total $ Value			
Returns	Number of Returns			
	Total $ Value			
No-Shows	Number of No-Shows			
	Total $ Value			
Dealer Diversity	Number of Unique Dealer Purchases			

Table 3

Seller Criteria	Measure	Last 30 Days	Last 90 Days	Total
Sales	Number Completed			
	Total $ Value			
Offers	Number Received			
	Total $ Value			
	Number Accepted			
	Total $ Value			
Returns	Number of Returns			
	Total $ Value			
Inventory Accuracy	% of Coins Available when ordered			
	Total Number of out-of-stock coins			
	Total $ Value of out-of-stock coins			
Responsive-ness	Average number of hours to respond to purchase notices			
	Average number of hours to respond to offers			
	Average number of hours to respond to questions			

Free-form text comments are solicited at the close of each transaction. The buyer and seller are required to provide feedback to retain membership access to the system.

A common problem encountered by collectors is locating items to augment existing collections. By definition, collectibles are highly sought after items. As such, there can be wide fluctuations in price and availability throughout a geographic region. The present invention system serves to open markets by allowing ubiquitous access (via the Internet) to large numbers of items.

While certain embodiments of the invention have been illustrated for the purposes of this disclosure, numerous changes in the method and apparatus of the

invention presented herein may be made by those skilled in the art. Some aspects of the described system could be used for items of unique value other than collectibles, such as antiques, intellectual property, real estate, souvenirs or artifacts. In the case of transportable, tangible items, the bar coded label on the case could be replaced with a miniature radio transponder containing a unique code that would be broadcast in response to an interrogation signal. For large items, the case may be replaced by a holder or tag which is securely attached to the item and displays the unique identifier. These and other changes are embodied within the scope and spirit of the present invention as defined in the appended claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A method for identification of items of a type wherein each item has a unique, preassigned identifier, comprising:

receiving from a user a requested identifier which corresponds to an item of interest;

accessing a computerized database of item information, which database includes unique identifiers for the items and an image file name which may be the same as or different from the unique identifier for each item;

determining if the entered identifier is present in the database; and

if the identifier is present, displaying to a user who entered the identifier one or more images of the item, which images accurately represent the appearance of the actual item associated with the identifier received from the user.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein each item has unique condition information associated therewith, further comprising displaying such condition information to the user.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein each item has unique price information associated therewith, further comprising displaying such price information to the user.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein each item has unique rarity, price guide, and auction and private transaction history, and other information associated therewith to aid in research and purchase decisions, further comprising displaying such information to the user.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the user request is received by a computerized system including a network.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the network is the world wide web.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the items are collectibles.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the items are coins, and the images displayed to the user include the obverse and reverse sides of the coins.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the images of the coins show the coin encased in a transparent case, which transparent case has a marking showing the unique identifier.

10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

inspecting a collectible which is not referenced in the database and assigning to it condition information and a unique identifier;

placing the collectible inside of a case labeled with the identifier;

creating an image of the collectible substantially at the time the condition inspection takes place;

storing the identifier and associated condition information in the database; and

storing the image of the collectible for future display to a user upon entry of the associated unique identifier.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the case has a transparent portion which permits viewing of the collectible, and the image of the collectible is created after sealing of the collectible in the case.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the label with the identifier is sealed inside the case, wherein the case has a transparent portion which permits viewing of the label.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the case is sealed so that it cannot be opened without substantially destroying the case.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising maintaining at least one server having access to a database of item information, which database includes the unique identifiers for each item and an image file name which may be the same as or different from the unique identifier for each item, and which server further has access to stored image files having the image file names.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising

receiving from a user a search query;

searching the database of item information for one or more items which match search criteria specified in the search query;

displaying search results to the user, which results identify any items which match search criteria specified in the search query; and

then receiving the requested identifier, which corresponds to one of the items located in the search.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the image displaying step further comprises displaying an option to purchase the displayed item to the user at a displayed price determined by a seller of the item.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the image displaying step further comprises displaying an option that permits the user to make an offer to a seller of the displayed item, wherein the amount of the offer is determined by the user.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising completing the transaction between the seller and the user.

19. The method of claim 16, further comprising terminating the transaction between the seller and the user and designating in the database that the displayed item is no longer available.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising recording the number of times a seller indicates that an item is no longer available in response to a purchase request, and determining a seller rating based on the number of times the seller indicates that an item is no longer available in response to a purchase request.

21. A system for identification of items of a type wherein each item has a unique, preassigned identifier, comprising:

a network interface for receiving from a user a requested identifier which corresponds to an item of interest;

a computerized database of item information, which database includes unique identifiers for the items and an image file name which may be the same as or different from the unique identifier for each item;

means for determining if an entered identifier is present in the database; and

means for transmitting to a user who entered the identifier one or more images of the item, if the identifier is present, which images accurately represent the appearance of the item.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein each item has unique condition information associated therewith, wherein the database has condition information data stored thereon, and the transmitting means permits transmission of the condition information data to a user who entered the identifier associated therewith.

23. The system of claim 21, wherein each item has unique price information associated therewith, wherein the database has price information data stored thereon, and the transmitting means permits transmission of the price information data to a user who entered the identifier associated therewith.

24. The system of claim 21, wherein each item has unique rarity, price guide, and auction and private transaction history information associated therewith, wherein the database has rarity, price guide, and auction and private transaction history information data stored thereon, and the transmitting means permits transmission of the rarity, price guide, and auction and private transaction history information data to a user who entered the identifier associated therewith.

25. The system of claim 21, further comprising a network and a plurality of user terminals, whereby the network transmits data from the network interface to any one user terminal from which a request is received.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the network is the world wide web and the terminals are personal computers.

27. A method for distributing information concerning an item having a value, wherein the item is one of a class of a limited number of items each having a unique value that is influenced by the total number of items in the class, comprising:

displaying an image of one of the items for inspection by an interested user;

displaying in association with the image an abridged report containing information about other items in the same class as the displayed item;

providing a selectable option to the user viewing the abridged report display to select a full report of information about other items in the same class as the displayed item; and

providing, in response to the user's selection of the option, information permitting the user to obtain the full report.

28. A collectible suitable for use with a computerized transaction system for collectibles, comprising:

a collectible item;

first indicia secured to the collectible item of a unique identifier associated with the collectible; and

second indicia secured to the collectible item of location information at which an image of the collectible item may be viewed on the computerized transaction system.

29. The collectible of claim 28, further comprising a case which unites the collectible item and first and second indicia.

30. The collectible of claim 28, wherein the first and second indicia are provided in one or more human-readable labels.

31. The collectible of claim 28, wherein the first indicia is provided in a machine-readable form.

32. The collectible of claim 31, wherein the first indicia is provided in a machine-readable form.

33. The collectible of claim 29, wherein the collectible and the first and second indicia are sealed within the case, and the case provides evidence of tampering if opened.

34. The collectible of claim 29, wherein the collectible and the first indicia are sealed within the case, the case provides evidence of tampering if opened, and the second indicia is applied externally to the case.

35. The collectible of claim 29, wherein the imaging takes place at about the same time and in the same location where the collectible is sealed in the case, and the second indicia is sealed inside the case with the collectible.

36. The collectible of claim 29, wherein the imaging is performed after sealing, and the second indicia is applied to the outside of the case.

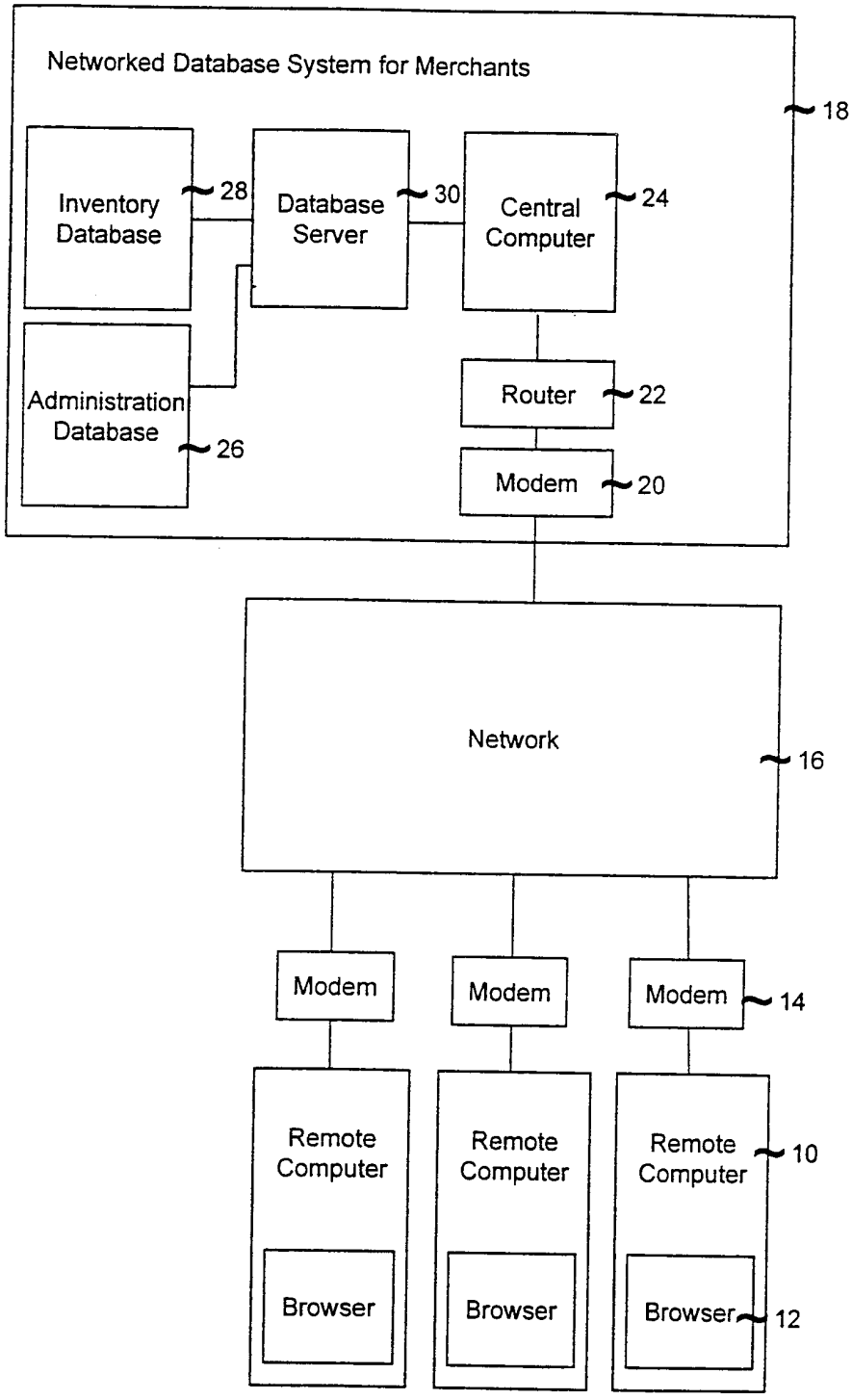

Networked Database System for Merchants
18
Inventory Database
28
Database Server
30
Central Computer
24
Administration Database
26
Router
22
Modem
20
Network
16
Modem
Modem
Modem
14
Remote Computer
Remote Computer
Remote Computer
10
Browser
Browser
Browser
12

Fig. 1

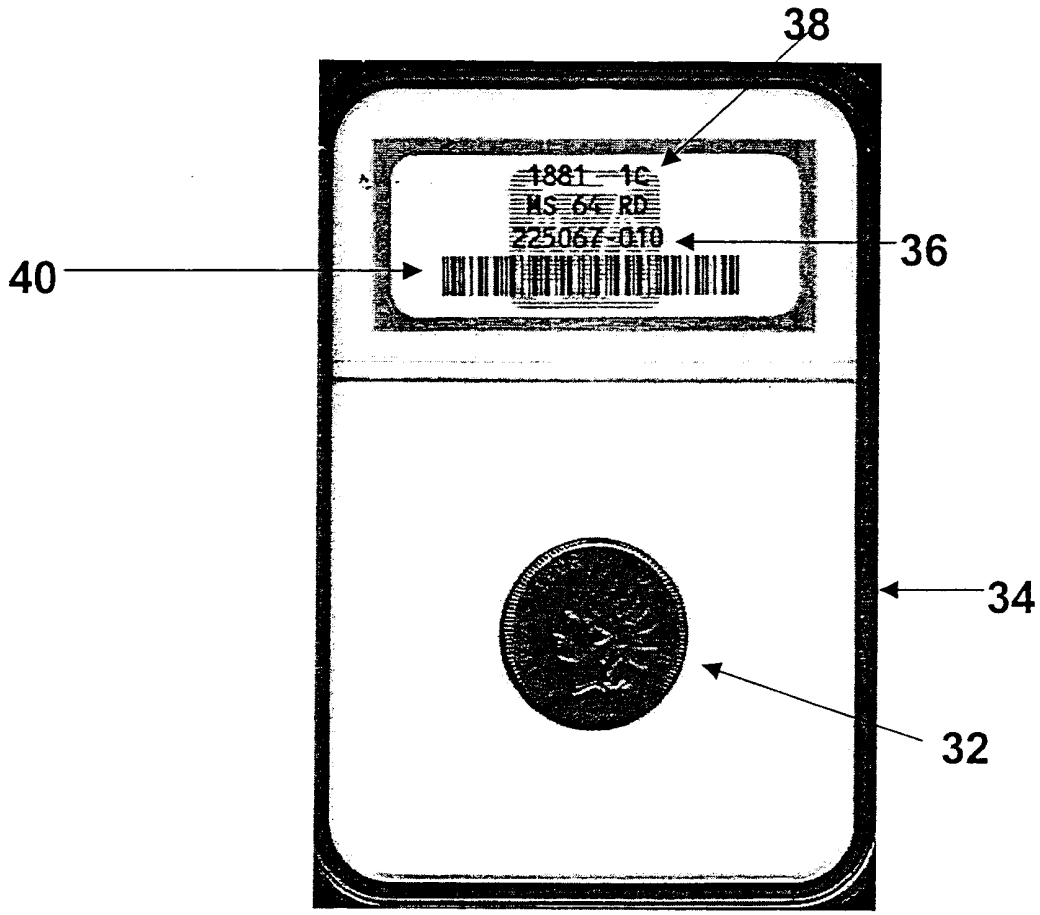


Fig. 2

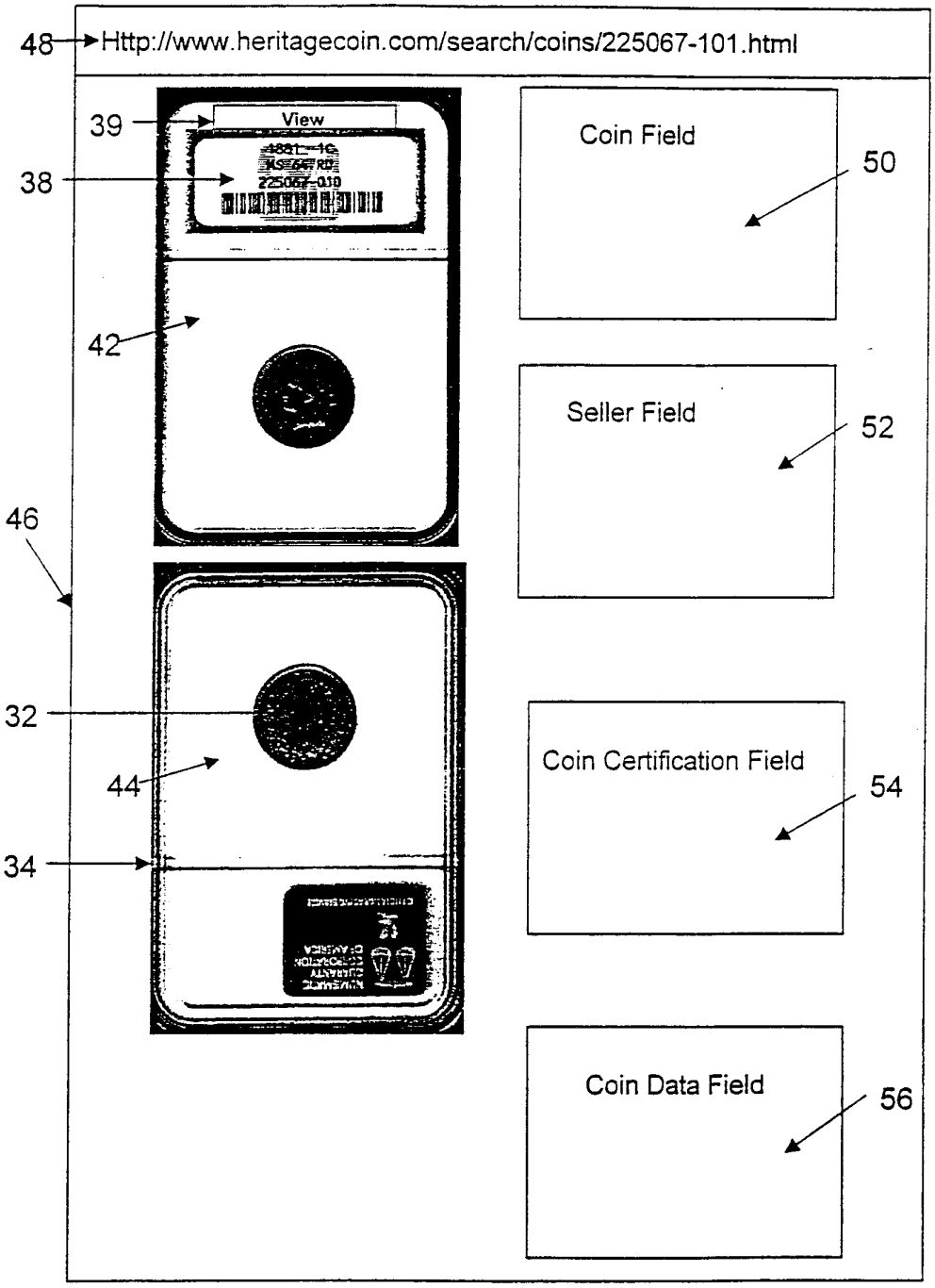

48
Http://www.heritagecoin.com/search/coins/225067-101.html
39
View
38
42
46
32
44
34
Coin Field
50
Seller Field
52
Coin Certification Field
54
Coin Data Field
56

Fig. 3

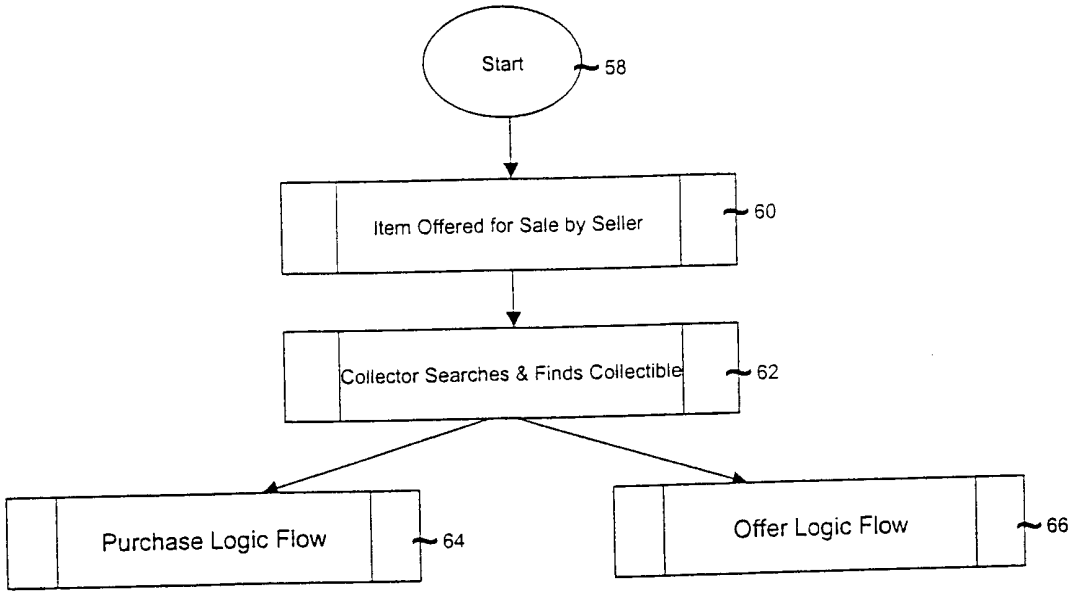
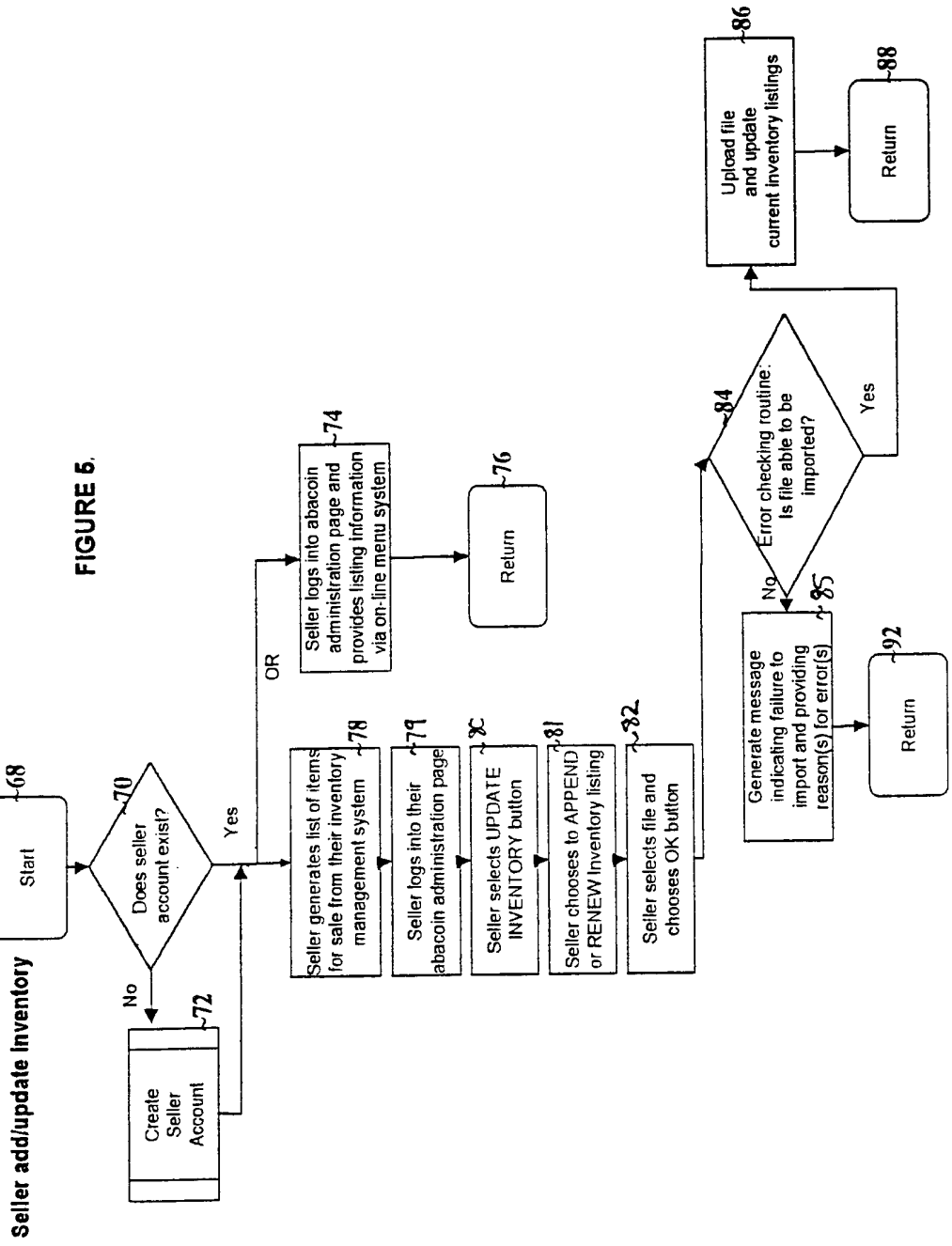

Start
58
Item Offered for Sale by Seller
60
Collector Searches & Finds Collectible
62
Purchase Logic Flow
64
Offer Logic Flow
66

Fig. 4

FIGURE 5.


Seller add/update inventory
Start
68
Does seller account exist?
70
No
Yes
Create Seller Account
72
OR
Seller logs into abacoin administration page and provides listing information via on-line menu system
74
Return
76
Seller generates list of items for sale from their inventory management system
78
Seller logs into their abacoin administration page
79
Seller selects UPDATE INVENTORY button
Seller chooses to APPEND or RENEW Inventory listing
81
Seller selects file and chooses OK button
82
Error checking routine: Is file able to be imported?
84
No
Yes
Generate message indicating failure to import and providing reason(s) for error(s)
85
Return
92
Upload file and update current inventory listings
86
Return
88

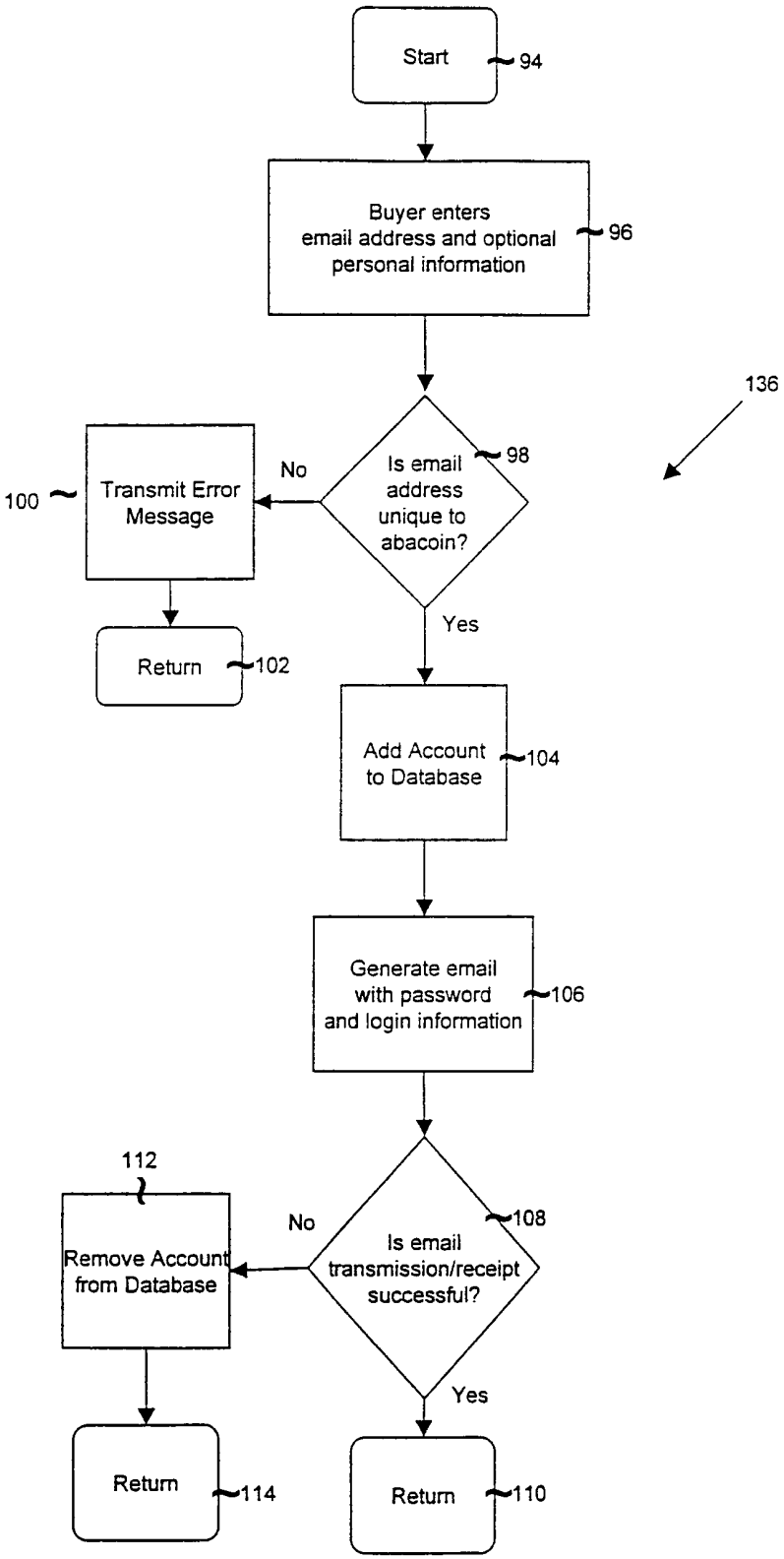

Start
94
Buyer enters email address and optional personal information
96
136
Is email address unique to abacoin?
98
No
Transmit Error Message
100
Return
102
Yes
Add Account to Database
104
Generate email with password and login information
106
112
Remove Account from Database
No
Is email transmission/receipt successful?
108
Yes
Return
114
Return
110

Fig. 6

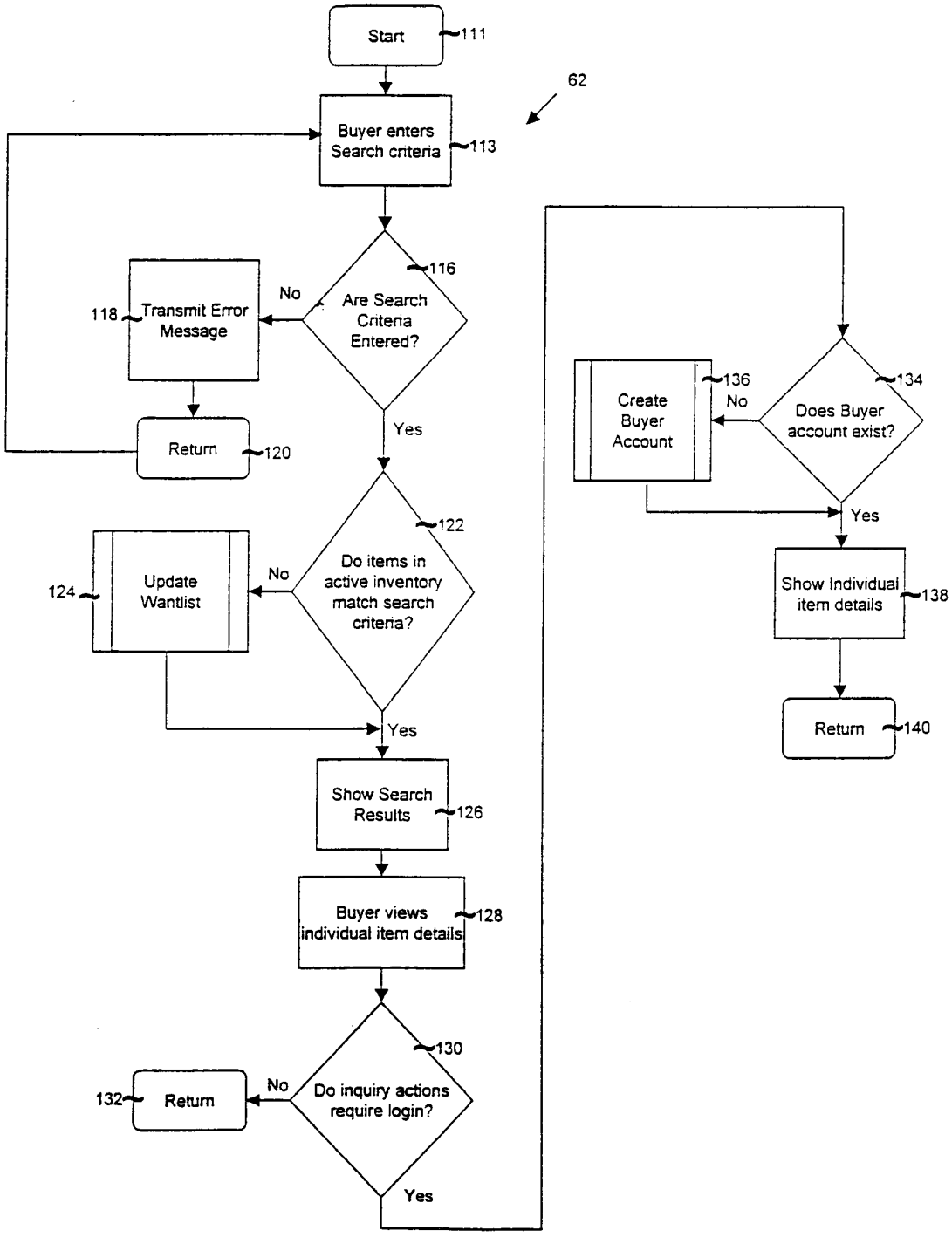

Start
111
62
Buyer enters Search criteria
113
116
Are Search Criteria Entered?
No
118
Transmit Error Message
Return
120
Yes
122
Do items in active inventory match search criteria?
No
124
Update Wantlist
Yes
Show Search Results
126
Buyer views individual item details
128
130
Do inquiry actions require login?
No
132
Return
Yes
134
Does Buyer account exist?
No
136
Create Buyer Account
Yes
Show Individual item details
138
Return
140

Fig. 7

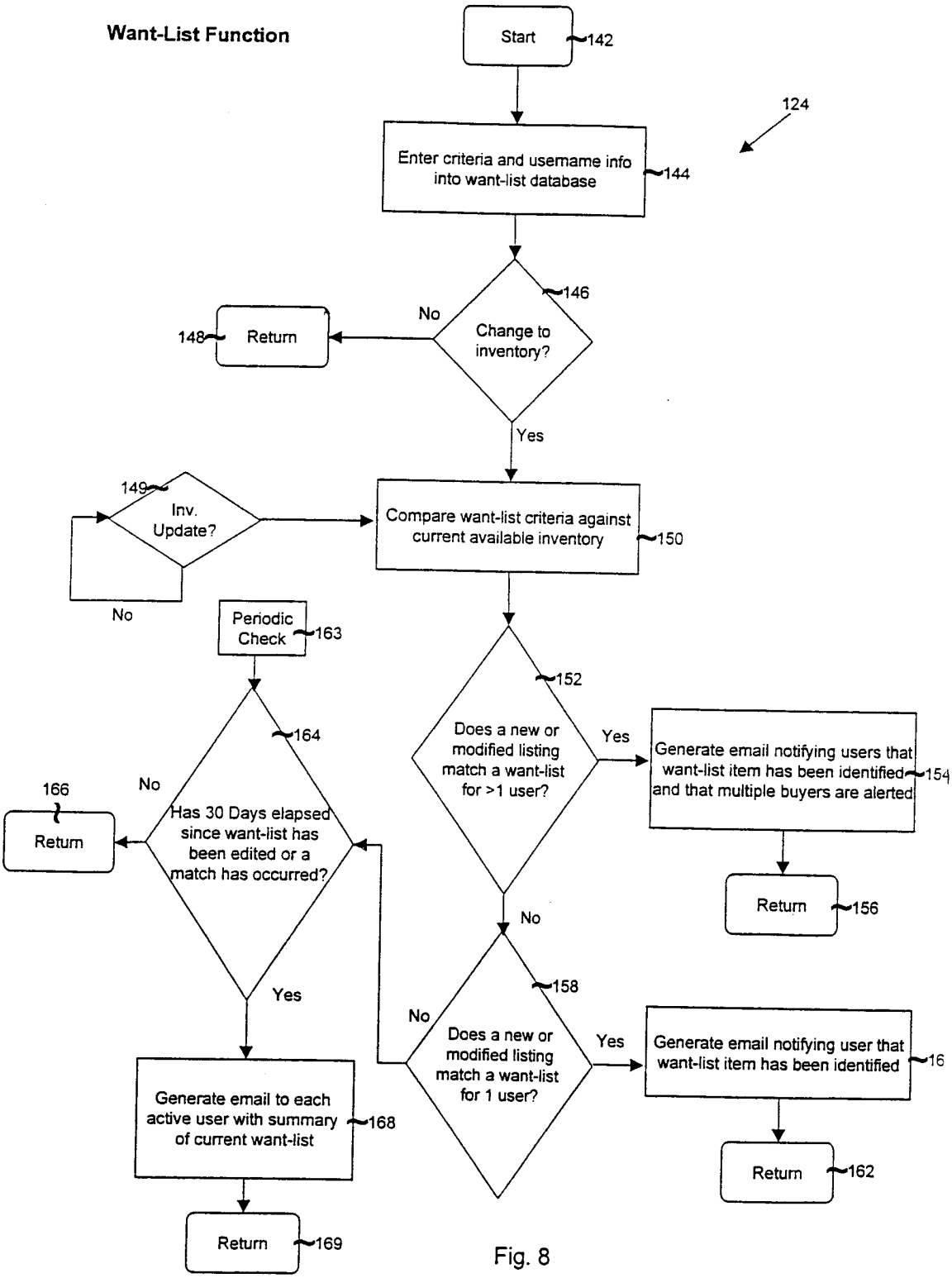

Want-List Function
Start
142
124
Enter criteria and username info into want-list database
144
146
No
Change to inventory?
148
Return
Yes
149
Inv. Update?
No
Compare want-list criteria against current available inventory
150
Periodic Check
163
152
Does a new or modified listing match a want-list for >1 user?
Yes
Generate email notifying users that want-list item has been identified and that multiple buyers are alerted
154
Return
156
No
158
Does a new or modified listing match a want-list for 1 user?
No
Yes
Generate email notifying user that want-list item has been identified
16
Return
162
164
Has 30 Days elapsed since want-list has been edited or a match has occurred?
No
166
Return
Yes
Generate email to each active user with summary of current want-list
168
Return
169

Fig. 8

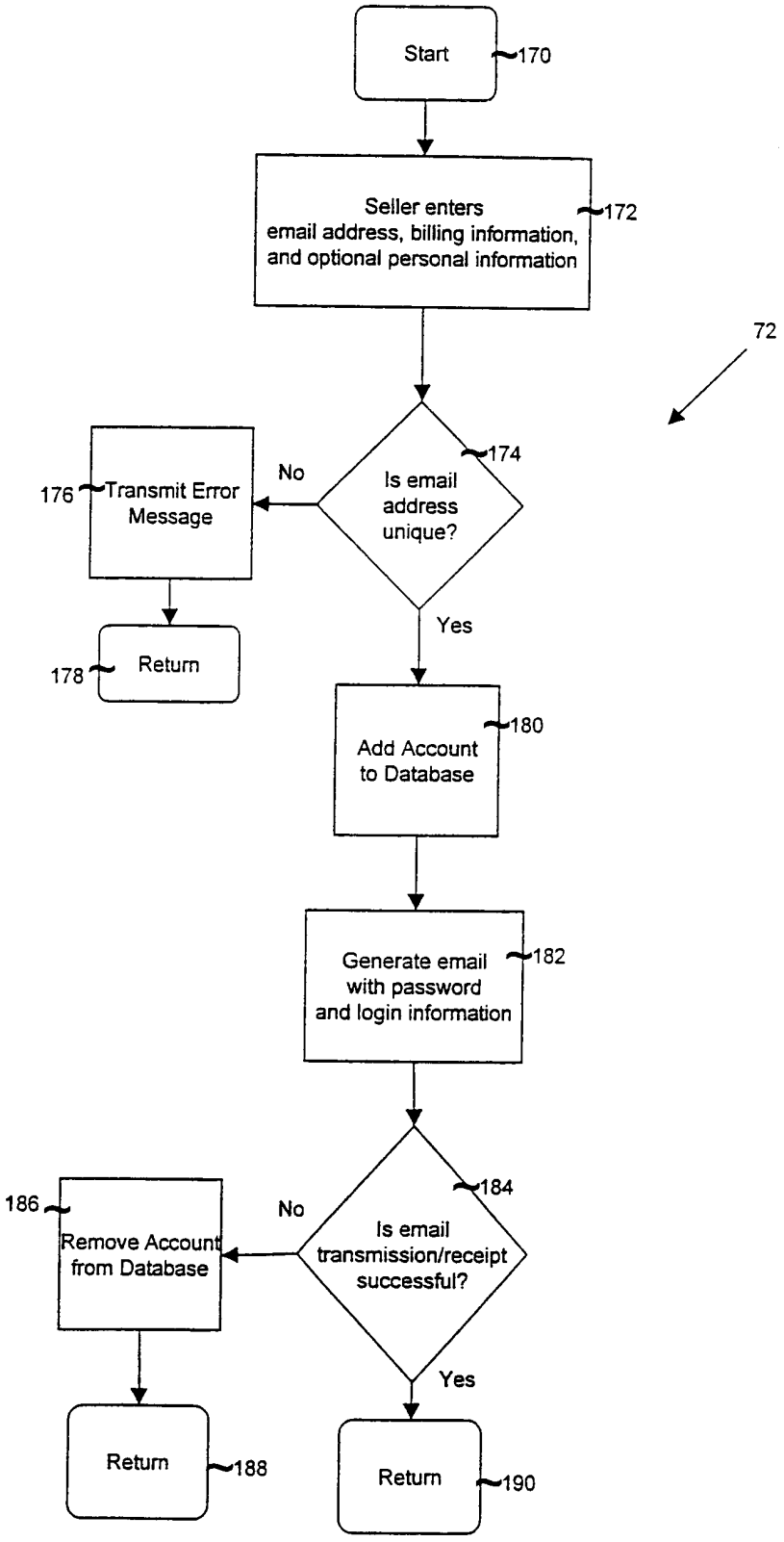

Start
170
Seller enters email address, billing information, and optional personal information
172
72
Is email address unique?
174
No
Transmit Error Message
176
Return
178
Yes
Add Account to Database
180
Generate email with password and login information
182
Is email transmission/receipt successful?
184
No
Remove Account from Database
186
Return
188
Yes
Return
190

Fig. 9

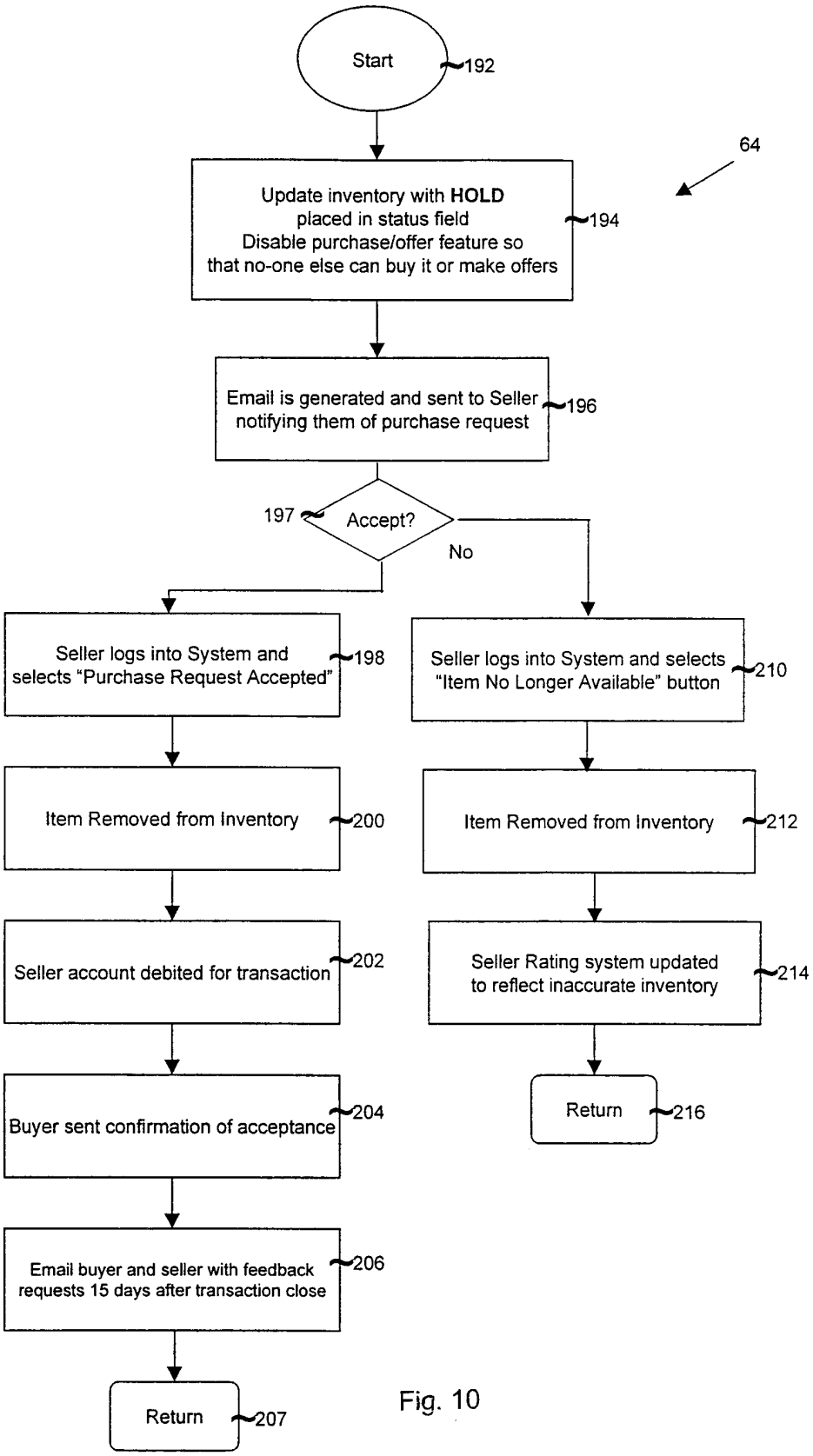

Start
192
64
Update inventory with HOLD placed in status field Disable purchase/offer feature so that no-one else can buy it or make offers
194
Email is generated and sent to Seller notifying them of purchase request
196
197
Accept?
No
Seller logs into System and selects "Purchase Request Accepted"
198
Item Removed from Inventory
200
Seller account debited for transaction
202
Buyer sent confirmation of acceptance
204
Email buyer and seller with feedback requests 15 days after transaction close
206
Return
207
Seller logs into System and selects "Item No Longer Available" button
210
Item Removed from Inventory
212
Seller Rating system updated to reflect inaccurate inventory
214
Return
216

Fig. 10

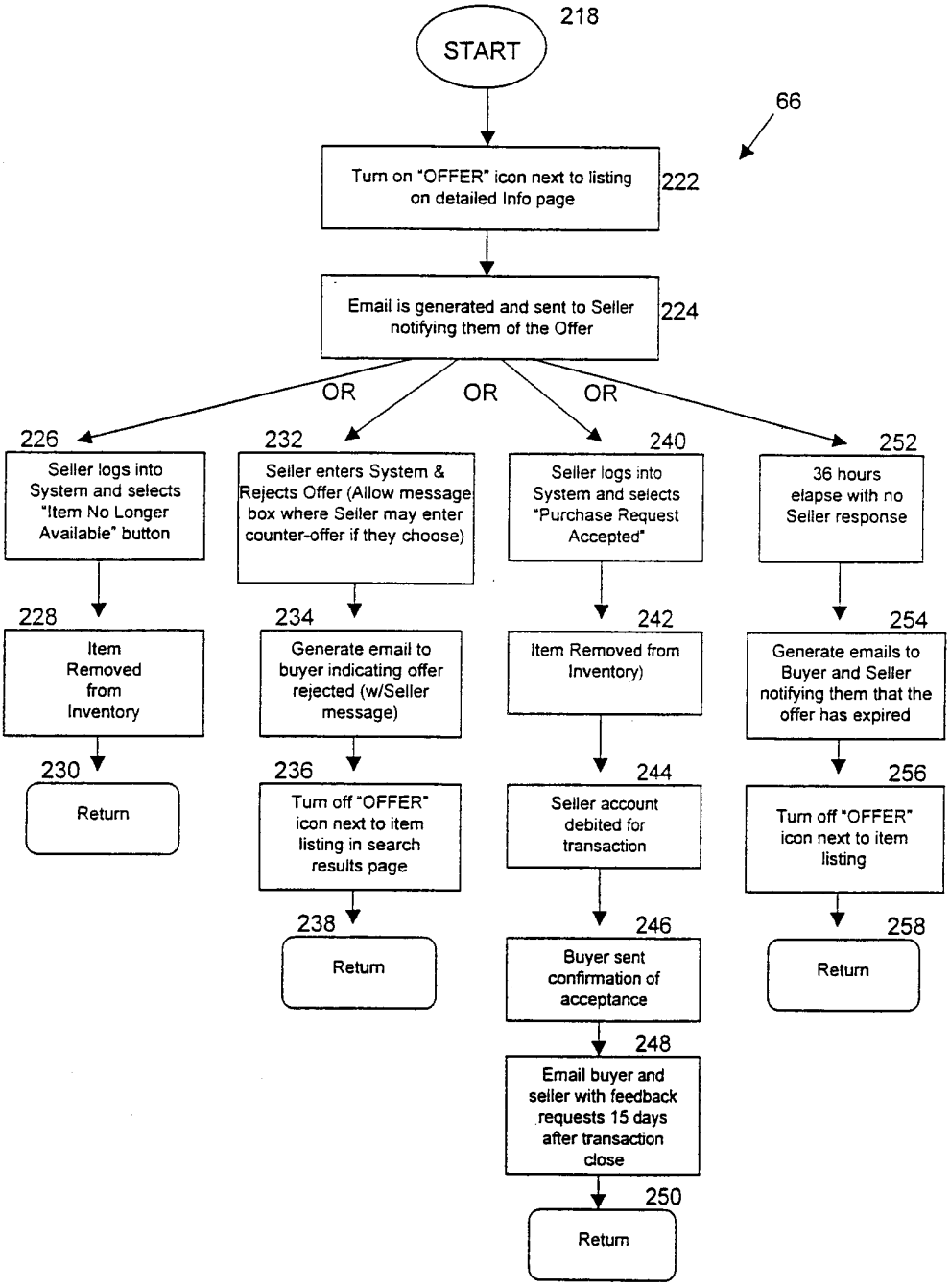

START
218
66
Turn on "OFFER" icon next to listing on detailed Info page
222
Email is generated and sent to Seller notifying them of the Offer
224
OR
OR
OR
226
Seller logs into System and selects "Item No Longer Available" button
228
Item Removed from Inventory
230
Return
232
Seller enters System & Rejects Offer (Allow message box where Seller may enter counter-offer if they choose)
234
Generate email to buyer indicating offer rejected (w/Seller message)
236
Turn off "OFFER" icon next to item listing in search results page
238
Return
240
Seller logs into System and selects "Purchase Request Accepted"
242
Item Removed from Inventory)
244
Seller account debited for transaction
246
Buyer sent confirmation of acceptance
248
Email buyer and seller with feedback requests 15 days after transaction close
250
Return
252
36 hours elapse with no Seller response
254
Generate emails to Buyer and Seller notifying them that the offer has expired
256
Turn off "OFFER" icon next to item listing
258
Return

Fig. 11

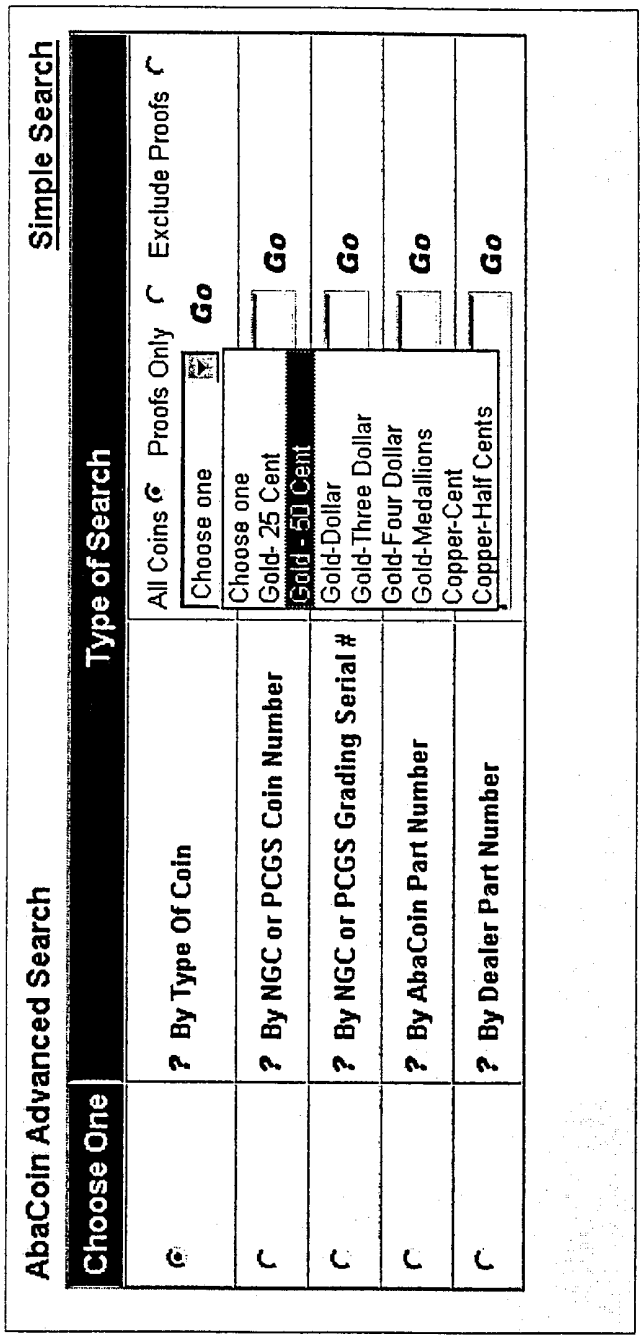

AbaCoin Advanced Search
Simple Search
Choose One
Type of Search
? By Type Of Coin
All Coins Proofs Only Exclude Proofs
Choose one
Go
Choose one
Gold- 25 Cent
Gold - 50 Cent
Gold-Dollar
Gold-Three Dollar
Gold-Four Dollar
Gold-Medallions
Copper-Cent
Copper-Half Cents
? By NGC or PCGS Coin Number
Go
? By NGC or PCGS Grading Serial #
Go
? By AbaCoin Part Number
Go
? By Dealer Part Number
Go

Fig. 12

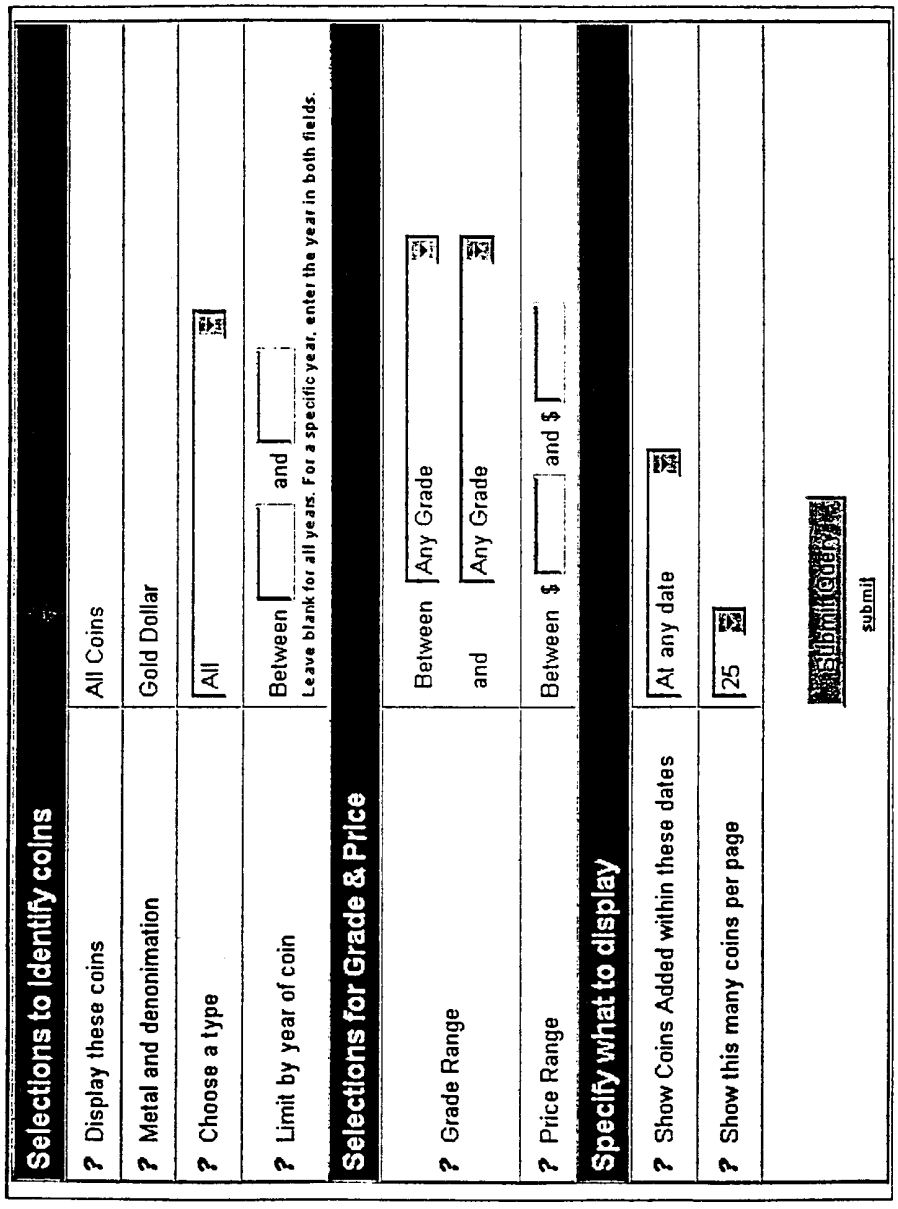

Selections to Identify coins
? Display these coins
All Coins
? Metal and denomination
Gold Dollar
? Choose a type
All
? Limit by year of coin
Between and
Leave blank for all years. For a specific year, enter the year in both fields.
Selections for Grade & Price
? Grade Range
Between Any Grade
and Any Grade
? Price Range
Between $ and $
Specify what to display
? Show Coins Added within these dates
At any date
? Show this many coins per page
25
submit

Fig. 13

The following coins are available for sale View Coin ID Numbers that match this search

Click on the column header to re-sort results Click on the ? for a definition of the heading.

Pic ?	Year ?	Description ?	Variety ?	Mint ?	ID # ?	Grade ?	Price ?	Added ?	Seller ?
☐	1907	Picture coin			NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 F	04/10/99	Heritage
	1907	No Picture	Starr		NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 F	04/10/99	Heritage
	1907	1 Cent - Copper Indian Head		D	NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 F	04/10/99	Heritage
	1907	1 Cent - Copper Indian Head		CC	NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 F	04/10/99	Heritage
	1907	1 Cent - Copper Indian Head	Knoxville	CC	NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 B	04/10/99	Heritage
☐	1907	1 Cent - Copper Indian Head		D	NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 F	04/10/99	Heritage
☐	1907	1 Cent - Copper Indian Head	Eliasberg	D	NGC 012345	MS-60	$2,500 B	04/10/99	Heritage

Fig. 14

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/19748

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :G06F 17/60
US CL : 705/27

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/27, 26, 37

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

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

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,845,265 A (WOOLSTON) 01 December 1998, see the abstract, figs. 1, 7-9, 12, 13.	1-36
A	US 3,757,037 A (BIALEK) 04 September 1973, see the abstract.	1-36
A	US 5,890,138 A (GODIN et al) 30 March 1999, see the abstract, figs. 2, 4, 9-12.	1-36
A,P	US 6,026,377 A (BURKE) 15 February 2000, see the abstract, fig. 1.	1-36
A,P	US 6,041,310 A (GREEN et al) 21 March 2000, see the abstract.	1-36
A,P	US 6,064,979 A (PERKOWSKI) 16 May 2000, see the abstract, figs. 2A1-2B.	1-36

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. [ ] See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents:	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
10 SEPTEMBER 2000	03 OCT 2000
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer James R. Matthews ROBERT A. WEINHARDT Telephone No. (703) 308-3900

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/19748

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A,P	US 6,058,373 A (BLINN et al) 02 May 2000, see the abstract.	1-36