US 20020111210A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication (10) Pub. No.: US 2002/0111210 A1

Luciano, JR. et al. (43) Pub. Date: Aug. 15, 2002

(54) ANONYMOUS PLAYER IDENTIFIERS IN A GAMING ENVIRONMENT

(76) Inventors: **Robert Anthony Luciano JR.**, Reno, NV (US); **Robert William Crowder**, Las Vegas, NV (US); **Jonathan Tolentino Velasco**, Stateline, NV (US); **Russ Frederick Marsden**, Gardenerville, NV (US)

Correspondence Address:
Russ F. Marsden
c/o Sierra Design Group
300 Sierra Manor drive
Reno, NV 89511 (US)

(21) Appl. No.: **09/819,112**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 27, 2001**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 09/788,162, filed on Feb. 15, 2001.

Publication Classification

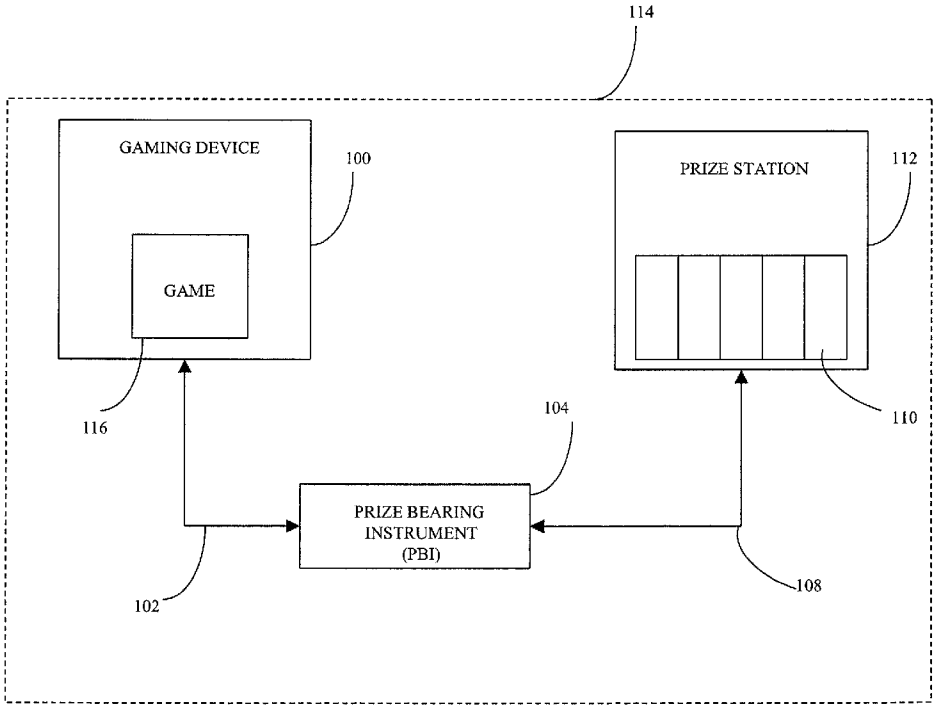
(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A63F 9/24**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **463/29**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and method for using anonymous player identification in tracking and promoting game use in a casino is disclosed. The ability to track anonymous players, that is, players who do not have a traditional player ID as used in casinos, allows operators to do two new things. The first is to track game and casino services use by players not in the traditional player ID tracking system, yielding valuable marketing data not otherwise available. The second is to reward anonymous players, thereby increasing the likelihood they will come back the casino in the future.

Example Award Credit System



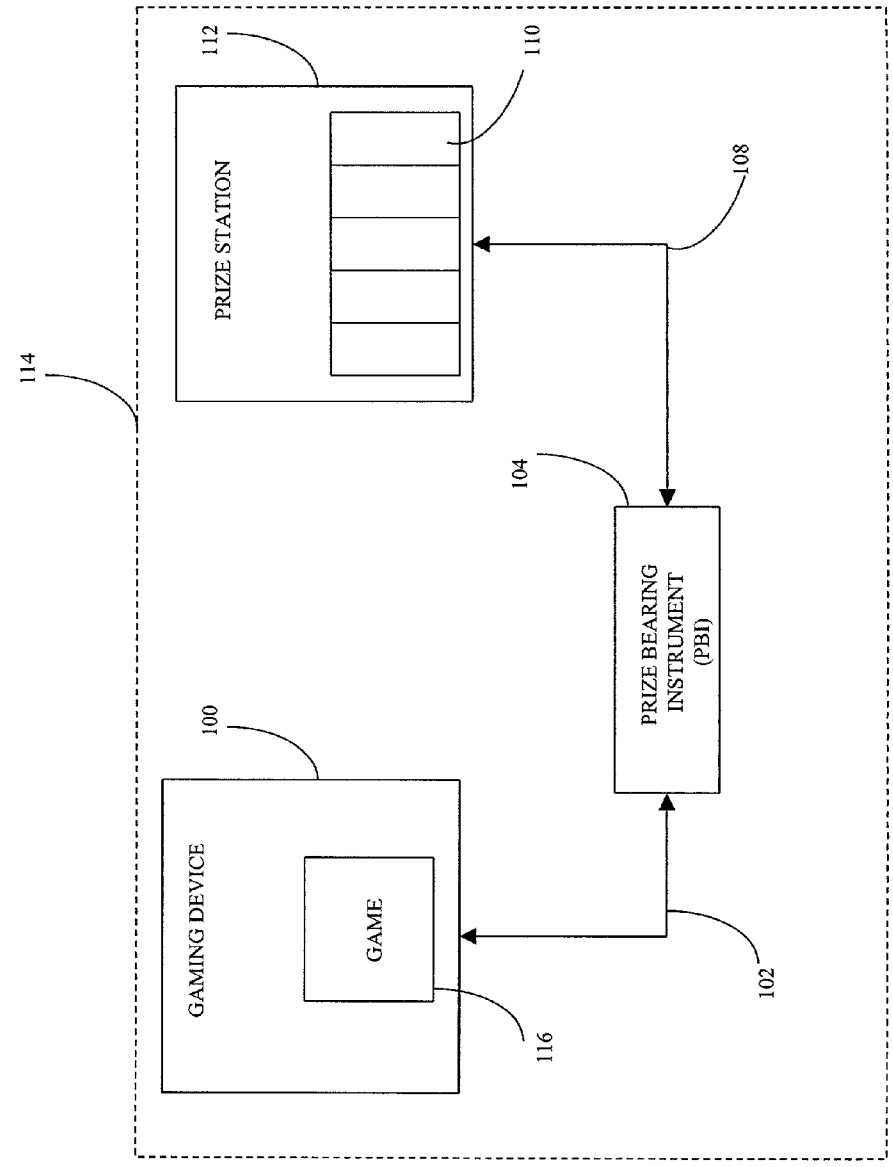


FIGURE 1
Example Award Credit System

FIGURE 2

Meta-Games According To The Present Invention

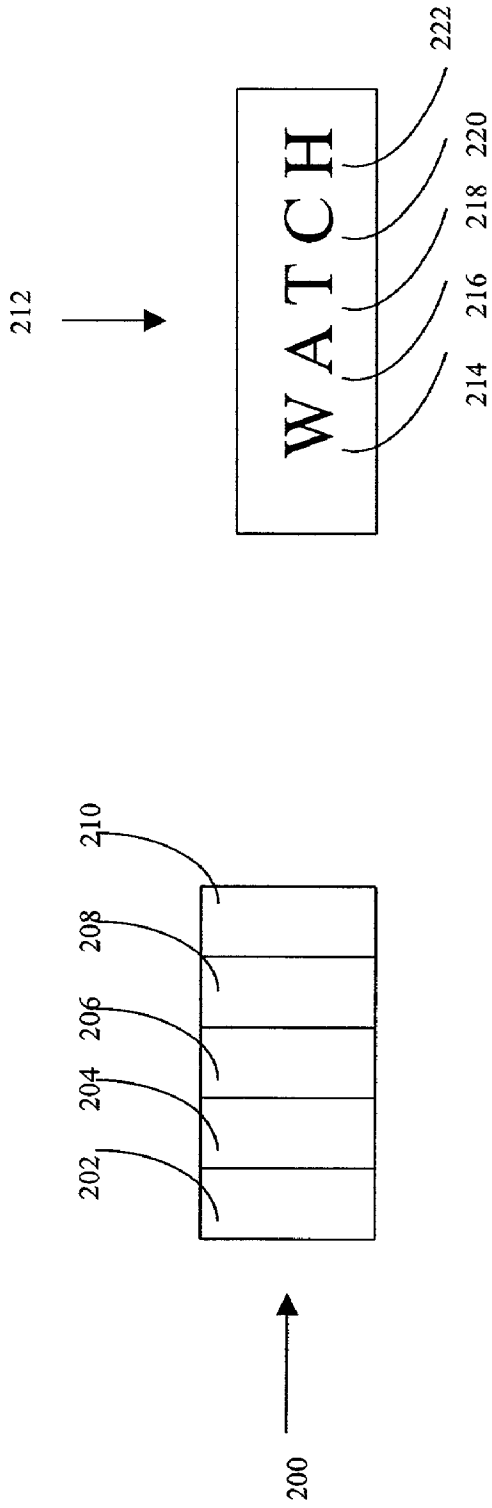


FIGURE 3
Award Credit Accounting
With Back End Validation Device

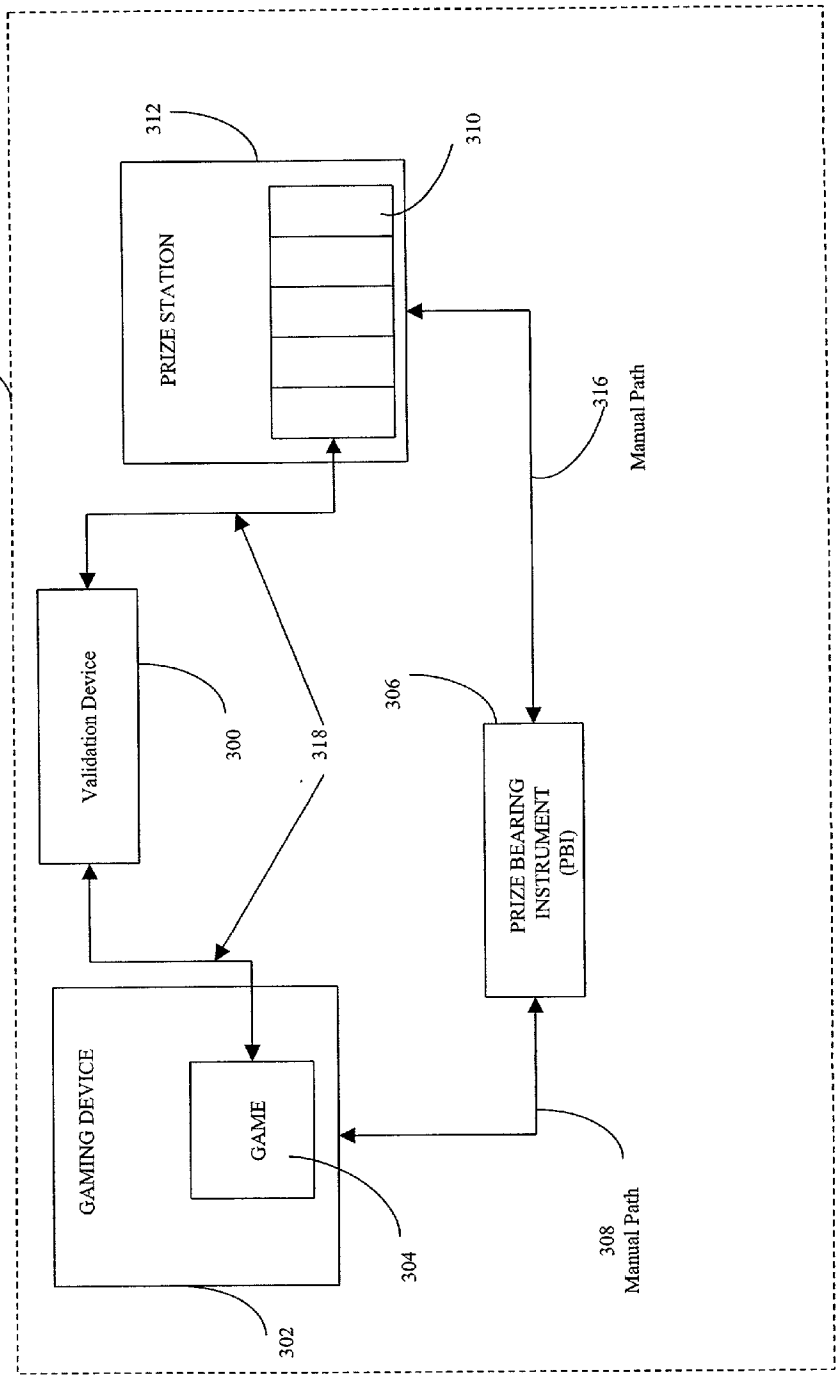


FIGURE 4

Example Voucher

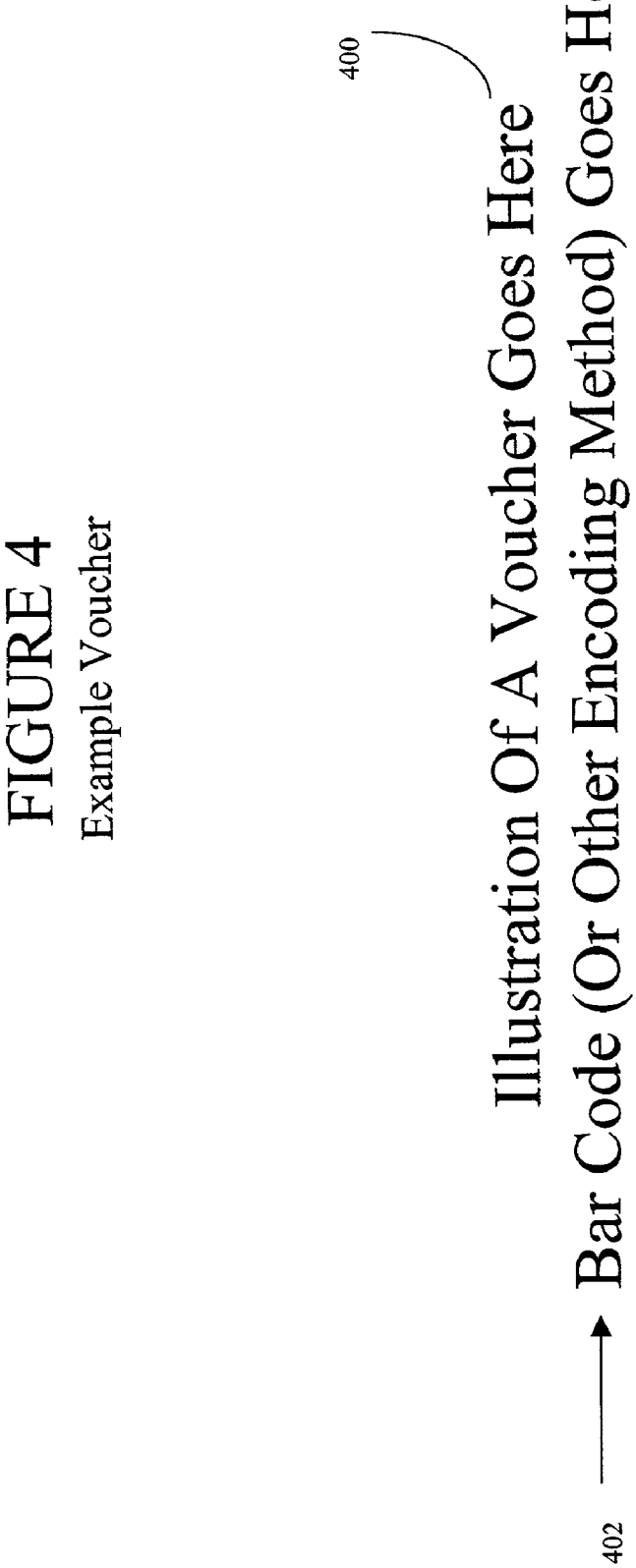


FIGURE 5
Gaming Device And Prize Station
On One Physical Machine

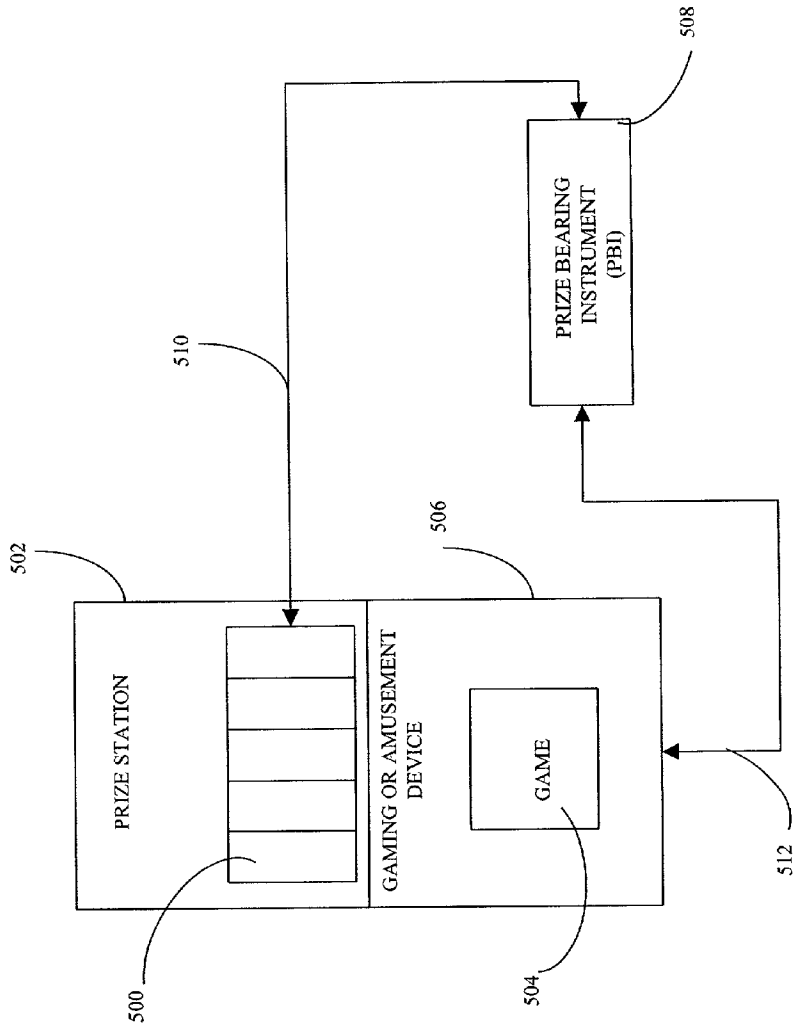


FIGURE 6
Award Credits On Multiple Machines

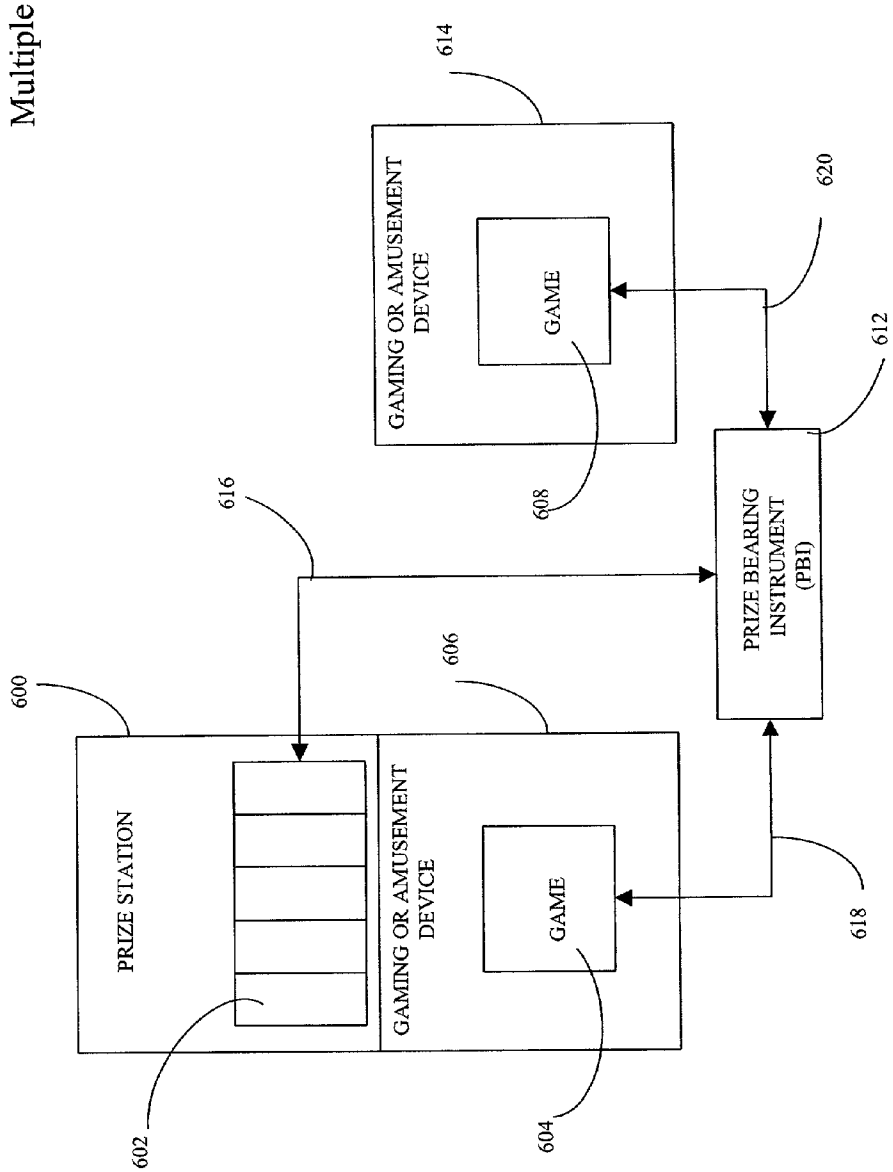


FIGURE 7

Award Credits In A Networked Environment

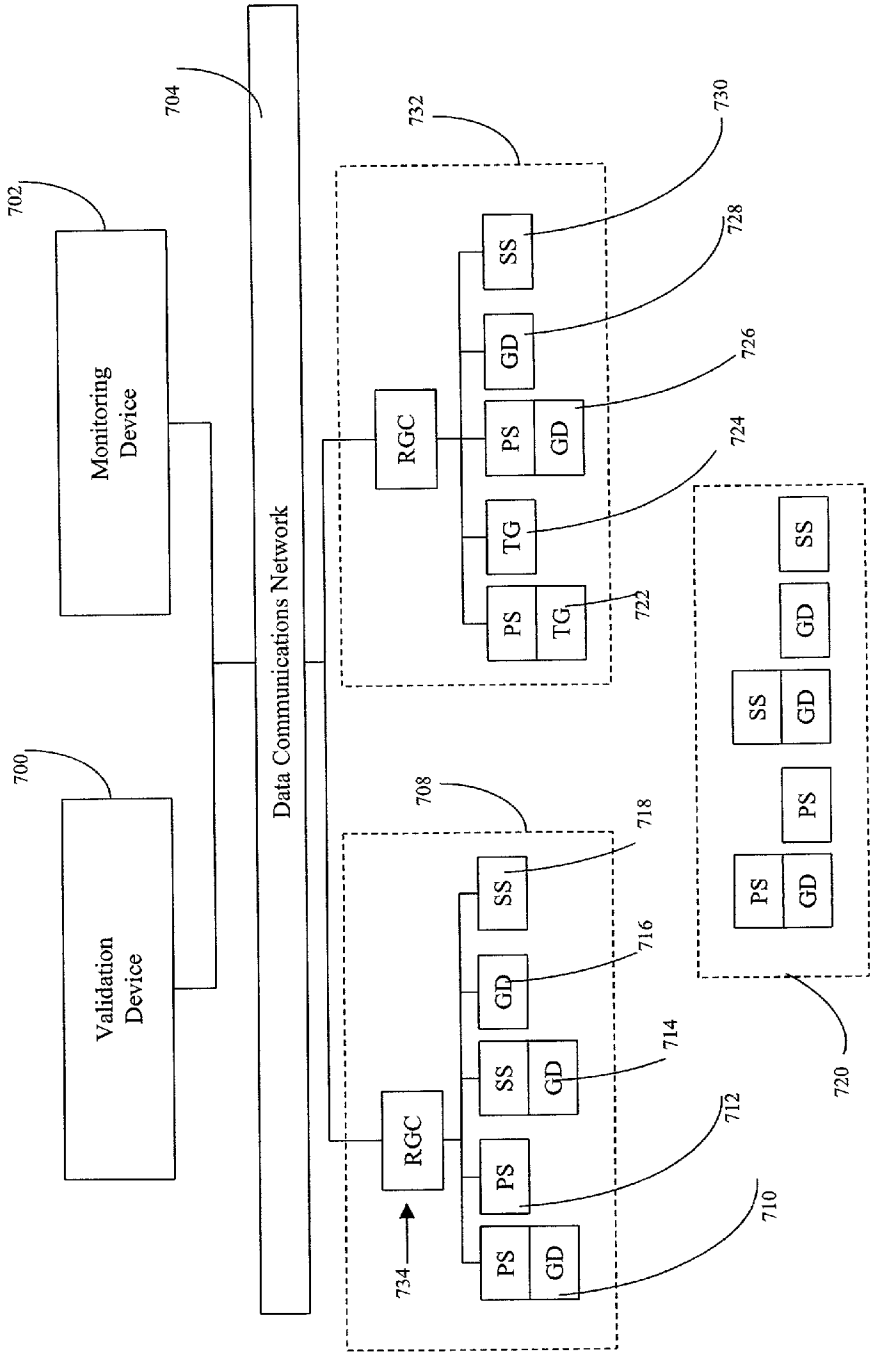


FIGURE 8
Gaming Device Details

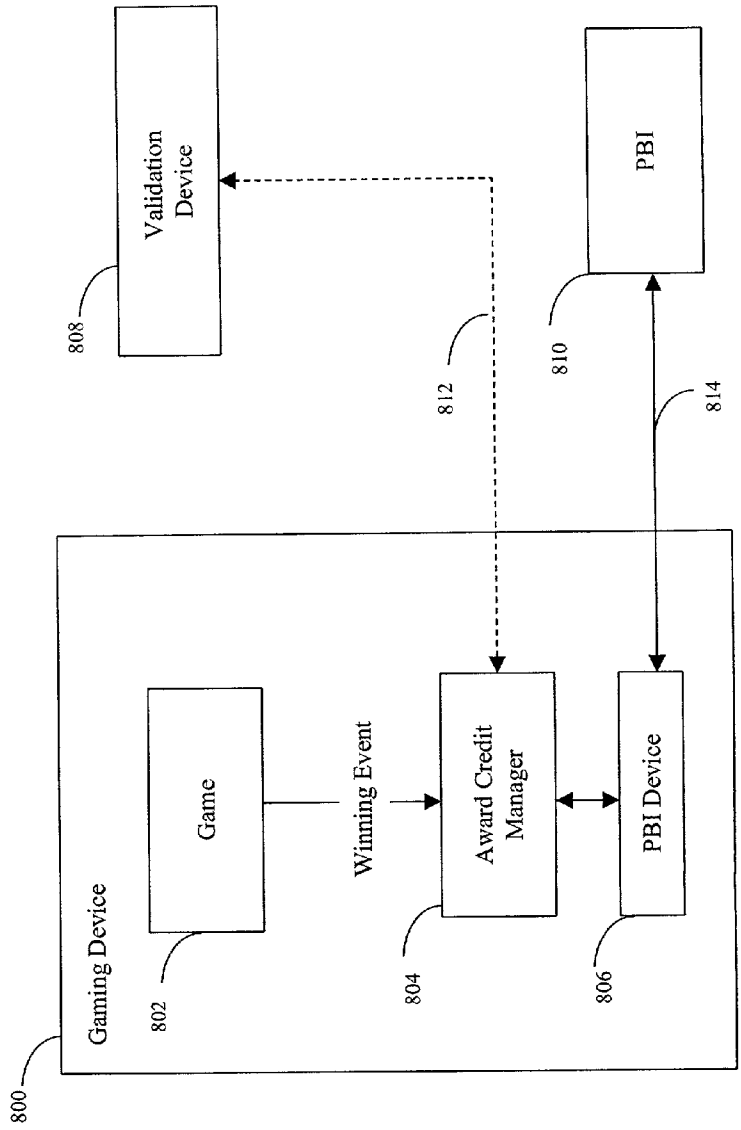


FIGURE 9

Prize Station Device Details

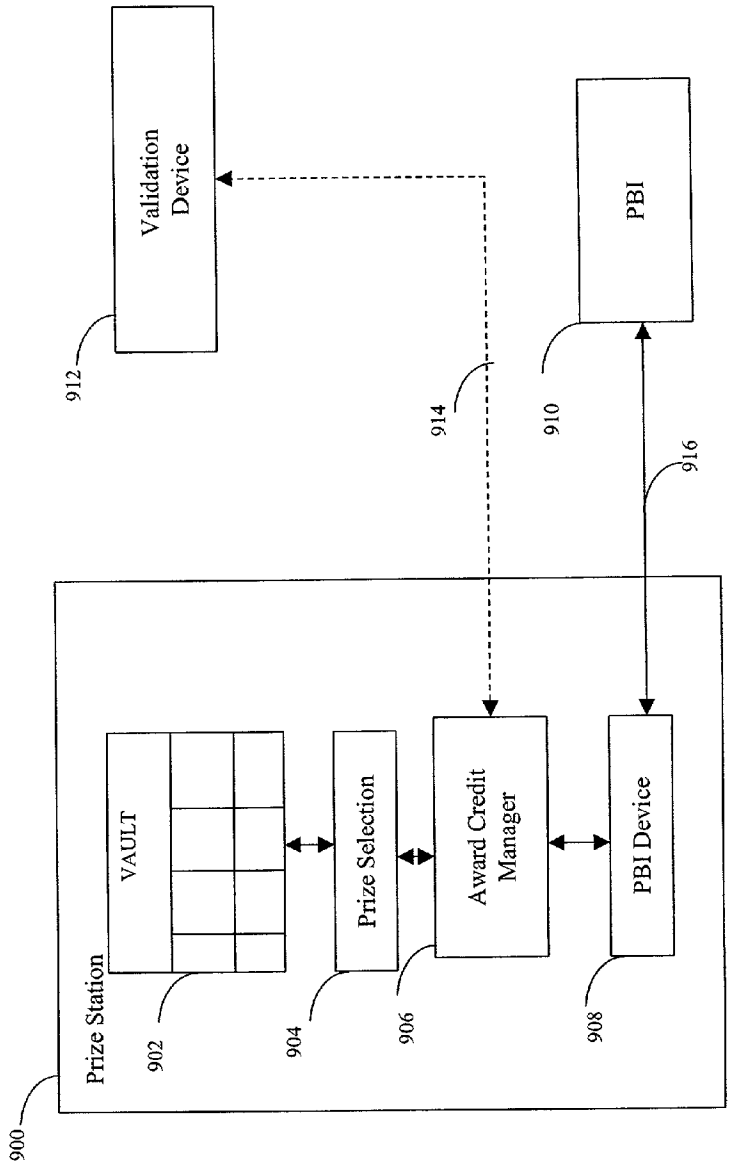


FIGURE 10
Further Meta-Game Examples

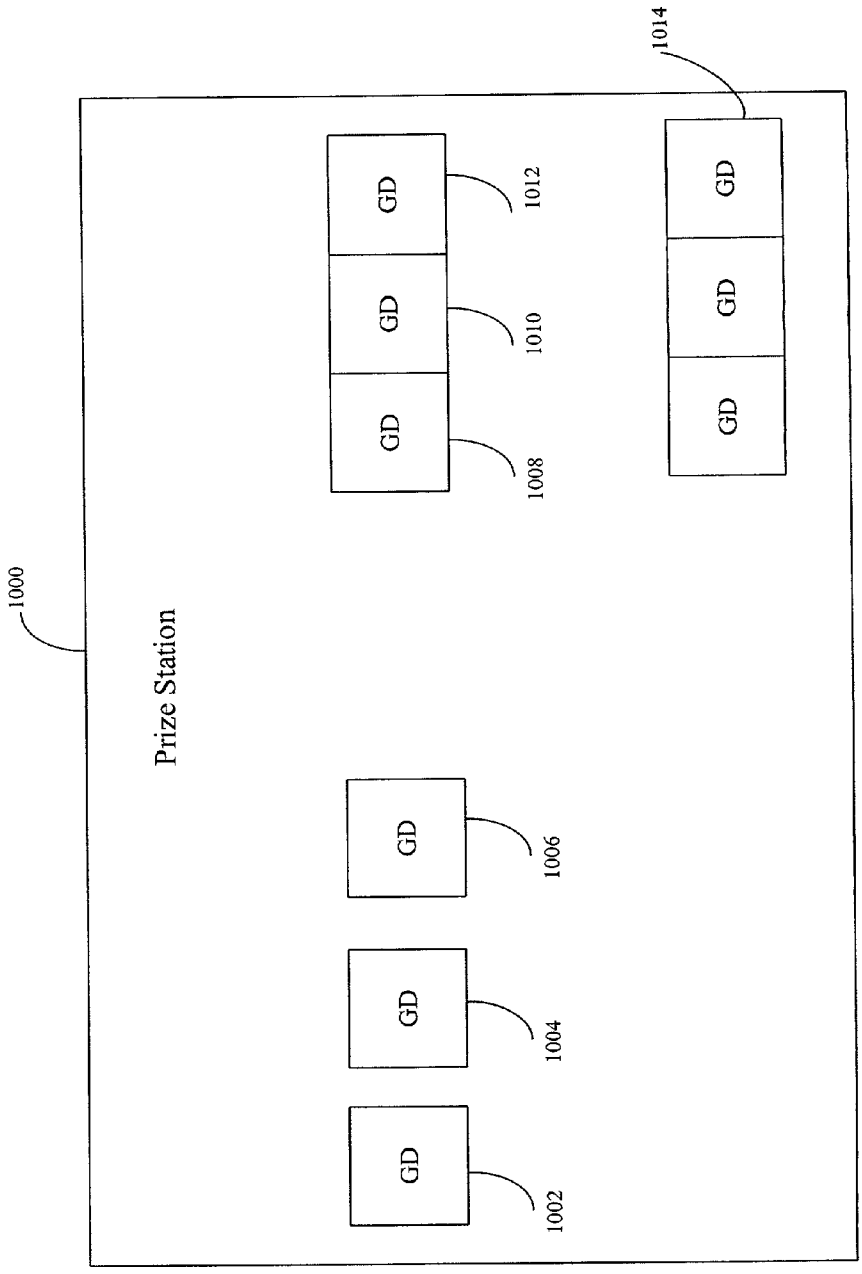


FIGURE 11

Hierarchical Prize Levels

The value of a prize at any level is deemed to be one-half the value of the prizes one level above itself and twice the value of the prizes one level below itself.

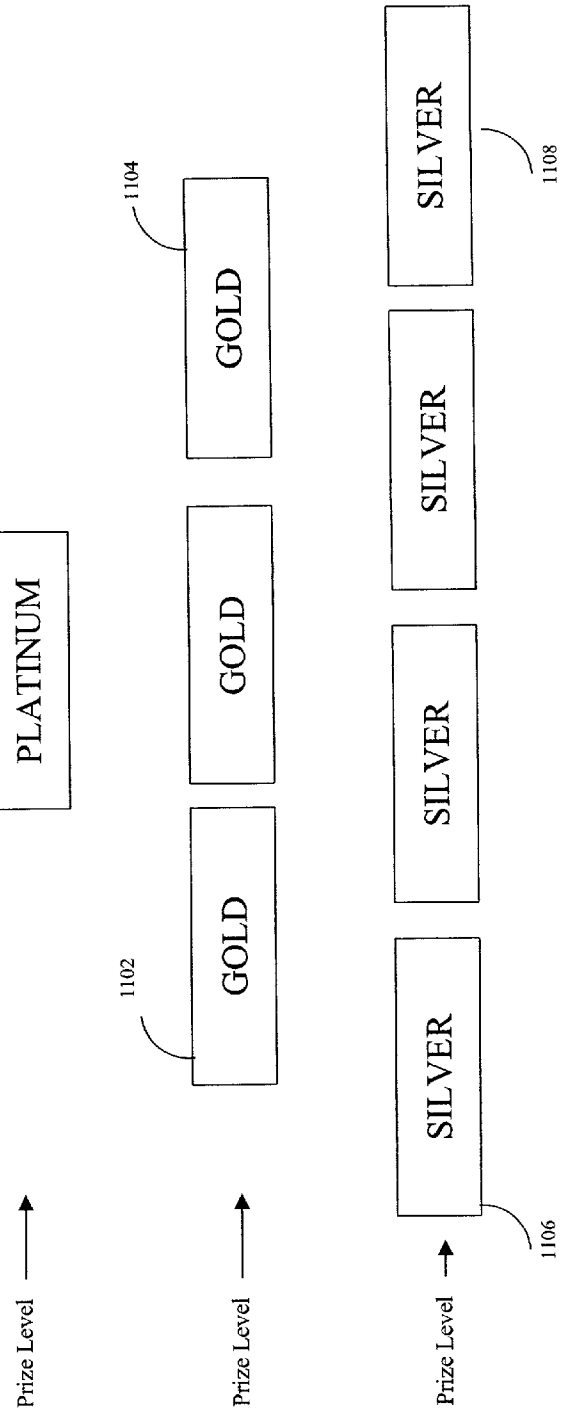


FIGURE 12
Game State Saving Game
With Credits

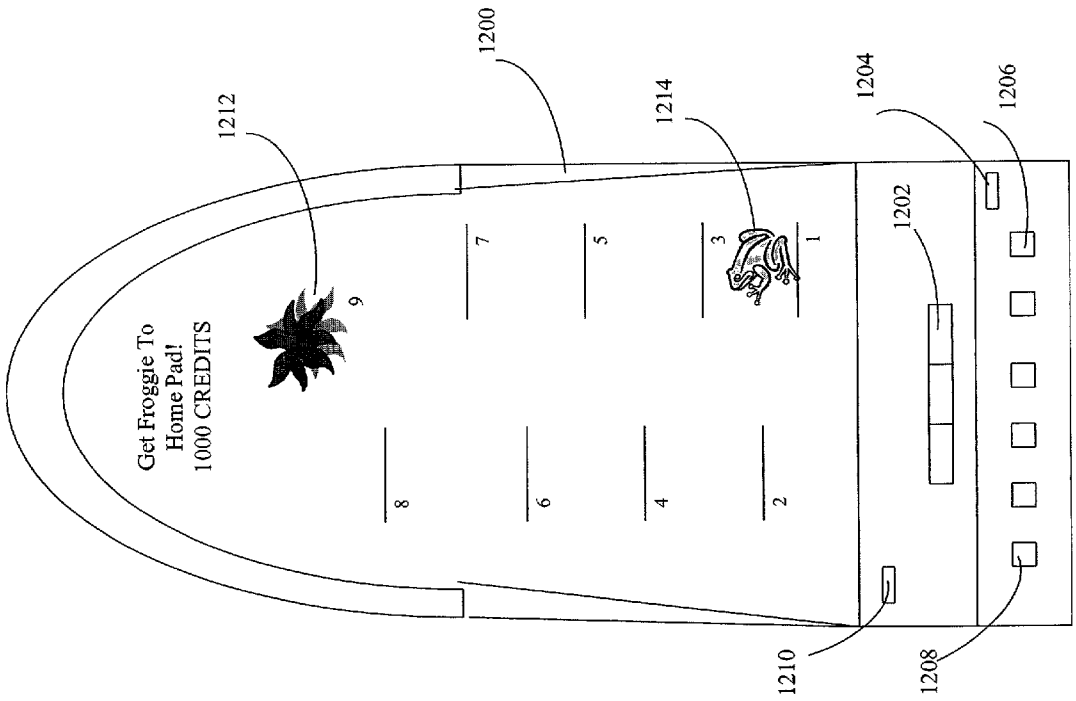


FIGURE 13
Game State Saving Game
With Skill Points

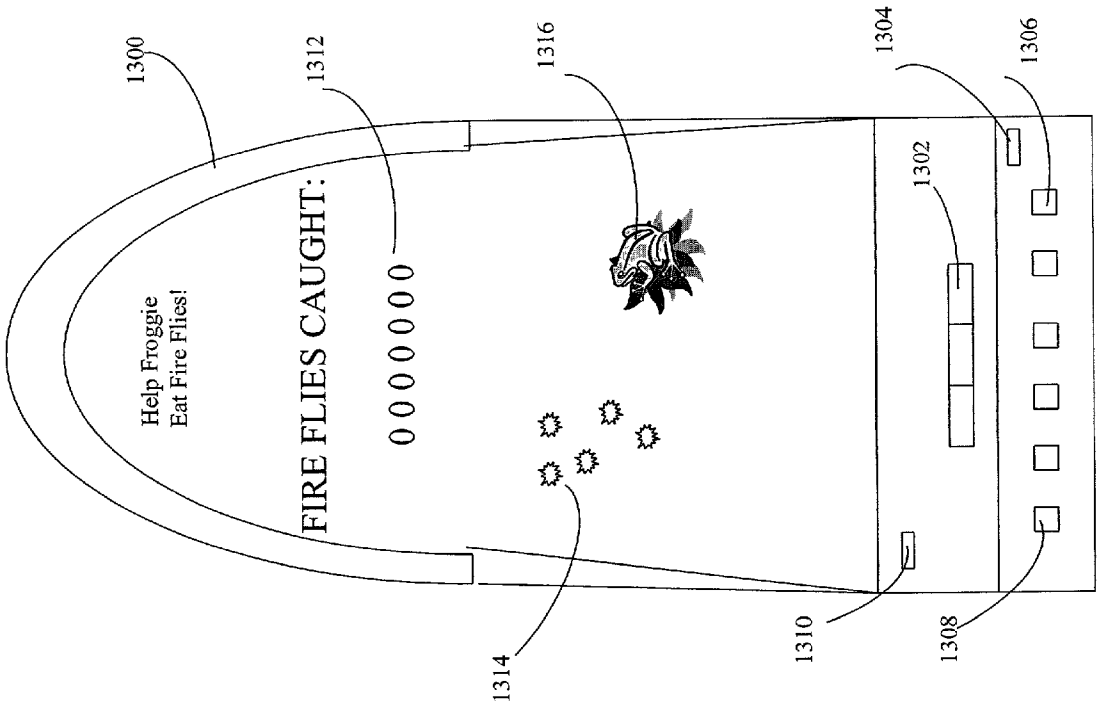
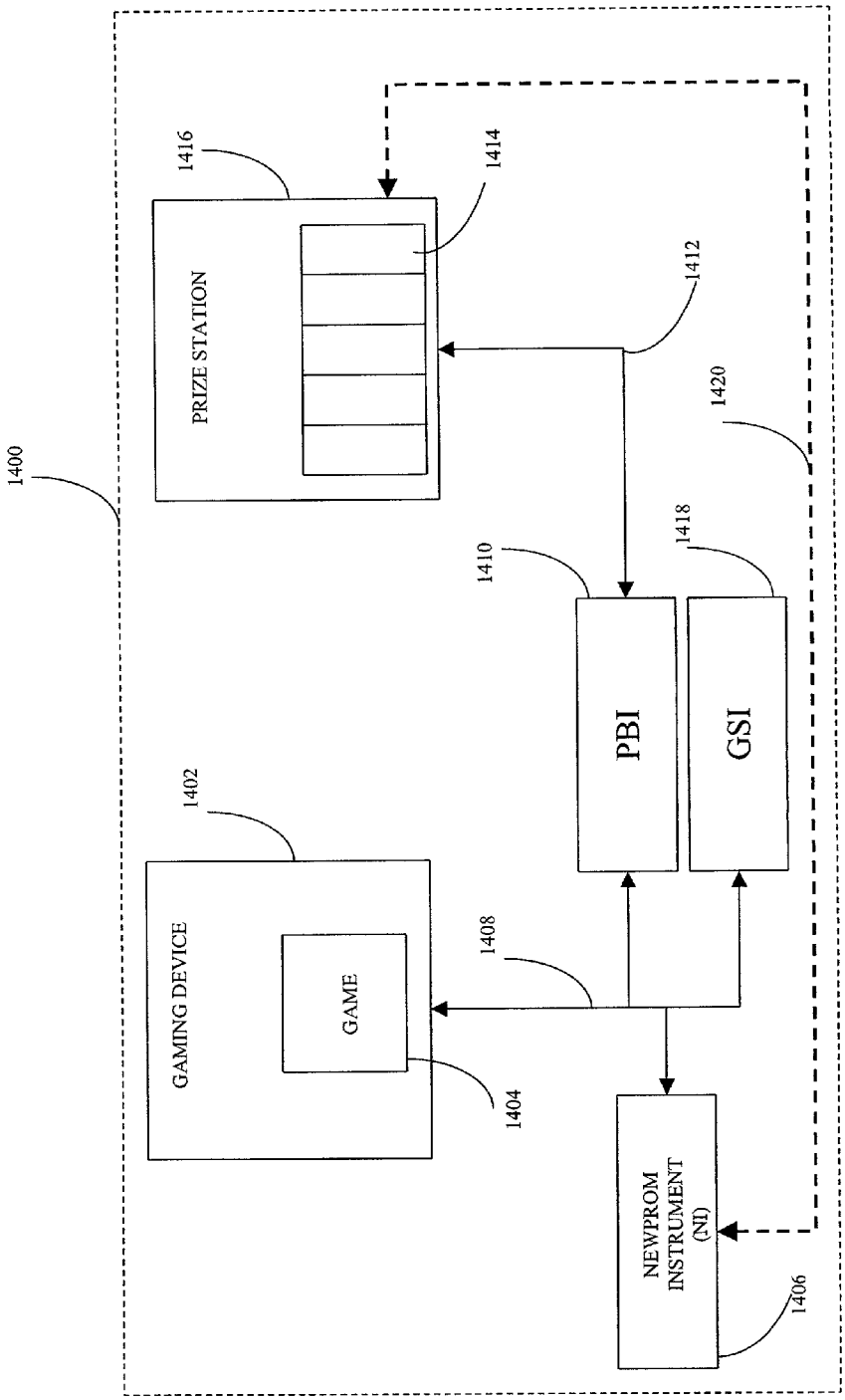


FIGURE 14

Example Award Credit, Game State, And Promotional Credit System



15-A

FIGURE 15

Example Elements Used To Determine Promotional Credit Issuance

15-B

Generally Applicable Elements	Simplified Example Of Sub-elements To Be Used With Newprom Interpreter For Gaming Devices At One Casino
1 Time Restrictions	1 Time Restrictions: 5+ Sub-elements (Minutes, Hours, Days, Weeks, Months)
2 Location Restrictions	2 Location Restrictions: 1 Sub-element (Issuing Casino: Only Valid At Issuing Casino)
3 Gaming Device Restrictions	3 Gaming Device Restrictions: 1 Sub-element (All Gaming Devices)
4 Game Play Enhancements	4 Game Play Enhancements: 2 Sub-elements (Additional Game Points, Progressive Jackpot)
5 Award Level Enhancements	5 Award Level Enhancements: 1 Sub-element (Null)
6 Triggering Events	6 Triggering Events: 2+ Sub-elements (Time Played, Amount Spent)
7 Distribution Means	7 Distribution Means: 3 Sub-elements (At Gaming Device, Targeted Mailings, Mass Local Mailings)

FIGURE 16
Newprom Device

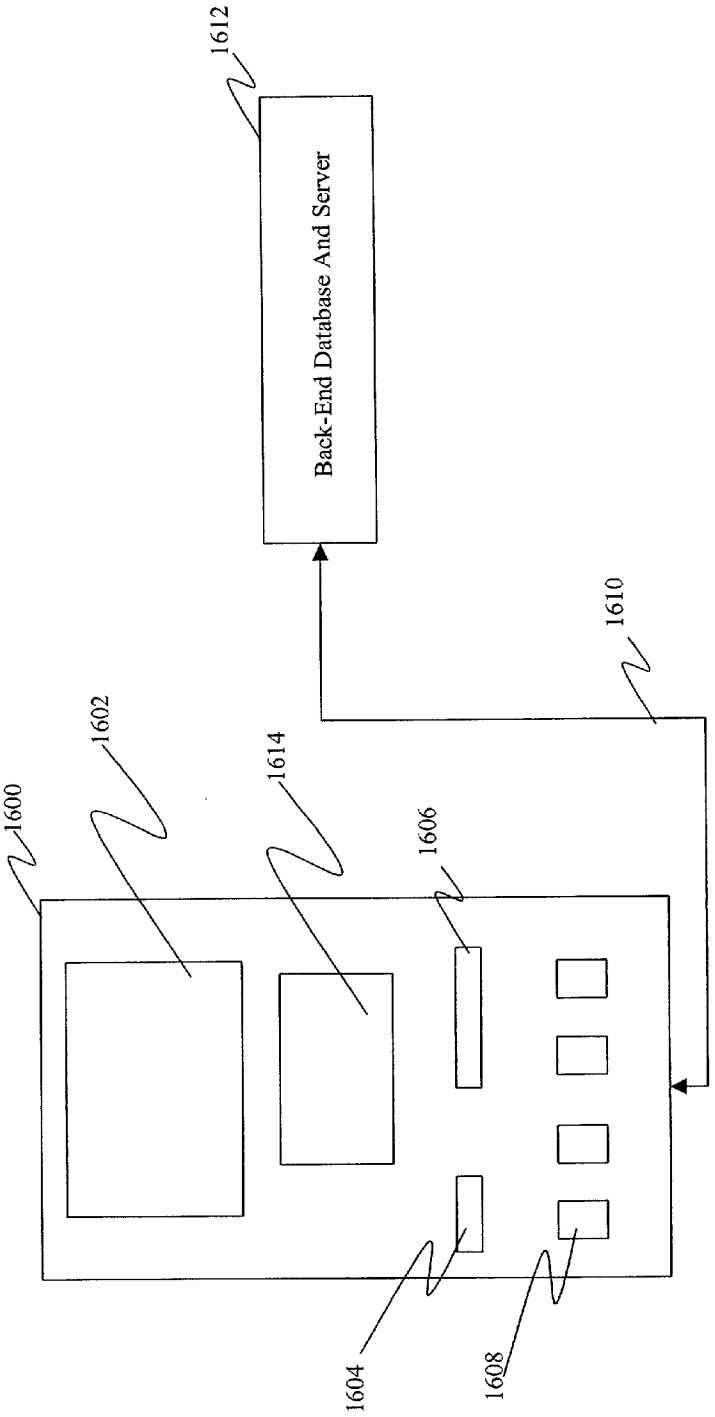


FIGURE 17

Non-Exhaustive List Of APID ITMs

CLASS I APID-ONLY	CLASS II APID AND DATA
Voucher IDs	Vouchers
Personal Sequences	Smart Cards
Magnetic-strip Cards	Magnetic Diskettes
Embedded RFID Tags	Optical Disks/Mini-Disks
	Handheld Devices With IR Interface
	Handheld Devices With RF Interface

FIGURE 18

Anonymous Player ID (APID) General Gaming Device Having An APID Data Coordinator

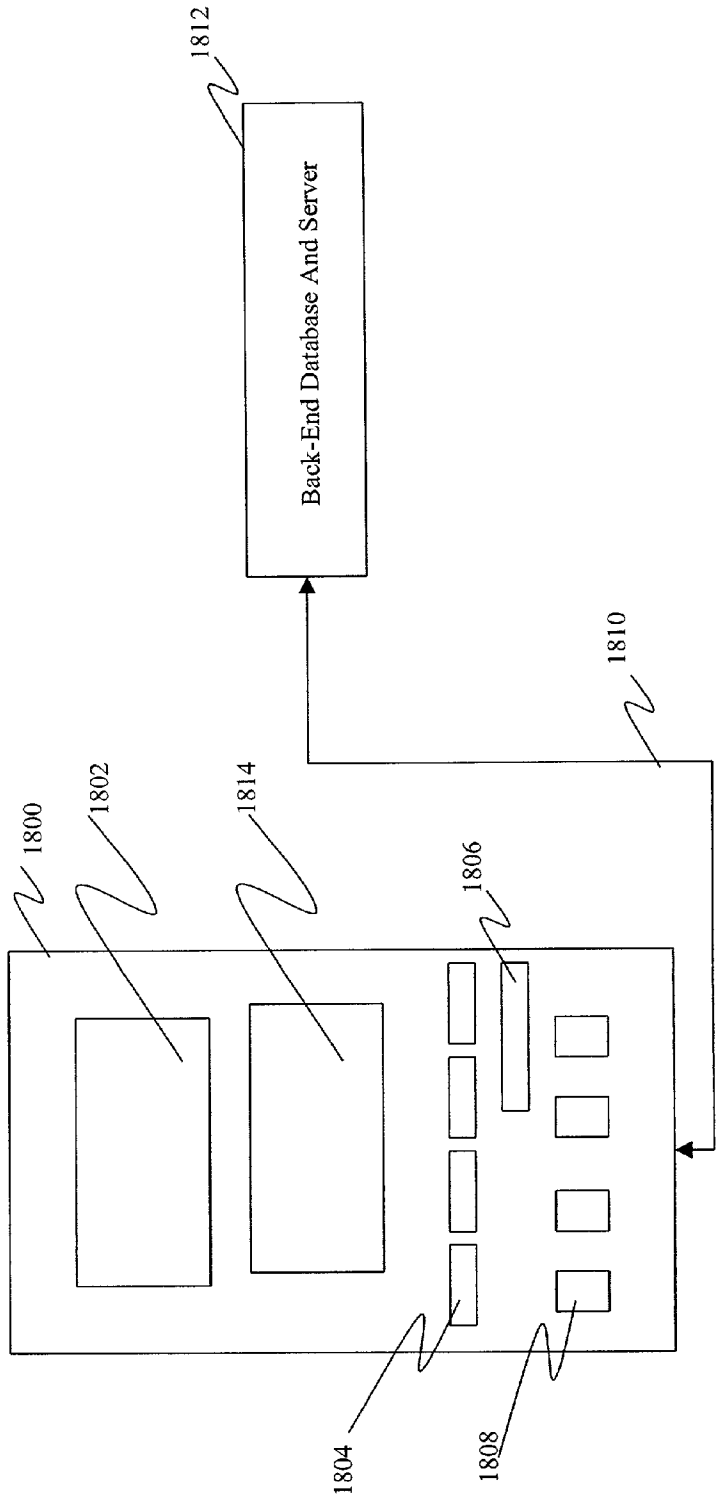


FIGURE 19
ITM, APID Service Station

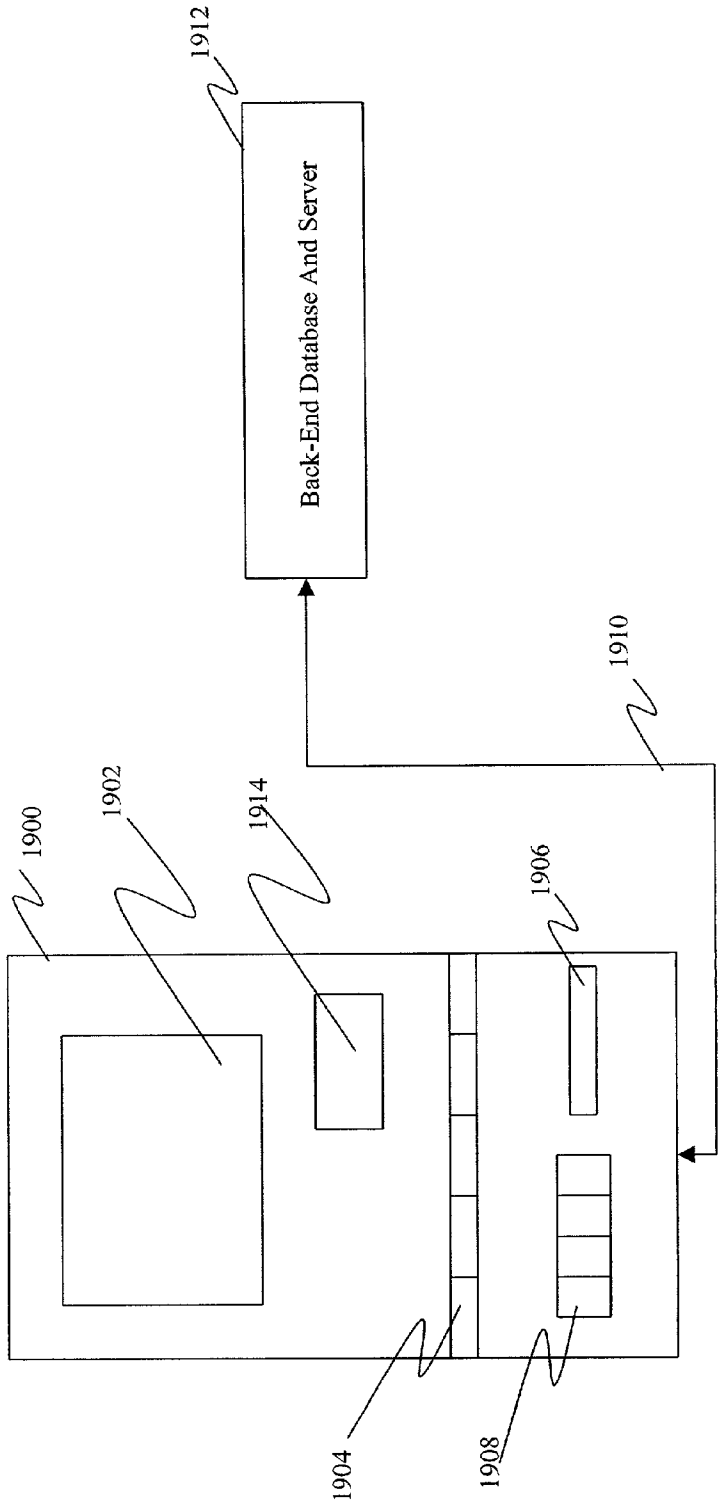


FIGURE 20

Example Use Of An ITM Service Station

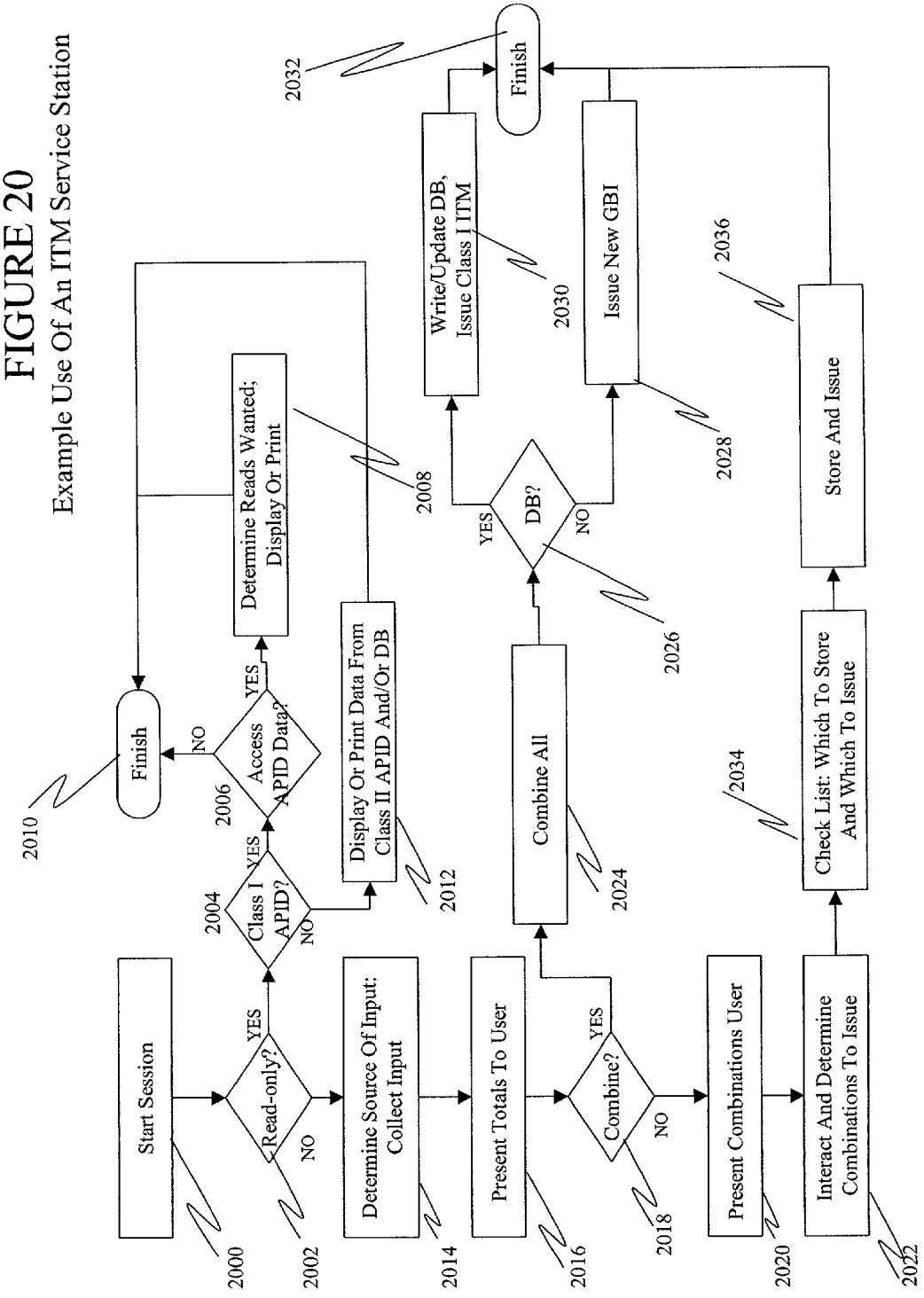


FIGURE 21

APID Use In Various Configurations

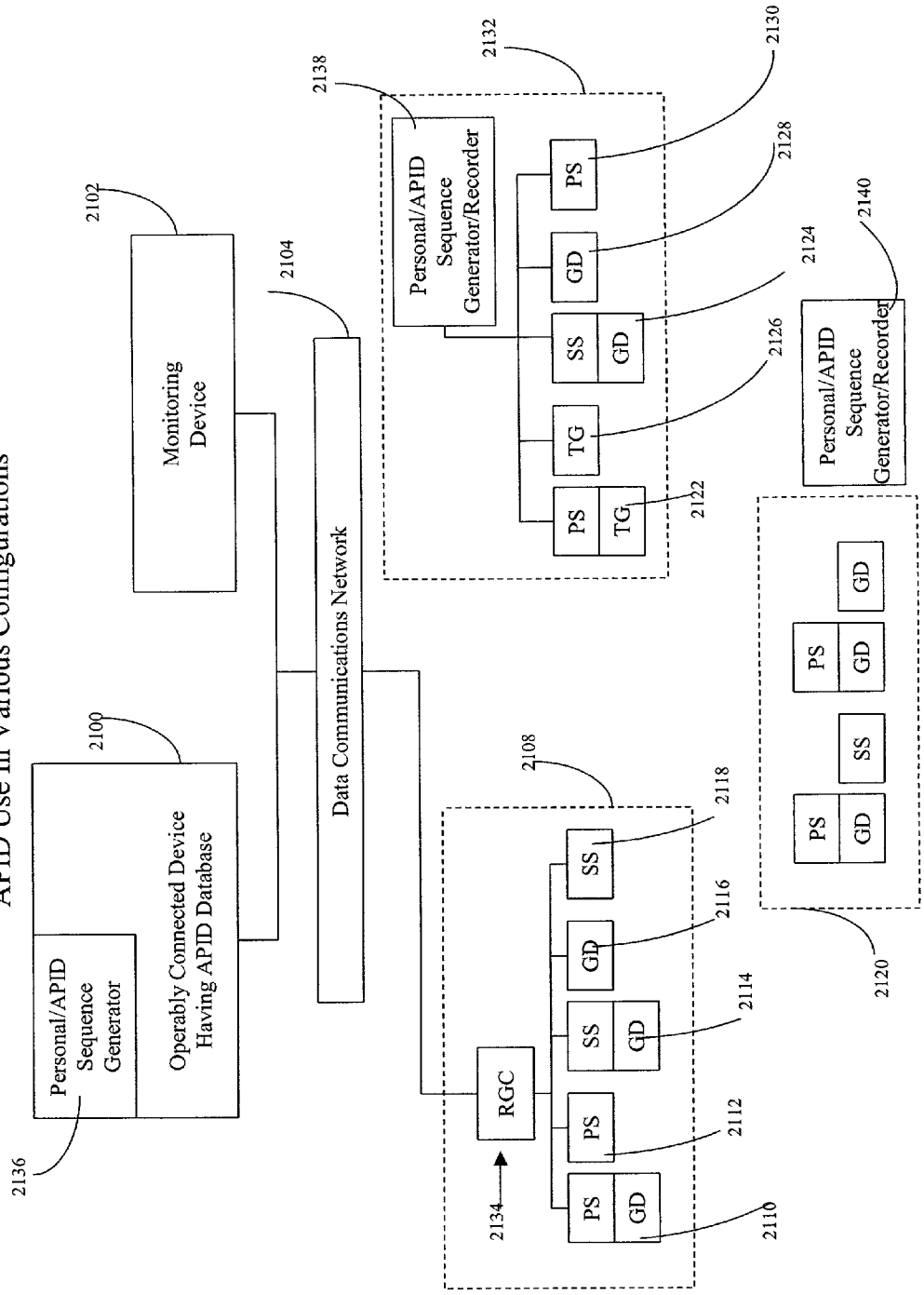


FIGURE 22
Method Of Generating And Issuing An APID ITM

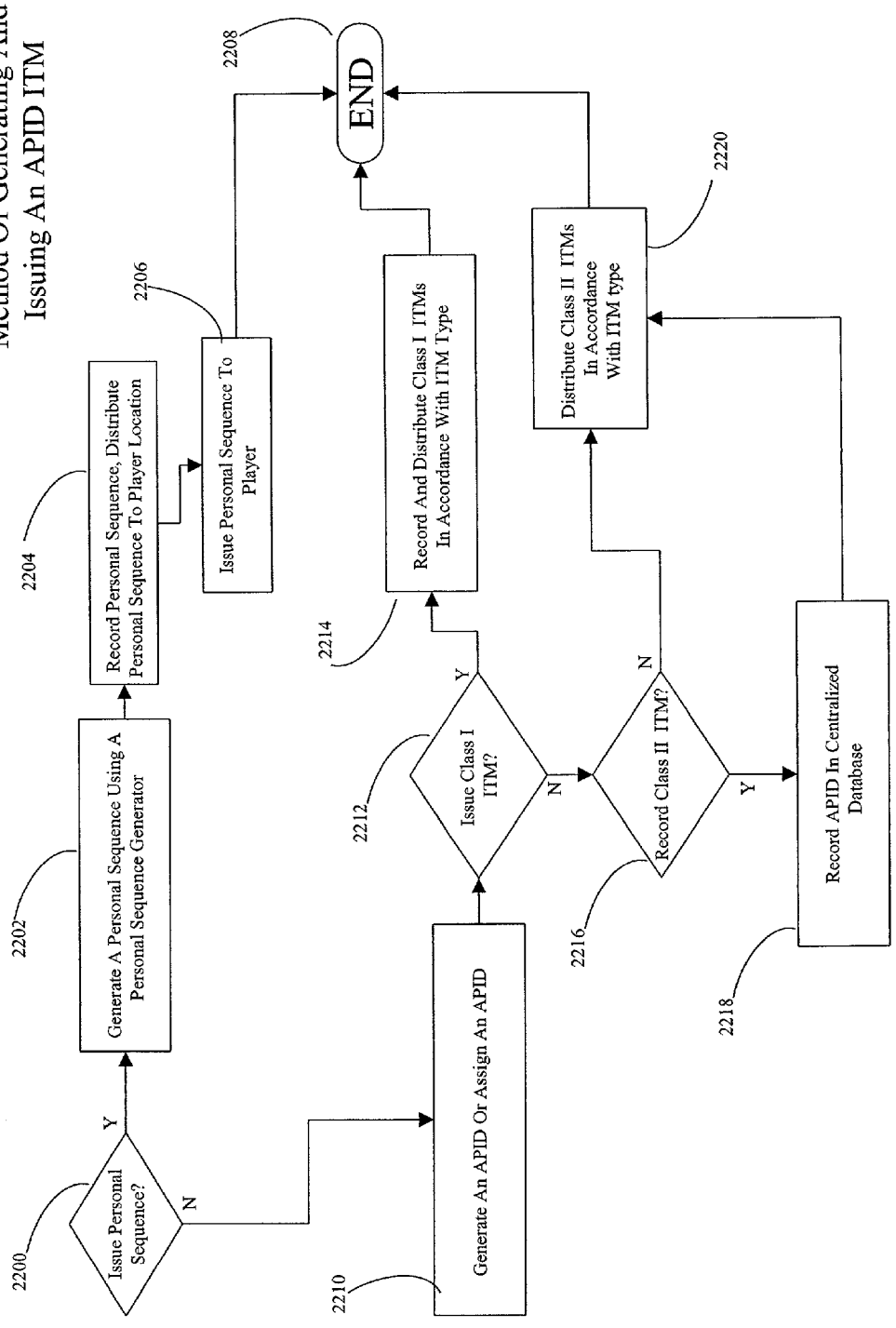


FIGURE 23
Method Of Using An APID ITM On A Gaming Or Gaming-related Device

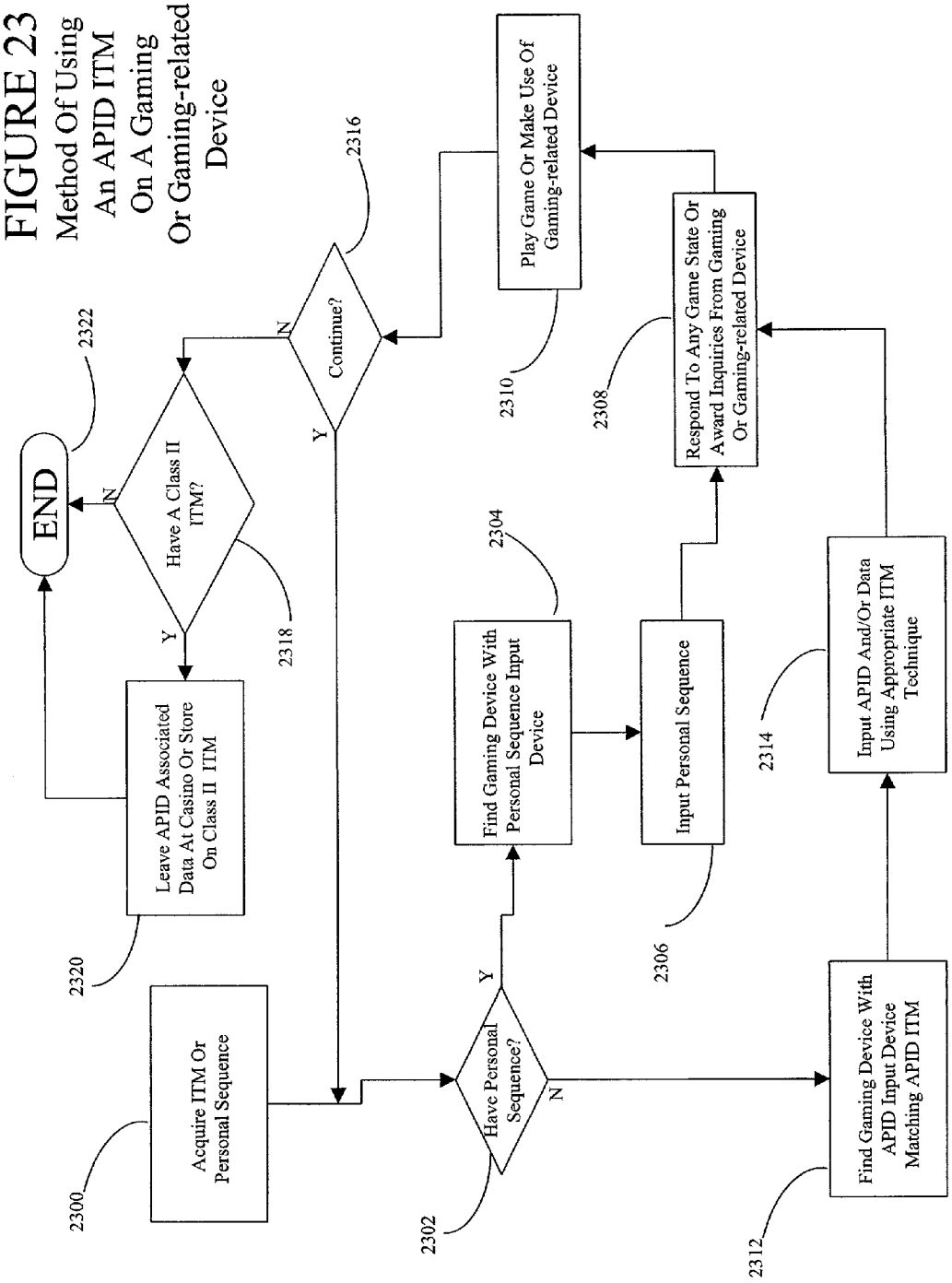


FIGURE 24
Method Of Gathering APID Data From Gaming Or Gaming-related Devices, Overall Process

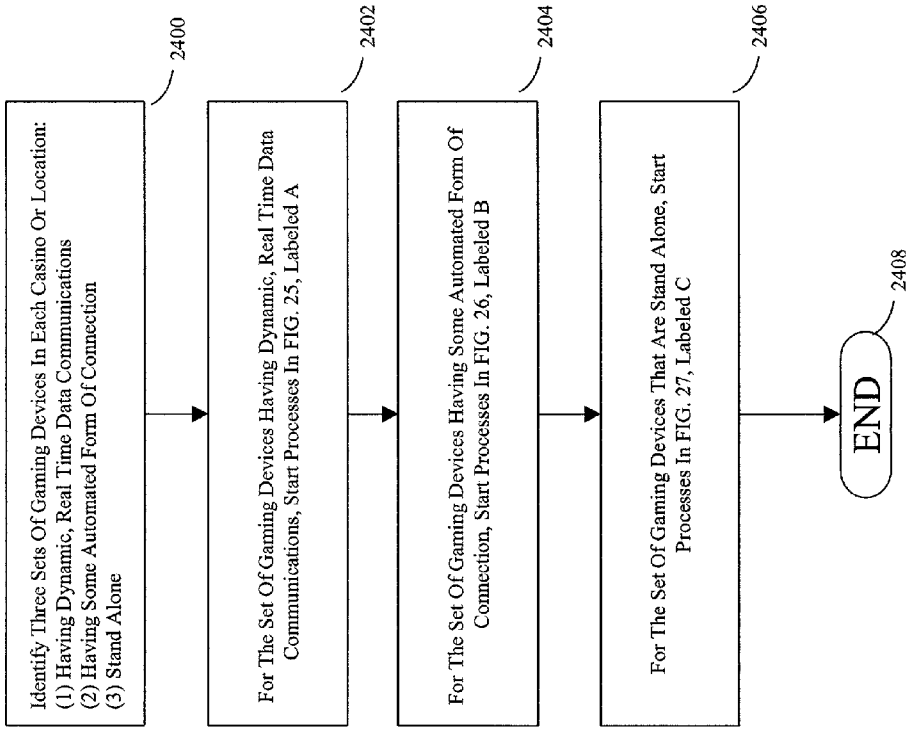


FIGURE 25
Method Of Gathering APID Data From Gaming Or Gaming-related Devices, First Sub-process

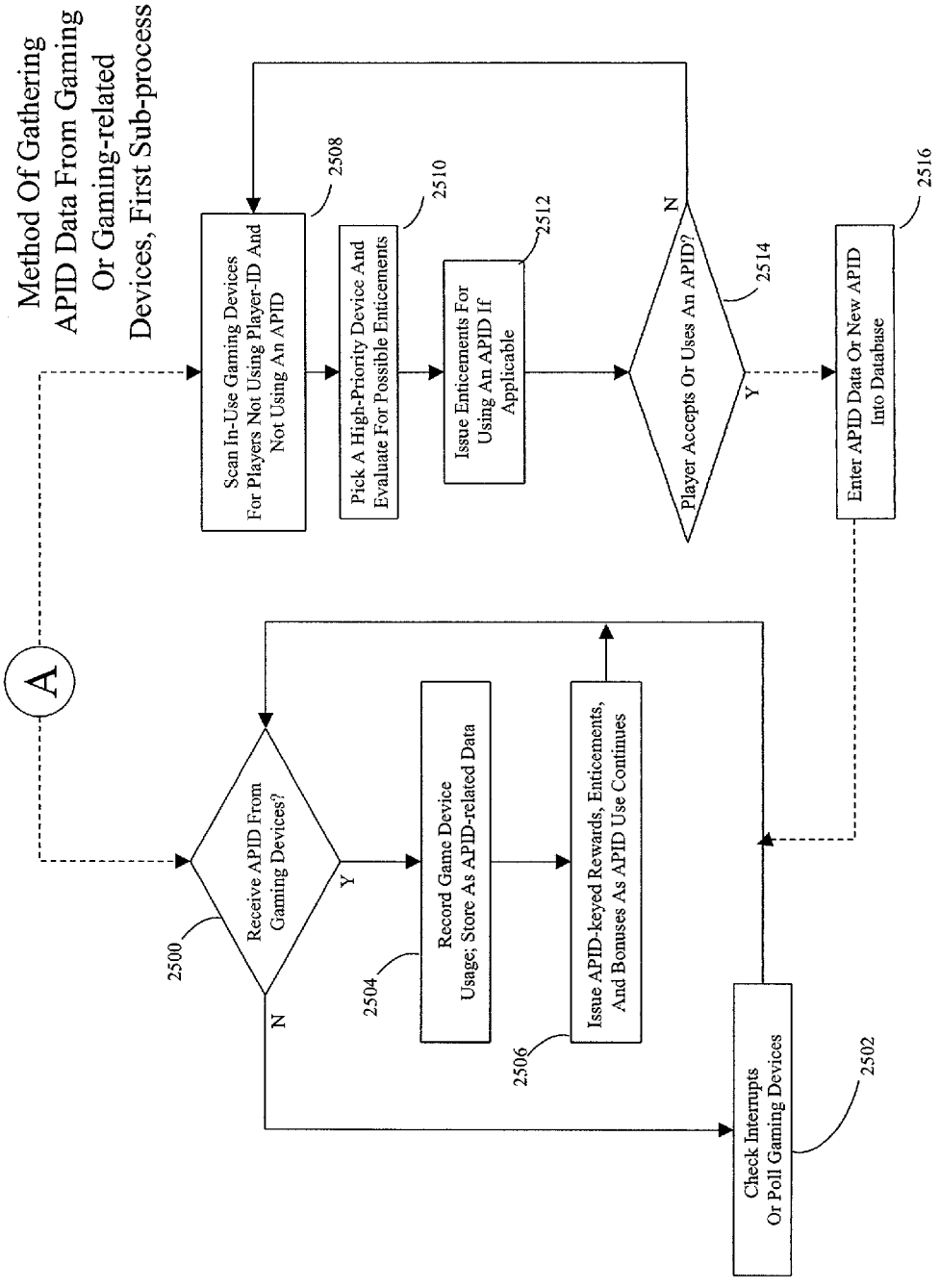


FIGURE 26

Method Of Gathering APID Data From Gaming Or Gaming-related Devices, Second Sub-process

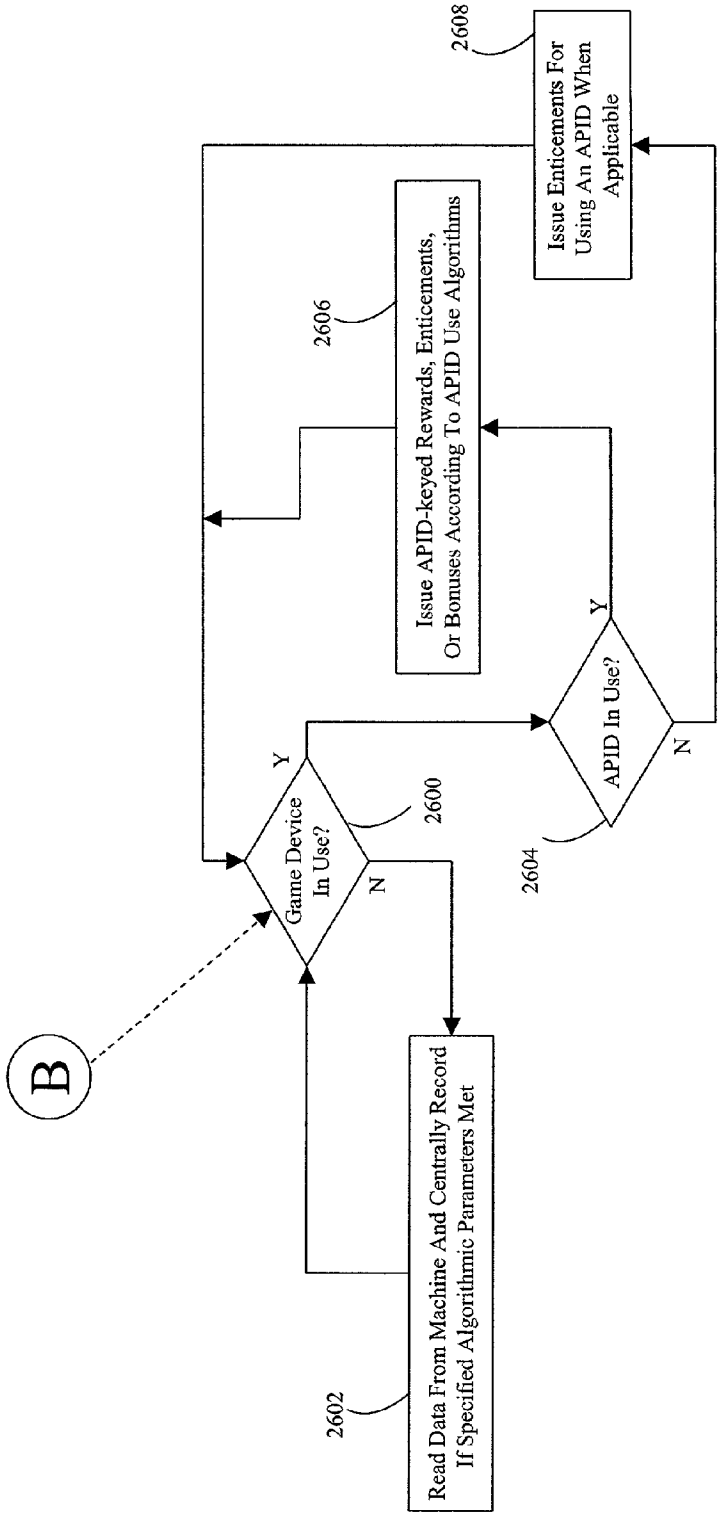
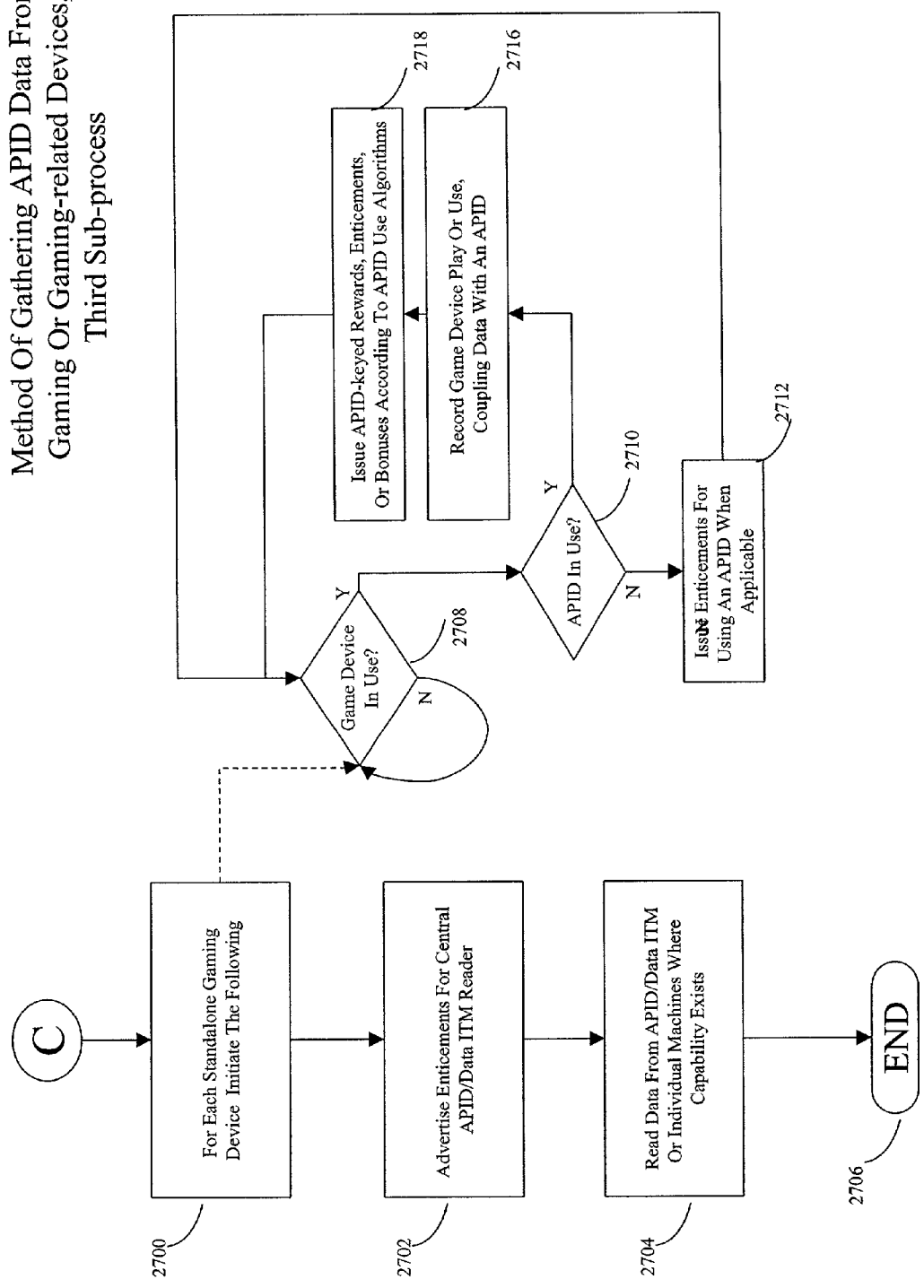


FIGURE 27

Method Of Gathering APID Data From Gaming Or Gaming-related Devices, Third Sub-process



ANONYMOUS PLAYER IDENTIFIERS IN A GAMING ENVIRONMENT

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of co-pending application Ser. No. 09/788,162 filed Feb. 15, 2001, Attorney Docket No. GSS-00-001-CIP.1.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] This invention pertains generally to gaming systems. More particularly, the present invention relates to a method and apparatus for tracking player activity and issuing player enticements when players do not use a traditional casino player IDs.

[0004] 2. The Prior Art

[0005] Gaming devices of various types have been in use for many years. The most common type is the conventional slot. A player operates a slot machine by providing coin or paper money, or tokens, that are received as game credits towards playing a game on the slot machine. Some machines allow a user to provide game credits in the form of a voucher, a printed coupon or a data card (e.g. magnetic strip or smart card). Once the sufficient amount of game credits has been provided to constitute a wager, the player then initiates the game, normally by pulling a handle or activating a button. If a winning event occurs, where a winning event is defined by the game being played, the slot machine issues a winning amount according to the player's wager and to a predetermined pay scheme. The game results are generally based on randomly generated events. The winning amount issued to the user is provided by a corresponding amount of game credits, which the player may redeem (cash-out) or use for further play on the slot machine. Similar game play and award schemes are provided according to other gaming devices such as video poker machines and keno machines.

[0006] Bonus and progressive awards have been introduced as improvements to conventional gaming devices to entice increased game play. A common bonus scheme is to award a player a chance to multiply the player's award winnings on a secondary or bonus stage of the game. Most bonus awards are simply an increased multiple of the primary winnings and are issued as game credits suitable for redemption or further play of the gaming device currently being played. In certain cases where the bonus award is large, manual payout by a casino attendant may be required. In some cases a non-monetary prize (e.g., a car) is made the subject of the bonus award. Like the larger monetary progressive awards, these non-monetary prizes are normally tendered manually by a casino attendant.

[0007] Progressive awards, like bonus awards, also normally comprise simple monetary credits, but typically comprise a large jackpot amount. Progressive awards couple more than one gaming machine, where some amount of the money a player spends at each gaming machine goes into a central award or "pot". The players of each coupled machine compete for the progressive award. The overall result is that a significantly larger award can be won by a player playing progressive games at a coupled machine than can be won at an individual gaming machine. Upon the occurrence of a specific game result, the progressive award is issued to the player. Since the progressive award is normally large, it is normally paid manually by a casino attendant or cashier.

[0008] Current gaming devices and methods, while suitable for normal award credit payout and one-time non-monetary prize payout, have some particular disadvantages. First, current gaming schemes are not well suited for awarding prizes which require a player to play more than one machine or collect more than one winning event on a machine towards the redemption of an award or prize. When playing a single machine, a player must accumulate a sufficient number of game points to be awarded a bonus prize, and this must occur during one "play" or session. However, current systems do not allow a player to collect game or award points on multiple machines for use with a secondary game or for cumulative collection of points toward prize redemption, nor do they provide for the collection of points over multiple sessions on one machine. And finally, current system cannot provide any mechanism for following player from game to game ("player tracking", used primarily for marketing purposes) unless the player registers with the casino.

[0009] Current gaming machines also have limited, if any, ability to incorporate non-gaming, intra-gaming, or inter-gaming promotional awards into game play, precluding a potential source of player participation and interest.

[0010] Some systems that have attempted to partially address these limitations of gaming devices are still limited. The attempted solutions fall into two broad categories: player tracking points and some sort of promotional coupons or credits.

[0011] Player tracking points are used when players identify themselves to a central server in a particular casino via the gaming machines using a player ID card (typically a magnetic strip card). The central server tracks the number of play ("lever pulls") or amount of money a player wagers. Depending on the amount of plays or money wagered, the player is given player points, translating into various prizes ("comps") given by the casino to the player.

[0012] The other primary method of giving enticements is through promotional credits. Promotional credits are usually some form of coupon or ticket that, when redeemed at a particular casino, will give the player a certain number of free game plays. The coupons function like tokens; in fact, it is usually the case that the coupons are redeemed for tokens and the player then uses the tokens in the games of their choice. Promotional credits have been issued both at the game itself and as promotional material outside of casinos, such as coupons as part of a travel package.

[0013] These solutions have significant limitations. The awards or credits are casino-wide, having no further method of targeting usage. The awards are based on simple, linear criteria (i.e., given away in a generic form or based on a single element having a one dimensional scale such as amount of money wagered). Additionally the effect on gaming devices is limited to free play (additional game credits). Finally, there is no ability to track players who are not already entered into a player tracking database, and who in addition make use of their player-IDs associated with that player tracking database entry.

[0014] Thus, there is a long-felt need to improve upon the current methods and apparatus for providing additional

methods of tracking player activity and to provide incentives that go well beyond the capabilities of traditional player-ID cards. The same need is felt in both traditional "Nevada-style" casinos and in casinos whose jurisdictions limit games to those based on drawings from a fixed-pool.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] The invention comprises a radical new granularity of enforceable control in the generation and issuance of awards and tracking tied to unnamed players in a gaming environment. The invention discloses a method and apparatus to make use of any combination of games (from individual games to classes of games to arbitrary sets of games, in one location or not) in any specified location, with any specified game play enhancements (alternatively enhanced prize station awards), with any enhanced award levels, with time control that may be based on any time units desired (typically minutes, hours, days, weeks, or months), with any set of triggering events to issue specially designed promotion based awards, designated to use any type of distribution method desired. Coupled with the use of unnamed player tracking, this provides heretofore unavailable ability to specify which types of awards, enticements, etc., may be issued to players, potential players, and unnamed players (players not in a player tracking database).

[0016] The newly available granularity further enables players to be enticed to use vouchers, voucher-IDs, smart cards, optical media, handheld devices having IR or low power RF interfaces, or any similar device transportable by a human that can be tracked, even though the user ("user" and "player" are used interchangeably in this disclosure) has no player-ID card. An example of an IR device would be a Handspring™ personal organizer using a downloaded application that interfaces with a casino's systems; an example of a voucher-based system is simply one in which the person receives a voucher-ID and uses the voucher-ID in similar ways a person would use a traditional player-ID. Such devices allows players not in the traditional player tracking databases may be tracked. This opens up an entirely new world of marketing data and dynamic award issuing capabilities.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] **FIG. 1** is a functional block diagram of an example system for maintaining award game states in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] **FIG. 2** is a functional block diagram of an example game board suitable for use with the present invention.

[0019] **FIG. 3** is a functional block diagram of another example system for maintaining award game states in accordance with the present invention.

[0020] **FIG. 4** depicts a sample voucher ticket suitable for use with the present invention.

[0021] **FIG. 5** is a functional block diagram of another example system for maintaining award game states in accordance with the present invention.

[0022] **FIG. 6** is a functional block diagram of another example system for maintaining award game states in accordance with the present invention.

[0023] **FIG. 7** is a functional block diagram of another example system for maintaining award game states in accordance with the present invention

[0024] **FIG. 8** is functional block diagram showing an example gaming device suitable for use with the present invention.

[0025] **FIG. 9** is a functional block diagram showing an example prize station suitable for use with the present invention.

[0026] **FIG. 10** is a functional block diagram depicting meta-games suitable for use with the present invention.

[0027] **FIG. 11** is functional block diagram showing prize organization suitable for use with the present invention.

[0028] **FIG. 12** is a functional block diagram depicting a game state saving game suitable for use with the present invention.

[0029] **FIG. 13** is a functional block diagram depicting another game state saving game suitable for use with the present invention.

[0030] **FIG. 14** is a functional block diagram showing an example system with multiple instruments suitable for use with the present invention.

[0031] **FIG. 15** is a diagram of elements used for promotion award issuance.

[0032] **FIG. 16** is a functional block diagram of a promotional award device according to the present invention.

[0033] **FIG. 17** is a list of examples of anonymous player identification individually transportable media types.

[0034] **FIG. 18** is a functional block diagram of a general anonymous play identification gaming device according to the present invention.

[0035] **FIG. 19** is a functional block diagram of am anonymous player identification service station according to the present invention.

[0036] **FIG. 20** is a flow diagram showing one example use of an anonymous player identification service station according to the present invention.

[0037] **FIG. 21** is a functional block diagram of systems using anonymous player identification according to the present invention.

[0038] **FIG. 22** is a flow diagram showing a method of generating and issuing anonymous player identification according to the present invention.

[0039] **FIG. 23** is a flow diagram showing a method of using an anonymous player identification on a gaming device according to the present invention.

[0040] **FIG. 24** is a flow diagram showing a method of gathering anonymous player identification related data from gaming devices according to the present invention.

[0041] **FIG. 25** is an additional flow diagram showing a method of gathering anonymous player identification related data from gaming devices according to the present invention.

[0042] **FIG. 26** is an additional flow diagram showing a method of gathering anonymous player identification related data from gaming devices according to the present invention.

[0043] **FIG. 27** is an additional flow diagram showing a method of gathering anonymous player identification related data from gaming devices according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0044] Persons of ordinary skill in the art will realize that the following description of the present invention is illustrative only and not in any way limiting. Other embodiments of the invention will readily suggest themselves to such skilled persons having the benefit of this disclosure.

[0045] Referring to the drawings, for illustrative purposes the present invention is shown embodied in **FIG. 1** through **FIG. 27**. It will be appreciated that the apparatus may vary as to configuration and as to details of the parts, and that the method may vary as to details, partitioning, and the order of the acts, without departing from the inventive concepts disclosed herein.

[0046] The present invention provides new methods and apparatus usable for the promotion of gaming and for player tracking. Gaming enticements may be specified as to games, times, and locations, and enables player tracking with unnamed players. The present invention provides for a granularity of promotional enticement not previously possible. Using the present invention allows targeted populations of players to be combined with targeted games, gaming devices, locations, playing times, and other criteria. Coupled with the fine granularity of targeted devices and players, the present invention also provides for very particularized forms of enhanced game play, enhanced game award levels, and enhanced general award levels that were not previously available. To enable this new granularity in promotional capability, new game state saving methods and apparatus must be introduced. Game state that may be saved and associated with one player falls into one of three types of state: credit/award game states, partial credit/award game states, and game state not related to credits/awards (i.e., skill points). The first type of saved game state is the game's award credit state, discussed immediately below.

[0047] **FIG. 1** shows a block diagram of an example system for maintaining a player's award credit state. System **114** includes a gaming device **100** and a prize station **112**. Gaming device **100** comprises a conventional game of chance, such as a slot machine, video poker machine, video lottery device, keno machine, bingo machine. The gaming device **100** may alternatively comprise a live table game of chance, such as a blackjack table or roulette table, where the functions described herein carried out by the gaming device are carried out by a table attendant.

[0048] If gaming device **100** is not a live table game, then gaming device **100** further provides a game **116** configured for play by a player. Gaming device **100** would then include typical hardware and software components (not shown), such as a processor, memory, and input/output devices such as a video output and control inputs, and game software, for executing game **116**. According to play of the game **116**, one or more game results may provide the player with an "award credit". The game results may be provided by a game of chance involving random events or may be provided from a predetermined outcome selected from a fixed pool (e.g., a lottery).

[0049] Award credits, unlike game credits which are used for additional game plays of game **116**, may be directly redeemed for prizes or awards on prize station **112**. Award credits may also be used in a meta-game. Although in the preferred embodiment award credits are not used for additional game play, the present invention fully encompasses embodiments which do provide for award credits being used to add to game play credits.

[0050] A meta-game is defined as using credits, award credits, promotion awards (defined below), or any other transferable result(s) from one or more individual games comprising a plurality of individual game units, towards a game that requires, in order to play, the output results (in terms of credits, award credits, promotional credits, special indicia, etc.) of previously played game or games.

[0051] In the simplest case a meta-game may simply consist of collecting a designated set of award credits that are used in prize station **112**. In this example, the meta-game pieces may be part of a game board or puzzle and when the player has collected a particular subset (i.e., collection or accumulation) of meta-game pieces, the player uses those pieces to "play" prize station **112**, where the combination of award credits will entitle the player to a particular prize or class of prizes. In other cases the award credits may entitle the player entry into a more complex meta-game, where the award credits are used in the meta-game in a similar way that currency is used in primary games.

[0052] **FIG. 2** illustrates a sample game board **200** having spaces for game pieces **202**, **204**, **206**, **208** and **210**. The game pieces **202** through **210** may be represented by indicia or representation to a particular theme, such as a popular board game, television show, movie, etc. Game rules may require accumulation of all or part of the game pieces **202** through **210** for different levels of prize awards.

[0053] **FIG. 2** also illustrations a second sample game board **212** having letter space holders to accommodate letters **214**, **216**, **218**, **220** and **222** corresponding to the word "WATCH". This game allows a player to collect letters (game pieces) from the word "WATCH" during game play of the primary game, normally a slot game. Once the player has collected all the letters, the player may redeem a prize corresponding to "WATCH" from the prize station. Numerous other game board formats and rules suitable for use with the present invention will be readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure.

[0054] Referring back to **FIG. 1**, according to one aspect of the invention the gaming device **100** is configured to maintain a record of the accumulated award credits (game pieces) associated with the player, including award credits earned during play of the game **116**. The player may maintain the player's state of award credits earnings (e.g., award credit game state, or award credit state) even when the player has terminated play of the gaming device **100**. In one embodiment, the player's game state is maintained via a prize bearing instrument (PBI) **104**. PBI **104** may comprise

any media suitable for associating a player's award credits with the player. Example media include a printed ticket (voucher), a magnetic or smart card, or other information storage medium. As an interface to PBI **104**, gaming device **100** provides a PBI reader/writer device (not shown) capable of reading PBI **104** and writing to (or generating) a PBI. PBI **104** will typically contain one or more data records indicating the number of (or collection of) award credits earned by the player. For vouchers, gaming device **100** will include a voucher reader and a voucher printer that is in operable communication with gaming device **100**. When the player selects to terminate play, gaming device **100** prints a voucher indicating the number of award credits earned by the player.

[**0055**] Gaming device **100** is also configured to determine the accumulated award credits previously earned by the player, generally by reading PBI **104** as presented by the player and identifying any award credits indicated. The previous award credits may have been earned from the same gaming device **100** or a similar gaming device having the same underlying feature set of gaming device **100**.

[**0056**] The award credits previously earned as identified by gaming device **100** are accumulated with further award credits which the player may earn during current play of gaming device **100**. The accumulated award credits may be maintained by the player at the termination of play of the gaming device **100** via another PBI **104** which indicates the overall accumulated award credits earned. PBI **104** thus preserves the award credit game state of the player upon termination of play on the gaming device. The player may later resume play of game **116**, starting at the level previously preserved, by presenting PBI **104** to game device **100** as described above.

[**0057**] In the example "WATCH" game **212** of **FIG. 2**, the player retains the player's earned letters (investment) so that when the player later continues play either on the same or different game, the player's letters (investment) is retained and restored and the player resumes play from the preserved game state. Although described herein for the purposes of redeeming tangible prizes and service, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that the present invention is suitable for use with preserving game states (e.g., award credits, game pieces) for use with bonus games, progressive games, investment bonus games, among others.

[**0058**] Continuing with **FIG. 1**, prize station **112** contains one or more prizes **110**. The prizes may be tangible goods (e.g., diamonds, keys to a car, event tickets), services, or monetary awards. Although not required for operation of the invention, the prizes are not generally redeemable directly via cash payments by the player to the prize station or the game devices. Rather the prizes are normally redeemable via award credits earned by the player from playing gaming device **100**. The redemption process indicated by double-headed arrow **108** is manually initiated by a player, as is the playing process indicated by double-headed arrow **102**. Both paths make use of PBI **104**. Redemption path **108** is executed by presenting one or more PBIs to prize station **112**. Prize station **112** is equipped with a PBI reader/writer device (not shown) for reading PBI **104** and determining the award credits associated with the player from data provided by PBI **104**. The prize station then determines the prizes to which the player is entitled according to the award credits earned by the player, or allows the player to play a meta-game. Other prize payout arrangements may also be used.

[**0059**] Referring now to **FIG. 3**, another embodiment of a system for maintaining a player's award game state in accordance with the present invention is shown. System **314**, like system **114** described above in conjunction with **FIG. 1**, comprises a gaming device **302** for playing a game **304** and a prize station **312** comprising one or more prizes **310**. System **314** further comprises a validation device **300** which typically comprises a server computer configured with conventional hardware and software components including a database (not shown). Validation device **300** is operatively coupled for communication with gaming device **302** and prize station **312**, normally via a network connection, shown as connections **318**.

[**0060**] Validation device **300** may function in one of a number of ways. According to one aspect of the present invention, validation device **300** may serve to validate award credits which are earned and collected by the player on gaming device **302** and redeemed for prizes at prize station **312**. Various validation means known in the art may be used to carry this out, including maintaining transaction records on validation device **300** which corresponds to transaction records identified on the player's PBI **306**.

[**0061**] According to another aspect of the invention, the use of validation device **300** eliminates (or reduces) the need for recording the actual award credits onto PBI **306**. Rather, validation device **300** may serve to maintain the award credits associated with players in a database (not shown). Under this arrangement, the player is identified with at least one record in the database, which further identifies the award credits earned by the player. The player may use any means for identifying herself to gaming device **302** or prize station **312**, including using a personal identification number (PIN) or using an identity PBI **306**, which instead of bearing the award credits earned by the player provides a unique identifying information to identify the player's corresponding award game state. The use of PBI **306** is indicated by double-headed arrows **308** and **316**; both show a manual path of use by the bearer of the PBI. In each case the bearer of PBI **306** would insert it into a PBI reader at the target location.

[**0062**] **FIG. 4** depicts an example ticket voucher **400**. Ticket voucher **400** includes a data record in the form of a UPC bar code **402**. As described above in conjunction with **FIG. 3**, this data record may identify the player's award credits or may alternatively identify the player's corresponding record(s) in the validation unit's database.

[**0063**] **FIG. 5** illustrates another example embodiment of a system for maintaining a player's game state in accordance with the present invention. The system has a gaming device **506** suitable for playing a game **504** and a prize station **502** having one or more prizes **500**. Gaming device **506** and prize station **502** are integrated into a single physical unit.

[**0064**] Gaming device **506** and prize station **502** may further be operatively coupled for communication to allow prize redemption to be made by the player via the gaming device. In this embodiment, the gaming device may include a monitor or other display device (not shown) for displaying game play as well as prize selection on a single display unit. PBI **508** may also be used as described above in **FIG. 1** and **FIG. 3**. Path **512** shows manual use of PBI **508** with the player inserting/withdrawing PBI **508** from gaming device **506**. Path **510** may be either a manual path, where the player

inserts PBI **508** into a reader associated with prize station **502**, or may include an electronic connection between gaming device **506** and prize station **502**, where PBI **508** may be issued after completing a transaction at both gaming device **506** and prize station **502**.

[**0065**] Referring next to **FIG. 6**, shown is another example embodiment of the present invention for maintaining a player's award game state. There is a game device **606** having a game **604** for play and another game device **614** having a game **608** for play. The game device **606** is integrated with a prize station **600** as described above in conjunction with **FIG. 5**.

[**0066**] The award credits earned by a player on game device **606** may be maintained and later presented and accumulated with additional award credits on game device **606** or game device **614**, normally via PBI **612**, although as noted above a validation unit may be used to perform this award game state maintenance function on the "back-end". PBI **612** may be presented to the prize station **600** for prizes shown generally as **602**. Paths **616**, **618**, and **620** show the different uses to which PBI **612** may be used in this embodiment. Paths **618** and **620** are award credit creation/gathering by manually using (or receiving) PBI **612** from gaming devices **606** and/or **614**. Path **616** indicates the manual use or retrieval of PBI **612** after using prize station **600**.

[**0067**] Turning now to **FIG. 7**, there is shown another example of an award game state system which comprises a plurality of individual systems (or subsystems) shown as **708**, **720**, and **732**. **FIG. 7** illustrates that a wide variety of systems and subsystems may be utilized with the present invention. Subsystems include those that are both connected and unconnected.

[**0068**] Systems **708** and **732** are each operatively coupled for communication to a validation device **700** and a monitoring device **702** via a data communications network **704**. System **708** comprises a plurality of game devices, service stations (service stations are defined and explained later in this disclosure), and prize stations each coupled to a conventional remote game controller (RGC) **734**. RGC **734** is coupled to communication network **704** for communication with the validation and monitoring units. System **708** includes individual game device **716**, service station **718**, and prize station **712**. System **708** further includes integrated game device and prize station **710** and integrated game device and service station **714**. Award credits earned in any of the gaming devices may be maintained according to the present invention, including a PBI, validation unit **700**, or via a combination of the PBI and the validation unit **700** as described above. The present invention encompasses configurations that allow system **708** to issue award credits that may or may not be used on system **732** or on system **720**; any subsystem may be configured to accept or reject award credits from other subsystems, depending on the needs of the particular installation.

[**0069**] System **732**, like system **708**, comprises a plurality of game devices, service stations, and prize stations each coupled to an RGC, which is coupled to communication network **704**. The game devices of system **732** include table games (TG) **722** and **724** as well as conventional gaming devices **726** (with integrated prize station) and **728**, and service station **730**. Table games **722** and **724** are maintained by an attendant or dealer for the particular table game (e.g., blackjack, roulette). Each table game is also equipped with a PBI reader/writer (not shown) to enable a player of the table game to present her PBI and establish the player's existing or previously earned award credits. Certain game results (such as consecutive blackjacks) may result in further award credits to be earned by the player during play of the table game. At the completion of play the PBI reader/writer may be activated to generate a PBI to give to the player after play is completed. As noted above, the award credits may alternatively be managed by validation device **700** in conjunction with individual PBIs, or without the need for a PBI where a player has a PIN number to identify the player. Table game **722** differs from table game **724** in that table game **722** further has in combination a prize station, where a player may redeem award credits for prizes.

[**0070**] System **720** also comprises a plurality of gaming devices, service stations, and prize stations, but unlike systems **708** and **732** this system is not coupled to communication network **704**. Each gaming device will use PBIs rather than validation device **700** and monitoring device **702**. As discussed earlier, the overall system may be configured to allow or disallow PBIs generated from subsystem **708** or **732** to be used in the machines comprising subsystem **720** and vice versa.

[**0071**] Referring now to **FIG. 8, a** gaming device is shown in additional detail. Gaming device **800** comprises a game **802** operatively coupled with an award credit manager **804**, which is also operatively coupled with a PBI input/output device **806**. The PBI input/output device **806** is configured to read, write, generate, transmit, and receive information about PBI **810** as needed. Path **814** shows a manual usage path for PBI **810**; the player must manually insert the PBI into the PBI reader. If PBI **810** comprises a printed ticket (voucher), the PBI input/output device **806** comprises a voucher reader for reading vouchers and indicia printed thereon, such as "Interleaved 2 of 5" bar codes. The PBI input/output device **806** would further include a voucher printer for generating vouchers when the player terminates play on gaming device **800**.

[**0072**] The award credit manager **804** carries out the operation of managing a player's award credits during play. If a player presents a PBI **810** prior to playing, the previously earned award credits are identified either directly from the PBI **810** and/or from validation device **808** which communicates with the gaming device **800** over an electronic communications path **812**. During play of the game **802**, the player may earn additional award credits based on winning game events. Such award credits are accumulated by the award credit manager **804** in conjunction with the previously earned award credits, if any. Upon termination of play of the gaming device by the player, another PBI **810** may be issued to the player which contains data associating the cumulative award credits earned by the player.

[**0073**] **FIG. 9** shows a prize station in more detail. Prize station **900** comprises a PBI input/output device **908** operatively coupled to an award credit manager **906**, a prize selection module **904** coupled to the award credit manager **906**, and a plurality of prizes maintained in vault **902**, the vault operatively coupled for communication with the prize selection module **904**.

[**0074**] When a player presents one or more PBIs to prize station **900**, shown as PBI **910** and manual insertion path

916, the PBI input/output device **908** reads the award credits associated with the player. Award credit manager **906** determines the total award credits' value, either directly from PBI **910** and/or from validation device **912**. Validation device **912** is optionally operably connected to prize station **900** via communications path **914**. Prize selection unit **904** offers to the player one or more prize selections based on the player's total award credits. The player may select a prize selection or may cancel prize redemption. If a player selects a prize, the prize is awarded from vault **902**. If the prize selection does not exhaust the player's total award credits, another prize selection may be offered to the player, if the remaining credits are sufficient to support a prize selection from the vault **902**. If the remaining award credits are not sufficient to support a prize selection, the remaining award credits are maintained and associated with the player, normally by dispensing another PBI **910**.

[**0075**] **FIG. 10** illustrates two additional meta-game systems which may be implemented using the game state maintenance system of the present invention. **FIG. 10** includes a prize station **1000** and a plurality of gaming device indicators illustrated as gaming device indicators **1002**, **1004**, and **1006**. Each gaming device indicator corresponds to a gaming device on the game floor; there may be as many gaming device indicators as there are individual games in actual implementations or they may be grouped for convenience. Under this arrangement a particular prize awarded by the prize station **1000** may require an award credit from each of the gaming devices indicated by **1002** through **1006** or a predetermined subset, such as three award credits where at least two of three must come from different gaming devices. Various other award requirements may also be used and will readily come to mind for a person of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure.

[**0076**] Another example of a meta-game involves banks of gaming devices. Bank **1** is shown having individual gaming device indicators **1008**, **1010**, and **1012**. Bank "n" is referenced generally as **1014**, and is understood to further comprise individual gaming device indicators not individually labeled. There may be any number of banks between bank **1** and bank "n". Prize station **1000** may require an award credit from each bank of gaming devices (corresponding to the gaming device indicators) in order to receive a particular prize. Each bank may be configured as the same game (e.g., blackjack), the same device type (e.g., slot machine), the same family of game (e.g., games manufactured by Sierra Design Group™), or other arrangement.

[**0077**] **FIG. 11** illustrates a sample hierarchical prize level arrangement suitable for use with the present invention. The sample arrangement includes prize levels comprising a silver level (**1106** through **1108**), a gold level (**1102** through **1104**), and a platinum level **1100**. One or more prizes may be associated with each level. For example, bracelet prizes may be available at the silver level (**1106** through **1108**), watches may be available at the gold level (**1102** through **1104**), and diamond jewelry may be available at the platinum level (**1100**). According to this arrangement, the gaming device may provide silver level award during play. The player may decide to redeem the silver award for one of the bracelet prizes, or the player may elect to accumulate additional silver level awards by playing the same or another gaming device. The prize values in this example are arranged hierarchically, where two of the prizes at one layer are worth one of the prizes at the layer above. Two silvers awards may be used to redeem either two silver prizes or one gold prize.

[**0078**] Having the ability to save award/credit game state creates the need and desire to save other states associated with a gaming device. A player will be particularly interested in saving the game state of a game that involves the accumulation of points that will eventually lead to an award (called partial award/credit game state), and where the game state is not tied to award credits (simply effects the game as viewed and/or played by the player rather then being tied to the accumulation of awards or credits).

[**0079**] As introduced earlier, game states other than award/credit game states fall into one of two additional categories. The first is saving partial award/credit game state, defined as saving state when working towards an award or credit on an investment bonus type game, where the secondary game's state is derived from a game of chance or drawn from a fixed-pool. The second category is saving any other game state that effects the state of the game as it appears to a player if they leave and return later, typically a skill game having associated points displayed on a screen, but no other result (i.e., they cannot be converted into game points, award credits, etc.). Usually the player has reached a certain level or point value and doesn't want to have to start over. As used in this disclosure "award/credit game state" and "award credit state" refers to the same set of data as it applies to any particular gaming device. This set of data, separate from the game it was awarded on and being used to redeem prizes, is called "award credit data".

[**0080**] An example of the first type is shown in **FIG. 12**. This is a state saving game associated with games based on chance (or fixed-pools) and working towards an award state. Typically the goal, if reached, gives the player more playing credits or award credits. Gaming device **1200** has a standard primary game with indicia windows shown as **1202**. The primary game may be any of the well known reel games, poker games, keno, bingo, fixed-pool games, etc. There is a panel of player buttons, shown between buttons **1206** and **1208**, used for the primary game. Any layout and interface may be used, from a fixed number of physical buttons to a dynamic layout of touchscreen buttons. Also included is an output slot **1204** and an input slot **1210**. Input slot **1210** accepts ID cards, ID vouchers, smart cards, game state vouchers, or any other means used to present gaming device **1200** with credits, states, or ID. If presented with ID, gaming device **1200** must be in operable communication with a back-end database (not shown), typically over a LAN (not shown). The communications means is used to retrieve data associated with the presented ID.

[**0081**] ID vouchers (a.k.a. voucher IDs) are intended to be used by people who may be at a casino for more than a brief time, but who do not want to be entered as "players" in the casino's database. Player IDs are typically used by casinos for player tracking purposes and to award regular players "player tracking points"—points that may be accumulated and redeemed for various comps from the casino. People who may make use of a voucher ID includes those who want to play a series of games over an evening or a week, want the convenience of having some gaming data kept on a back-end database, but do not want to give the casino their

personal data. The player may chose to use a voucher ID, which is simply any media on which a unique identifier is recorded (typically an alpha-numeric sequence). This may include a card with a magnetic strip, smart card, or a bar-coded voucher, optical disk, infrared (IR) or low-power radio frequency (RF) devices, or any other form of readable media that can easily be carried by a person. For the purposes of this disclosure, any form of media that can be transported by a person will be called Individually Transportable Media, or ITM. Gaming device data, discussed below, can now be associated with the "voucher ID" rather than a traditional player's card. Typically voucher IDs would be given limited life spans, specified by the holder or establishment.

[0082] Like traditional player cards, the player using a voucher ID may be awarded "points" according to conventional methods used for calculating player tracking incentives or awards. Later, the player may redeem the points by presenting his/her voucher ID at redemption sites established by the casino. Redemption sites could include, but are not limited to, restaurants, bars, hotels, or customer counters.

[0083] Returning now to **FIG. 12**, when playing the primary game there will be game states, indicia, or other aspects of the primary game that will trigger the secondary game. In this example, the secondary game is the "Froggie" game. Each time the secondary "Froggie" game is invoked by the primary game, frog **1214** will advance up one step. The secondary game starts at step **1** (the steps are labeled). With each invocation of the "Froggie" game, frog **1214** advances one step. After 7 invocations frog **1214** will be sitting on step **8**. With one more trigger of the secondary game, the player will get the frog to its home pad **1212** (step **9**) and will be awarded 1000 game credits. Alternatively, the number of steps the frog advances on each secondary game invocation can be partially determined by the indicia shown on the primary game, allowing for more than one "hop" per invocation. When the frog reaches its home pad **1212**, the game may present the player with the option of award credits instead of play credits.

[0084] The player has the option of saving the state of the game at the start of each primary game play. In this example, the state saved would be the state of the secondary game, specifically the frog's current step location. If the player plays "Froggie" enough to advance frog **1214** to step **5**, the player may touch button **1206**, the "save state" button, and receive a print-out in the form of a voucher from output slot **1204**. Immediately after saving the game state to a voucher, the game resets itself to the base state, with frog **1214** back on step **1**. The player may now leave the game for a while and come back, inserting the previously generated voucher into slot **1210**. The game will set itself to the state saved, in this case placing frog **1214** on step **5**. The game is now ready to be played.

[0085] Typically the game state just recovered will be available for a fixed length of time, perhaps 3 minutes. The game must be played within that allotted time or the game reverts to its start state and the game state voucher value is lost. If the player inserts the game state voucher and decides not to play the game, the voucher can always be recovered by pressing the "save state" button before the allotted time is up. Although discussed in terms of vouchers, any form of ITM may be used.

[0086] The advantages of saving game state are increased interest in investment bonus games by the players. With the ability to save their state, players who must leave without having reached the winning secondary game state have a much higher incentive to return and continue playing.

[0087] In addition to saving game state associated with awards, game state may be saved simply to keep a score on a non-award game or skill game. An example of this type of game state is shown in **FIG. 13**. In gaming device **1300** there is a primary game, indicated with indicia windows **1302**. The primary game may be any game of chance or a fixed-pool game, including but not limited to poker, keno, reel-games, etc. Buttons shown between **1306** and **1308** are used to play the primary game in its known manner. Also included is input slot **1310** for reading any convenient input form that may be used to record game state. This includes but is not limited to vouchers, magnetic strip cards, smart cards, player IDs, ID vouchers, IR or RF devices, etc. Output slot **1304** is used to give any ITM to the player on request, typically some form of voucher. Button **1306** is used for secondary game play; button **1308** is a "save state" button that directs the gaming device to save the current state of the game. All this is shown for illustrative purposes only and can take a plethora of functionally equivalent forms including configurations with only one, or primary, game.

[0088] In this case, when the secondary "Froggie" game is triggered or invoked from the primary game, the player can play the game for skill points. Frog **1316** has a tongue (not shown) that can be extended by pressing button **1306**. A plurality of "fireflies" shown as **1314** are flying near frog **1316**. A player presses button **1308** when a firefly is in line and near the frog's mouth, getting points thereby. The player accumulates points that are recorded on the screen at **1312**.

[0089] When the player needs to leave the machine for a time, the player has the option of pressing "save state" button **1306** and saving the all game state of the machine that can be saved—in this case, the players score on the secondary game. The player will be issued a bearer record from output slot **1304** on which is recorded the game state. When the player returns later, the player inserts the readable media into read slot **1310** and the game will reset to the saved state.

[0090] In a preferred embodiment, the saved game state will also have an expiration date associated with it. The idea is to encourage a player to maximize their skill point score within a specified period of time (thereby encourage game use in general during the same period). The expiration time picked would depend on the game type, the player's average stay, as well as other factors, but would typically be in hours or days.

[0091] The saving of game states discussed above includes award states, "partial" award states (secondary or bonus game state, before award points or prizes have been awarded) and skill states. Each of the following designations: award states, partial award states, skill states, and non-award states are equivalent to the following designations, in order: award game states, partial award game states, skill game states, and non-skill game states. In addition, the difference between skill game states and non-skill game states is that non-skill game states includes "experiential" states that are not based on skill. Any example of an experiential state might be the state of a VR "trip" which the player needs to finish later. Skill states or skill game states

are those states associated with the collection of points (or other indicia) received as a result of the application of at least some player input that affects the awarding of the points.

[0092] Returning to discuss savable game state, any game state that is allowed to be savable by a player may be saved. This determination may be made by the gaming device itself, a back-end server with a database for networked gaming devices, or by parameters set by the operators or other accountable people. The examples given above are illustrative only, showing example embodiments. They are not exhaustive; the inventive concept disclosed herein fully encompasses any savable game states.

[0093] Game state may be saved using the same types of ITMs described for award credits such as vouchers with bar codes. The descriptions discussed above for types of prize bearing instruments (PBIs) and devices that read, write, and use them apply equally for game state instruments (GSIs). The same is also true of the system architectures described above for use with PBIs; all the descriptions hold equally true for use with GSIs with the exception that prize stations, upon being presented with GSIs, will simply return them to the user; the information contained on a PBI is related to prize redemption, the information on a GSIs is to save game state.

[0094] If award and/or credit game state, partial award/credit game state, and/or non-award game state saving games are used in the same establishment or casino, the preferred embodiment is to combine all savable game states. The amount of information that needs to be stored for both PBIs and GSIs is readily accommodated on any of the instruments described for the PBIs, and may readily be stored in the same database records with additional fields. In this preferred embodiment, a single bearer instrument would contain data for award/credit game state, partial award/credit game state, and any other savable game state, allowing users to carry a single instrument for both uses. It would look essentially the same as the example of **FIG. 4**, but perhaps with additional amounts of information stored on more tightly packed encoding strips, perhaps with multiple strips one over the other, having any needed PBI and GSI information.

[0095] In addition to carrying information on saved game state for one gaming device, it is fully envisioned that the current invention will encompass the saving of game states for multiple games on a single bearer instrument. If the game state is being saved in a back-end database, this is the straightforward association of one player ID or voucher ID with multiple game state records, where the game state records include fields identifying the gaming device to which the saved state applies. For bearer instruments such as vouchers, multi-game, multi-state vouchers will be issued. These will be supported by readers that will read and understand (decode) the multi-game, multi-state instruments. And as discussed above, any type of ITM will work.

[0096] The ability to keep game state for the player as described above helps enable another inventive concept to be used in gaming, the new promotion (Newprom) award system or Newprom system. Newprom awards, credits, and/or related game state may be recorded in all the ways described for all the savable game state above (i.e., using the same ITMs).

[0097] As discussed above, saved game state (including award/credit game state, partial award/credit game state, and other game states) are received as a result of using a game and allow a player to both save game state on a gaming device and to redeem awards, credits, or award credits at prize stations. Newprom awards have been created to be used in ways beyond the scope of award credits, normal awards/credits used at gaming devices, and the savable game states described above. One primary difference between Newprom awards and award credits or game state savings is that in the preferred embodiment, Newprom awards are given to players based on non-gaming events and situations, meta-gaming events, as well as gaming events, and can be used (depending on the specific Newprom award) for both enhanced gaming and enhanced award distribution.

[0098] Referring to **FIG. 14**, the preferred embodiment allows players to use Newprom awards (embodied on a Newprom instrument, or NI, **1406**) in gaming device **1402** having game **1404**, and in some embodiments in prize station **1416** containing prizes **1414**, the being shown by dotted line **1420**. Typical Newprom awards are issued to entice players to use a game, such as game **1404**, before the player can "cash-in" by using a prize station. However, Newprom awards are configurable to be used in prize station **1416** as well. The Newprom awards used with prize stations have typically been configured to be used in conjunction with a winning ticket or credits from a gaming device, thus still requiring game play before being used at a prize station; the Newprom award then acts as a "prize enhancer". Additionally, Newprom awards may be issued as a result of game play, in which case they may be configured for direct use in a prize station.

[0099] **FIG. 14** shows a gaming system which uses Newprom awards (NI **1406**) as well as award credits (PBI **1410**) and game saving instruments (GSI **1418**). System **1400** has gaming device **1402** which incorporates game **1404**. Also included is prize station **1416** which has a plurality of prizes or prize representations **1414**. PBIs **1410** may be used in the manner described above, shown as paths **1408** and **1412**. GSIs **1418** may be used with gaming device **1402** as described above, indicated with path **1408**. In addition, a new instrument for Newprom awards is added, the NI. NI **1406** may be inserted into the same reader as PBI **1410** or GSI **1418**. What was the PBI input/output device described above is now a combined PBI/GSI/NI input/output device.

[0100] Newprom awards may be awarded to players in a wide variety of ways and can structured in any way that suits the needs of the establishment issuing the credits. Some examples are discussed below, but it is to be understood that these are for illustrative purposes only and not an exhaustive list.

[0101] Newprom awards and game states are disclosed in co-pending parent application having serial number xx/xxx, xxx, filed Feb. 15, 2001, attorney docket number GSS-00-001-CIP.1, entitled "HIGH GRANULARITY PROMOTION-BASED AWARDS AND USE IN GAMING ENVIRONMENTS", incorporated herein in full by reference. Due to the length of the disclosure the discussion will not be repeated here; only an overview is provided.

[0102] Newprom awards may take almost any form an imaginative promoter may wish to use. One preferred embodiment bases Newprom award use and issuance on

specified underlying elements; in particular one preferred embodiment of Newprom awards will use seven elements. The seven elements are: time restrictions, location restrictions, gaming device restrictions, game play enhancements, award level enhancements, triggering events, and distribution means. **FIG. 15**-A lists the seven elements.

[**0103**] Each of the seven elements will have assigned a set of states or sub-elements (states inside of elements and sub-elements are interchangeable in this context). Each sub-element in each element will be of the same type as the element that contains it. Each element will normally, by default, have a "null" or "all" sub-element, corresponding to a situation where that sub-element, when used as part of a state transition evaluation by an algorithm, effectively means the element that contains it will have no effect on the given state transition.

[**0104**] The elements, sub-elements (states inside of the element), and external event states are read and used by a Newprom interpreter and its embodied state evaluation algorithms to determine if and when to issue Newprom awards, as well as the Newprom award's configuration and its amount. Further explanation and examples are given in the referenced disclosure.

[**0105**] One example will show how the Newprom system may work, although actual implementations will typically encompass far more complexity than that used for this illustration. Each of the seven elements is shown with a simplified set of sub-elements in **FIG. 15**-B. The shown set of sub-elements would enable a Newprom interpreter, having a state evaluation algorithm written for the illustrated sub-elements, to issue additional game points and allow entrance into additional games (perhaps one or more progressives) to players at a specific casino.

[**0106**] The time restriction element has pre-defined time evaluation periods in each needed time increment, so there will be several sub-elements defined for each sub-element type, perhaps several sub-elements each for seconds, minutes, hours, etc.; the location restriction enables players to use their Newprom awards at this casino only; the gaming device restrictions element has one sub-element corresponding to all games (no restriction); the game play enhancements contains two sub-elements, one for additional game award amounts (typically a multiplier from the base game award), and one to enable access to a progressive game; the award level enhancement is one sub-element, the null element; the triggering event element has two sub-element types, the amount of time a player has been actively using a game device at the casino and the net amount the player has spent (there may be several sub-elements of each sub-element type); and, the distribution means element has three sub-elements defined, one for awards to be given to a player in real time (the "At Gaming Device" sub-element), and two to enable the issuance of Newprom awards directed at players at home, one for those with player-IDs ("Targeted Mailings" and one to entice locals to come and play ("Mass Local Mailings").

[**0107**] In this example two of the seven elements will have no effect on state transitions as the transition algorithm in the Newprom interpreter evaluates states: the gaming device restriction element and the award level enhancement element. The others are used, combined with state feedback from the casino and actual gaming devices (i.e., time-of-day, time spent at a game, amount spent, etc.), to determine when to make a transition and what Newprom award related action to take (typically to issue a Newprom award or set game state), if any, in the new state.

[**0108**] To finish the overview of Newprom awards, it will be appreciated that the actual method of embodying Newprom award data in a tangible way will encompass the same methods described above for game states, and introduced in the description of **FIG. 14** above. To simplify definitions, a GBI is now defined as being enabled to carry Newprom award data as well as all types of savable game state data. The same architectural descriptions given for award game state savings and use, partial award game state savings and use, and "other" game state saving and use also apply to a GBI having Newprom data on it. The difference in the descriptions of the devices receiving a GBI are that when presented to a prize station (such as **112** in **FIG. 1, 312** in **FIG. 3**, or **502** in **FIG. 5**), the prize station will simply return the instrument (the ITM, in this case a GBI) if there is no award game state embodied on the ITM. Similarly, when presented to a gaming device such as **100** in **FIG. 1, 302** in **FIG. 3**, or **506** in **FIG. 5**, there may or may not be game state or Newprom data for that game on the ITM, in this case a GBI. If there is no data on the GBI (generally, ITM) that is recognizable by the device, the GBI (generally, ITM) is simply returned or the data is not used. Gaming devices **100**, **302**, and **506** will each have a Newprom interpreter operably disposed within it (Newprom interpreter not shown), if it is Newprom enabled.

[**0109**] A Newprom interpreter is defined as the combination of hardware and software components that are used to read a Newprom award as input (in any form, from any form of ITM to a database entry) and trigger or cause to happen the corresponding changes to any device needed to carry out or implement the result embodied in a Newprom award, called a general Newprom enhancement in the applicable device. The set of hardware and/or software that is required to carry out the functional equivalent of the Newprom interpreter may physically reside in a number of places. Also, in one preferred embodiment, the Newprom interpreter will further have embodied in it the capabilities of a savable game state manager, including the award/credit manager.

[**0110**] If the Newprom interpreter is embodied in a system making use of elements, sub-elements, and state analysis, the Newprom interpreter further includes an embodiment of an algorithm that uses as input Newprom elements, sub-elements, and any needed data (states) from the casino and any gaming and/or gaming-related devices. Note: as used in this disclosure, "gaming devices" includes game-related devices such as prize stations and service stations, as well as devices only having games on them. The Newprom interpreter evaluates the current states that are applicable, changes its internal state if needed, and makes changes to gaming devices and/or issues Newprom awards corresponding and applicable to a new or changed state.

[**0111**] In addition to a traditional game device, Newprom awards may be used in a Newprom device, allowing a player to check the state of any Newprom awards a player may have, illustrated in **FIG. 16**. A player may use Newprom device **1600** by presenting a Newprom award voucher or Newprom award ID (which may be any ITM) at GBI

input/output device **1604**. In a preferred embodiment, Newprom device **1600** is on a LAN **1610** or in other operable communication with a server and back-end database **1612**.

[**0112**] Newprom device **1600** will present the player with several kinds of output and information, depending on the players' desires and if the player has presented stand-alone Newprom awards (typically a voucher, but this applies to any ITM having data on it) or has presented an ID. Some players may not wish to have all their Newprom awards displayed when presenting an ID, so the button selections at the bottom of the device allow a player to choose hardcopy output from printer **1606** (more private) or a video display on screen **1602** (more public). In addition, if the player is new the player may ask for a printed map of the casino, where the times and gaming devices on which the presented Newprom awards can be used is highlighted. The player has a choice of printing the map on hardcopy, output by standard printing means at output slot **1606**, or to display the information on screen **1602**.

[**0113**] If the player presented an ID, the player may choose to view all of the Newprom awards associated with the presented ID from the back-end database, or may ask to be shown a subset. The subset will usually be based on time; i.e., the player will ask what Newprom awards are available to use in the next 24 hours.

[**0114**] In one embodiment Newprom device **1600** is a standalone kiosk, in which case a Newprom interpreter **1614** will be embodied in Newprom device **1600**. In another embodiment the Newprom award status device contained within a gaming device, which may share one Newprom interpreter. In such cases there will be a button, typically on a touchscreen, that the player uses to indicate to the machine that the player wants a Newprom status check. After getting their readout, the player will then have the choice of using this gaming device or of simply recovering their Newprom awards.

[**0115**] In a casino or establishment that uses savable game states and Newprom awards a preferred embodiment is to use both a back-end database and a transportable media solution. The back-end database will keep records for each of the types of data associated with a player in addition to other data, then recall them when the player presents a player ID or a voucher ID.

[**0116**] Having introduced voucher IDs earlier in the disclosure, the concept may now be extended and coupled with the use of savable game states and Newprom awards. Voucher IDs are one example of an Anonymous Player ID (APID). APIDs may be used by either players who do not want to be entered as "players" in the casino's database, or by casinos to help track and reward players not using player-IDs.

[**0117**] Traditional player-IDs are issued to a person who has given the required amount of personal data to a casino, including but not limited to name and address. The casino then issues a player-ID to the person, the most typical form being a magnetic-strip card. When players use their player-IDs, casinos track the players' use of machines and amount spent (either gross or net). Casinos collect the marketing data associated with the player's use of identifiable machines, and can reward a player with "player tracking points." Player tracking point are typically awarded based on lever pulls or net amount of money spent while playing. The points may be accumulated and redeemed for various comps from the casino.

[**0118**] People who may use an APID but not a traditional player-ID includes those who want to play and keep track of certain game states over time, but do not want to be personally identified to a casino. Depending on the casino, using an APID may further enable anonymous players the convenience of having savable game state data and any associated newprom awards kept on a back-end database rather than on the actual media carried by the anonymous player. When used in casinos having a database used for APIDs, anonymous players may not have to carry any media at all; they may be issued a personal identification sequence instead.

[**0119**] A personal identification sequence, or personal sequence, is generated by a personal identification sequence generator. The personal sequence identification generator will typically be implemented in software, similarly to password generators as are well known in the art. In fact, commercially available password generators could be used as the heart of a personal identification sequence generator. Such an implementation would of necessity be a centralized application (i.e., all the personal sequences would be generated in one location, on one machine, or by a designated server on a network, to avoid duplicity and recording problems). Although handy in some particular cases, requiring players to memorize an ID (an alpha-numeric sequence) has significant and well known limitations. Most implementations of APIDs will use individually transportable media.

[**0120**] If a casino does not have the technical infrastructure needed for centralized distribution to peripheral distribution points, unique IDs for use as APIDs would be generated in one physical location, imprinted on a voucher, magnetic-strip card, or other individually transportable media, and issued to players at that location for use in the casino.

[**0121**] Individually transportable medias (ITMs), introduced earlier in this disclosure, includes any device having some way for a reader of that device to extract ID data, and which can be carried by a single individual. An example is the voucher ID: a printed ticket having some kind of indicia on it, usually a bar code, that can be read by a voucher reader when the person carrying the voucher inserts it into the voucher reader.

[**0122**] **FIG. 17** shows two classes of ITMs that may be used with APIDs: Class I ITMs which only have APID data; and, Class II ITMs which have both APID data and savable game state and/or Newprom data (referred to generally as additional data, or an APID plus data). For the purposes of this disclosure, "APID data" refers to any combination of an APID, any savable game state data and any Newprom data that is associated with an APID, and/or an APID and its associated savable game state data (if any) and its associated Newprom data (if any). Examples of Class I ITMs include the voucher IDs and personal sequences discussed above, the well known magnetic strip cards, and embedded RFID tags. Examples of Class II ITM devices include vouchers (having more than just ID data encoded on them); smart cards; small magnetic media (perhaps similar to 3-½" diskettes); optical disks (including optical mini-disks inside carrying covers which typically have a sliding access panel

for the optical reader); handheld personal organizers with IR data transfer ports (such as the Palm Pilot™); and, devices which have low-power RF interfaces.

[0123] One embodiment of Class I ITMs will use RFID tags. RFID tags may be embedded in token or chip-sized disks, small obloids or spheres, a small molded symbol of the originating casino, or a keychain tag or fob. A player uses the ID by simply waving it in front of a reader, which reads the RFID tag enclosed in the object. Each RFID tag has a unique number. Class I ITMs will typically only be used where the gaming devices have access to data associated with the APID stored in a separate location; there is little value in using Class I ITMs otherwise.

[0124] In a system where the gaming machines do not have access to a centralized database having APID data, Class II ITMs will typically be used. That is because the ITM must be self-contained—it must provide the gaming device with both an APID and any data associated with the APID (savable game states, Newprom awards).

[0125] **FIG. 18** shows a general gaming device for use with APIDs. A player may use APID gaming device **1800** by presenting an APID in any ITM form which can be read by input/output device **1804**. In a preferred embodiment, there will be several forms of ITMs that may be read, shown as additional input/output slots to the right of input/output slot **1804**. Example configurations would include an RFID "slot", a voucher slot, an optical mini-diskette slot, and an IR port "slot" (obviously the RFID reader and IR port "slots" are not literally slots). In a preferred embodiment, APID gaming device **1800** is on a LAN **1810** which is operably connects to a server and back-end database **1812**. If connection **1810** is not a LAN, than any operable connection to a database is represented.

[0126] APID gaming device **1800** may present the player with several kinds of output and information, depending on the players' desires. Output slot **1806** will typically be configured to issue vouchers and support information (information printed in a human-readable language). Note that if a Class I ITM is presented to APID gaming device **1800**, there is no need to output a new ITM; the ITM presented can be returned. If a Class II ITM is presented, then it will be likely that the data on the ITM will change. If the Class II ITM was a voucher, then output slot **1806** will be configured to issue another Class II voucher to the player, only with the savable game state or Newprom award data changed according to what the player used and/or played on APID game device **1800**. Most other Class II ITMs may be intrinsically changed (i.e., optical mini-disks will have the changed data read directly onto them, handheld devices will have changed data sent to them, etc.), so the input slot is also the output slot.

[0127] Well known in the art game play buttons are indicated as **1808**, as is the well known player display **1802**. Player display **1802** may further have touch-screen buttons (not shown) that allow a player to enter a player sequence. Of course, there may be a traditional keypad provided as well (keypad not shown).

[0128] APID gaming device **1800** further has APID data coordinator **1814** operably disposed within it. The functions performed by the APID data coordinator are to collect and coordinate APIDs and data associated with one or more APIDs. In APID gaming device **1800**, APID data coordinator **1814** receives the APID data from a player in whatever ITM form the particular APID gaming device is configured for. In the current example, this would include Class I ITMs in the forms of a personal sequence, embedded RFID, or voucher ID; or, Class II ITMs in the forms of a voucher, an optical mini-disk, or a handheld device with an IR interface.

[0129] APID data coordinator **1814** then determines if it has access to a database having APID related on it. If it does, it will request any game state or Newprom data associated with the APID. If the presented ITM is a Class II ITM, the APID data coordinator checks for additional applicable data from the ITM itself (there may be none, or what is on the ITM may not be applicable to APID game device **1800**). The APID data coordinator, after collecting data from a database (if any) and from the ITM, combines any data applicable to the present gaming device while discarding duplicate data, if any. This is then passed off to the appropriate internal module within APID game device **1800** (typically a Newprom interpreter further having a savable game state manager).

[0130] It is expected that data saved on a central database and data on a Class II ITM, with both sets of data being associated with the same APID, will not be identical. This may occur for many reasons, including a player's use of the Class II ITM at standalone gaming devices (including prize stations and service stations), a player combining data from multiple APIDs, or, if so configured, a player's use of the Class II ITM at another casino. The present invention can be configured to be used in multiple casinos with very minimal cooperation being required; one example would include a unique ID for each casino that is agreed to and recognized by other casinos via a master list (or other distribution means), and which is then concatenated or otherwise combined with the locally generated unique ID will suffice). This list is not exhaustive; other scenarios resulting in a difference between the two sets of data will readily come to mind of people with ordinary skill in the art.

[0131] The resolution of differing data is up the individual casinos. It is expected that most installations will make use of self-authenticating methods as are well known in the art when recording data on ITMs, so the integrity of the data can be assumed to be reasonably high. After making some sanity checks (i.e., is the data suggesting a game configuration never used at this casino), the casino may choose to either copy the data from the Class II ITM to the central database, or may decide to leave the two data sets distinct; each solution has advantages and disadvantages and will be decided on in accordance with each casino's policies.

[0132] After the player has completed using the gaming device, the APID data coordinator collects any savable game state and/or Newprom award data associated with the APID, then records the new data on a Class II ITM, sends the new data (associating it properly with the APID) to a database, or both. Which the APID data coordinator does is dependent on the infrastructure of the casino.

[0133] **FIG. 19** shows an ITM service station. The ITM service station (or APID data coordinator service station, or simply "service station", all three designations being interchangeable in the present disclosure) provides a set of general services for the holders of APIDs not related to game playing or prize redemption. An example service is the

ability to combine awards and savable game state into or onto one ITM from several ITMs (also providing useful data to the casino thereby).

[0134] Because the complexity of the interactions that are possible at any service station is relatively high and will change more rapidly than gaming devices, a preferred embodiment will have a minimum number of "hard" buttons, shown generally as buttons **1908**. In one preferred embodiment, hard buttons **1908** are used to make simple preliminary choices. Such choices include screen display or print-out-only, or the choice to use only a read-out function. Read-only functions are provided for people who forget what their Class II ITM contains, providing an English, Spanish, Japanese, or other language translation of what the instrument has on it and then returning the instrument without further processing.

[0135] ITM service stations will also have at least one input/output slot, shown as **1904**, and will preferably have several. In one embodiment there will be five "slots", shown as four additional slots to the right of input/output slot **1904**. The five "slots" will include a traditional magnetic strip card slot, a voucher input/output slot (serving both Class I and Class II vouchers), an embedded RFID tag reading "slot", an optical mini-disk slot, and an IR port "slot". Clearly the IR port and the RFID reader are not literally slots. The voucher input/output device will be configured to handle any type of information on a GBI.

[0136] There will also be at least one output port, shown as slot **1906**. This may be configured to issue Class I and Class II vouchers, and natural language information. In a preferred embodiment video display **1902** will also have touchscreen buttons for user input. ITM service station **1900** may be connected to the casino's back-end database **1912** via a LAN **1910** or functionally equivalent means. Being connected to a back-end database is optional; a subset of the ITM service station's primary functions can still be carried out without the connection, and in some cases it may be desirable to have one or more ITM service stations installed where connections to a central server and database cannot be made.

[0137] The functionality provided by the ITM service station is geared towards helping users manage and understand any and all ITM instruments and any awards or credits they may have. This will be especially helpful to occasional users who do not play enough to "memorize" the meaning of the various instruments and awards. Referring now to **FIG. 20, a** user starts a session by pressing a hard button for certain limited functions, or inserting any applicable ITM in its' respective slot (i.e., player's card in a player card slot, PBI in the voucher input/output slot). This action corresponds to start box **2000**.

[0138] The user initially decides if they want a read-only session at decision diamond **2002**. If the answer is yes, the "YES" exit is taken to decision diamond **2004**. If the user has presented a Class I APID ITM to the ITM service station, the "YES" exit is taken from decision diamond **2004** to decision diamond **2006**. If the ITM service station can access a back-end database and the APID is recognized, the "YES" exit is taken to box **2008**. Box **2008** asks if the user wants a display or a print-out, and then provides the user with the current state of any information in the database associated with the APID presented. Box **2008** is then left and the process finishes at finish **2010**.

[0139] If, at decision diamond **2006**, the APID was not recognized or the BD is not reachable, the process finishes immediately at finish point **2010** (with a polite message to that effect on the screen, of course!). If, at decision diamond **2004**, the user presented something other than a Class I APID the "NO" exit is taken and box **2012** entered. Action taken in box **2012** is to collect all the data available to the ITM service station, from both the Class II ITM and data on a database associated with the APID found on the ITM. Note that there may or may not be any data associated with this APID on a database, or the ITM service station may not have database access. The user is then asked in what form to output the data (video or hardcopy), the data is presented in that form, and any ITMs returned to the user. The process then proceeds to finish box **2010**.

[0140] If, at decision diamond **2002** the answer was "NO", the user wants to do something more than have something read. The "NO" exit is taken to box **2014**. Action taken in box **2014** is to collect all data associated with the APID on the ITM, both from the Class II ITM if one was used and any information on a database (if any, and if this particular ITM has database access). The user is then asked if they want to add more sources of input. More sources of input would come from more Class I and/or Class II ITMs (over the course of time, a player may easily collect more than one APID, or a group of players may want to combine their credits and awards). If the player indicates a "yes", the ITM service station prompts them for another ITM, and collects any data associated with the newly presented ITM. This continues until the player indicate they have no additional ITMs for the ITM service station.

[0141] Once the user indicates to the ITM service station all sources of credits has been accumulated, the ITM service station combines like data and reaches a total. Combining like data consists of combining award credits, consolidating game state information for the same gaming device, combining Newprom awards if they can be, etc. Much of the data will not be able to be combined, it will simply be listed in order. An example of hard to combine data will typically be Newprom awards. Newprom awards will tend to have such variability that they typically won't combine or consolidate. On the other hand, award credits (extracted from savable game state) will always combine. Box **2014** is left and box **2016** entered.

[0142] The action in box **2016** is to present the information to the user in the most coherent manner possible. As before, the user may choose hardcopy or video output. Box **2016** is then left for decision diamond **2018**.

[0143] In decision diamond **2018** the user is asked if they want to combine credits that are combinable, and re-issue the rest in as compact a form as possible. It is expected that this will be most commonly used function besides the "read-only" function. If the answer is yes, the "YES" exit is taken to box **2024**. The action taken in box **2024** is to do the combinations possible, remove redundant or expired credits, etc. These calculations may be done in the ITM service station or in a server in a networked environment. Box **2024** is then left for decision diamond **2026**.

[0144] At decision diamond **2026** the user is asked if they want to store the information on a database or if they want the recombined information, including any savable game state and Newprom awards that are still valid, issued on a

Class II ITM. If the answer is yes to the database storage, the "YES" exit is taken and box **2030** entered. Note that if the ITM service station in use is not networked, the only choice that can be made is taking the "NO" exit from this decision diamond—in that case, the question is not presented to the user (player).

[**0145**] In box **2030**, the database determines which APID to use if more than one was presented to the ITM service station for this transaction, or if a new APID is needed, and records the old APIDs that are being combined (providing marketing data for the casino thereby). The database then stores the recombined data with the new or chosen APID. The user is then issued a Class I ITM having the associated APID. The process finishes by then entering finish **2032**.

[**0146**] If the user indicated no at decision diamond **2026**, then the "NO" exit is taken to box **2028**. The general action taken is to issue the newly recombined data; the form that will take will depend on the ITM or ITMs the user presented to the ITM service station. If the user presented Class I ITM(s), the ITM service station will issue a Class II ITM with the data. When practical, this Class II ITM will typically be in a voucher form (least expensive, currently). If the user presented a form of Class II ITM that has read/write capabilities, such as an optical mini-disk or a handheld device with an IR port, then the new data will be transferred to that Class II ITM in the applicable manner. After issuing the new data, the process then finishes by leaving box **2028** and entered finish **2032**.

[**0147**] If the user answered no at decision point **2018**, the "NO" exit is taken to box **2020**. Action taken in box **2020** is to instruct the user on possible combinations. For example, a user may want a Newprom award ITM to give to a friend to use while keeping savable game state for themselves. Or, several players may want to divide up any net award credits into even amounts, then have them issued on separate Class II ITMs. After an initial display is presented to the player(s), box **2020** is left and box **2022** is entered.

[**0148**] Action taken in box **2022** is to put up a series of interactive screens, allowing the player(s) (users) to determine the award and savable game state combinations they want. After determining a set of ITMs equal in value to the credits and awards presented to, and/or collected by, the ITM service station at the start of the session box **2022** is left and box **2034** entered.

[**0149**] The action taken in box **2034** is to present a list to the user of the newly combined credits and/or game states, and ask which are to be stored in a back-end database and which are to be issued on new Class II ITMs. The user indicates which are to be stored and which are to be issued. Box **2034** is left and box **2036** entered. The action taken in box **2036** is to store and/or issue the data as the user requested. For the data to be stored on a database, the process is the same as that described for box **2028**. The process now exits box **2036** and finishes by entering finish indicator **2032**.

[**0150**] Referring now to **FIG. 21**, various system configurations using APIDs are shown. One preferred embodiment of a system has components connected by network **2104**. Traditional monitoring device, **2102**, is connected to network **2104** as is a traditional remote game controller (RGC) **2134**. Connected to RGC **2134** is a set of games, included generally within box **2108**. All these devices are on the network. Shown is a combination gaming device and prize station **2110**, a prize station **2112**, a combination gaming device and service station **2114**, a gaming device **2116**, and a service station **2118**. Each makes use of ITMs and APIDs as described above. The system also has database device **2100** connected to network **2104**, where database device **2100** further has personal/APID sequence generator **2136**.

[**0151**] Because personal/APID sequence generator **2136** is in operable communication with each device on the network, APIDs can be centrally managed and accessed from any device on the network. All forms of APIDs, including personal sequences, may be handled the same way. Personal sequences are actually generated for use in personal/APID sequence generator **2136**, but in most cases the APIDs will be assigned from a known set or a readable set. Readable sets refer to cases such as embedded RFID tags. RFID tags typically have unique numbers assigned during manufacturing, and would be provided to the casino that way. Issuing an APID based on RFID tags includes reading the tag about to be issued, creating a database entry for it, then issuing it. In other cases, such as IDs on mag strip cards, personal/APID sequence generator **2136** will both generate the APID number, assign (write) it to a card to be issued, and create a record in the database for that number. The specific actions depend on the ITM being used. However, they may all be managed from one location on the network.

[**0152**] System **2132** shows a case where there is a limited form of connectivity between devices and the personal/APID sequence generator/recorder **2138**, but not a fully functional LAN type connection. An example of limited connectivity would be RS**232** serial port connections. The system may has the expected devices in it, including combination table game device and prize station **2122**, table game device **2126**, combination gaming device and service station **2124**, gaming device **2128**, and prize station **2130**. Without the LAN type of functionality, the APIDs will have to managed and distributed from a single location. The limited connections will typically be used for periodic APID data collection. Class II ITMs will typically be used in this environment.

[**0153**] System **2120** shows the most limited type of interconnection—sneakernet! ("Sneakernet" refers to devices being connected only by people carrying read/write media between the devices). The individual gaming devices, prize stations, service stations, and combinations can only receive their information from an ITM. No data retrieval or recording can be carried pout on the individual machines. The management of APIDs will be at a centralized location typically being worked from a single standalone computer with the required ITM read/write device, shown as personal/APID sequence generator/recorder **2140**. In addition, the collecting and processing of APID data will all happen within the machine having personal/APID sequence generator/recorder **2140** (the actual data may be brought to a central location by casino personnel).

[**0154**] Although shown in all instances, it is actually expected that most installations will choose not to use personal sequences. For most people there will be a strong preference for one of the simple-to-carry Class I ITMs instead of having to remember a personal sequence, espe-

cially if they visit more than one casino. However, the (optional) capability exists if a particular operator decides to make use of it.

[0155] Referring now to **FIG. 22, a** method of generating and issuing APIDs is illustrated. This may be invoked at various times during a player's use of gaming devices (or prize stations, service stations, etc.) at a casino. One example would be after a player has either just begun play at a gaming device, or alternatively has already played at least one game on the gaming device and wants to save some aspect of the game (make use of savable game state, Newprom award, etc.). The initial choice shown in diamond **2200** is if a personal sequence is to be issued. The personal sequence path is a separate path because the actions taken are different than that for other forms of APIDs. If the answer is yes, the "Y" exit is taken to box **2202**.

[0156] Actions taken include the generation of a personal sequence. The actual generation of a personal sequence may be based on many grounds, varying from simply assigning a random 4, 5, or 6 place alpha-numeric for use by a player to the involvement of a player who chooses the best phoneme-based sequences for themselves. In the case of interactive choices, the additional interactive support mechanisms will be in place for the required functionality. Following the generation of, and, in the case of presenting a series of choices to a user, the users choice of, a personal sequence box **2202** is left and box **2204** entered.

[0157] The actions associated with box **2204** are basically two. The first is to record the sequence in a database.

[0158] Note that in all cases when discussing databases in the present disclosure, no assumptions about the complexity of the database is being made. The database may vary from an extremely simple comma-delimited flat file having only ASCII-text entries used for later processing, to fully implemented relational database entries. The actual implementation used will depend on the sophistication of the installation and its intended use.

[0159] The second action taken in box **2204** is to send the sequence to a distribution point, where it will be issued to a player. The distribution point may or may not be where the personal sequence generator is located, depending on the communications infrastructure of the particular installation. Box **2204** is left and box **2206** entered.

[0160] Actions taken at box **2206** are to disseminate the personal sequence to a player. This may be by any means desired, including but not limited a print-out with the sequence on it or a video display of the sequence. After this action, the personal sequence is deemed issued and the process ends at end node **2208**.

[0161] Returning to diamond **2200**, if the answer is no (do not use a personal sequence), the "N" exit is taken to box **2210**. The action taken in box **2210** is to either assign or generate an APID. As explained above, the action of assigning or generating an APID depends on the ITMs used in this particular installation. If mag stripe cards are used as Class I ITMs, then the action includes generating an APID. If the ITMs are embedded RFID tags, then the action is to allocate one from storage, read the RFID, and assign it to use.

[0162] Note: the generation if APIDs will not be discussed in detail, as many techniques may be used as are well known in the art. For example, a simple one is to use the TOD clock (readable to at least 1/10s of a second) to generate a numeric sequence, which when concatenated with a casino-specific alpha-numeric sequence generates unique IDs for the casino. If self-authentication methods are added to the APID generation, additional security is provided. There are many such methods and they are well known in the art; any method may be used with the current invention.

[0163] Box **2210** is left and diamond **2212** is entered. If the casino is issuing Class I ITMs, the "Y" exit is taken to box **2214**. Class I ITMs are generally used with systems having a central database, and the action taken in box **2214** is to record the APID to be used in the database, and then issue an ITM having the assigned APID where the actions taken to issue an specific ITM will correspond to the type of ITM being used. This finished the generation and issuance of an APID, the process ending at finish node **2208**.

[0164] When discussing Class I ITMs in this disclosure, the assumption being made is that any system using them will have a centralized database. It is possible to configure and use a system using Class I ITMs and have no direct (electronic, optical, IR, etc.) communications link between gaming devices. In such a system the individual gaming devices may be configured to record game or device use data coupled with an APID. The device operators would collect the data later, perhaps downloading the information onto diskettes from each gaming device. The data would then (typically) be re-loaded onto a computer for data (market) analysis. The data files would typically be simple flat files. Although entirely possible, this type of implementation is not expected to be used as the availability of gaming devices that can record game use and couple it with an APID will ordinarily be used in an establishment having some form of communications infrastructure, as the additional cost for the communications infrastructure is relatively small percentage of the cost of the gaming devices.

[0165] If, at diamond **2212** the answer is no, the "N" exit is taken to diamond **2216**. Typically, a casino having networking capability will always keep a database associating gaming device use with APIDs, even if the APIDs use a Class II ITM. If the casino is not filly networked, there may be no central database. If the casino does not keep a record of the APID, the "N" exit is taken from diamond **2216** to box **2220**. Action taken in box **2220** is to issue the Class II ITM in a manner consistent with the ITMs used in the casino. This finished the process, ending at finish node **2208**.

[0166] If, at diamond **2216** the casino decides to keep a record of the APID to be issued in a Class II ITM, then "Y" exit is taken to box **2218**. The action associated with box **2218** is to make a database entry for the APID, ready to record associated gaming device use as such data becomes available. Box **2218** is now left for box **2220**. The actions taken in box **2220** are as described immediately above, the issuing of the Class II ITM. The process now finishes at finish node **2208**.

[0167] Continuing with **FIG. 23, a** method of using APID ITMs is shown. Starting at box **2300**, the player acquires some form of ITM. Acquiring an ITM may take many forms. The player may ask for one at a customer desk, or a gaming device may prompt the player to use one. There will usually be some enticement from the casino for the player to use the APID. The most likely initial enticement will simply be

extra game play credits limited to a certain time period and useful only at the game the player is currently using (if the player is at a game), or limited to a certain set of games the casino wants to expose people to; this limits potential exposure by the issuing casino and is made possible with the use of Newprom awards and savable game states. Coupled with the control Newprom awards allow, issuing and acquiring APIDs may take a multitude of forms, including general mailings. Many more configurations of issued APIDs will readily come to mind of a person of ordinary skill in the art and having the benefit of the present disclosure and the referenced parent discloser.

[0168] After acquiring an APID, either as a personal sequence or on an ITM, the process proceeds from box **2300** to diamond **2302**. If a player has a personal sequence, the "Y" exit is taken to box **2304**. The player finds a gaming device (including devices such as prize stations, service stations, etc.) that is configured to accept personal sequences. Proceeding to box **2306**, the player inputs their personal sequence in the manner dictated by the gaming device (touchscreen, keypad, voice input, etc.). The process moves to box **2308**, where the player responds to any choices, dialogues, summary data, etc., from the gaming device itself (if any). Choices will typically appear if the gaming device (prize station, service station) has accessed data associated with personal sequence from a database. The choices presented to the player (user) will depend on a combination of the data retrieved and the type of gaming device being used. The data retrieved may not have any applicability to the device currently in use. If the casino is using Newprom awards, for example, there may Newprom data on a database associated with the personal sequence but it may not applicable to the game the player wants to use at this time. Alternatively, there may be saved game state that is applicable, in which case the game will be configured to match the retrieved data. If there are choices to be made, an interactive process starts. Such an interactive process will typically be carried out at APID-enable prize stations or APID-enabled service stations, but may happen on game-only devices as well. Game-only devices may inquire if a player wants to make use of applicable credits or awards before actually embodying them in the current game, for example, or a game-only device may retrieve game state data and Newprom data both applicable to the current game, and will ask the player which they want to use.

[0169] Finally, the device being used responds to the APID input and any interactions between the player and the device by enabling or responding as indicated and as appropriate for the device being used. The process moves from box **2308** and continues on in box **2310**, where the player plays a game, gets a prize, makes use of the service station, or any other applicable actions.

[0170] After the action in box **2310** is complete, diamond **2316** is entered and the player decides if they want to keep playing. If the player decodes to continue, the "Y" exit is taken returning to diamond **2302** and looping. If the player chooses to stop, the "N" exit is taken to diamond **2318**. If the player has a Class I ITM or a personal sequence (in this case the player has a personal sequence) the "N" exit is taken to finish node **2322**.

[0171] Returning to diamond **2302**, if the player answers no the "N" exit is taken to box **2312**, where the player finds a gaming device that accepts the form of ITM they are carrying (as above, "gaming device" is used generically here to include any type of device found in a gaming environment, including but not limited to game devices, prize stations, service stations, etc.). The action now moves to box **2314**, where the player uses the matching input device and the device recovers whatever is APID and associated data is presented to it.

[0172] Note that from a player's perspective, data from a Class II ITM and data retrieved from a database using an APID from either a Class I or Class II ITM will look the same. It is all "their" data. The process is now continues to box **2308**, where the player may interact with the gaming device as described above. After finishing any interaction, box **2308** is left and box **2310** entered, where the player makes use of the gaming device, and the gaming device responds as appropriate for the type of device.

[0173] As described above, diamond **2316** is entered and the player may redo the loop (using the "Y" exit from diamond **2316**) or may be finished (use the "N" exit from diamond **2316**). If the player chooses the finished ("N") exit from diamond **2316**, diamond **2318** is entered. If the player has a Class I ITM, there is no choice; the "N" exit is taken, any data associated with the player's APID is left on a database, and the process finishes at finish node **2322**.

[0174] However if the player has a Class II ITM, the player may record (some of) their data on their Class II ITM and take it with them, as well as having it left on a database (assuming the casino has such a database; it may not in some cases). The typical configuration is expected to do both, that is, leave the APID and associated data on a database, and to have some of the APID associated data on a Class II ITM. This is partly because the data collected has two uses: enticements, awards, credits, etc., for play, and marketing data for the casino. Some of the data useful to the casino will not be transmitted to a Class II ITM, such as the amount if time the player with the APID spent at a particular game. Class II ITMs will typically only contain APID-associated award and credit data. The rest of the accumulated data will stay on a database at the casino. There are additional situations that may create a need for a player to make a choice at box **2320**, although it is not shown. That would include the case where the player's Class II ITM cannot hold all the award and/or credit data currently associated with the APID. The player may be asked if they want to leave all there data on the database, recovering it as needed later rather than partially loading it onto a limited-capacity Class II ITM. After award and credit data have been written to the appropriate ITM, the process finishes at finish node **2322**.

[0175] Referring to **FIG. 24, a** method of encouraging APID use and gathering APID-related data is shown in part (the method extends over **FIGS. 24, 25, 26** and **27**). Starting in box **2400**, the first action is to put each gaming device that will be used with APIDs in one of three categories: (1) having a dynamic, real time communications link, typically able to support session-layer communications; (2) having at least some form of automated connection; and, (3) standalone gaming devices. Category (1) typically includes what is considered in the art to be LAN-type connectivity (using the OSI 7 layer model or a TCP/IP model), where information may be passed between the gaming device and servers or other machines on an as-needed basis and as demand

requires, and where connected devices can make use of abstractions such as session level communications. Category (2) includes slower, lower-level connections such as an RS 232 connection, which passes essentially raw data and does not support abstractions such as session-layer links. Category (3) which is simply a standalone gaming device.

[0176] Having identified each set, box **2400** is left and box **2402** is entered. The action associated with box **2402** is to first determine if there is at least one gaming device in category (1), and if there is then trigger the processes shown on **FIG. 25** at "A". Box **2402** is left and box **2404** is entered. The action associated with box **2404** is to determine if there is at least one gaming device in category (2); if there is, the processes shown in **FIG. 26** at "B" are triggered. Leaving box **2404** and continuing to box **2406**, the action associated with this box is to determine if there is at least one standalone gaming device; if there is, the processes shown on **FIG. 27** at "C" are triggered. Having triggered the needed processes to support the gaming devices at the location in question, the process completes at finish node **2408**.

[0177] Continuing to **FIG. 25** at "A", two dotted lines are shown. Each dotted line is a trigger, starting two processes that run in parallel. The two processes start at diamond **2500** and box **2508**. These two processes will be in constant communication with each networked gaming device. Looking at diamond **2500**, the question asked is if an APID has been received from a gaming device. If not, the "N" exit is taken from diamond **2500** and box **2502** is entered. The action taken in box **2502** is to check status on input registers (poll connected devices), see if any interrupts outstanding are from gaming devices, or any other similar form of communications which alerts the central process that an APID has been delivered to a gaming device. After acquiring any input, box **2502** is left and diamond **2500** is entered. The data is assessed to see if a gaming device has sent an APID (or an APID with associated data). If not, the loop repeats until an APID (or APID with data) is detected.

[0178] When an APID is detected in diamond **2500**, the "Y" exit is taken to box **2504**. Actions associated with box **2504** include storing the APID (if new) and/or storing any gaming device data sent with the APID. The gaming devices will typically be sending data regularly to the central process, including everything from basic game play stats to special awards or credits earned by the player using the APID. This data is recorded in database, associated with the APID, to whatever granularity desired by the casino. After recording any data, box **2504** is left and box **2506** is entered. The actions associated with box **2506** have to do with assessing the currently available data associated with the APID, then using the data to issue various awards or credits. The types and kinds of credits and awards issued can be as variable as the Newprom awards discussed earlier: the data being received and associated with an APID will be evaluated as a set of states, then used with the Newprom elements and sub-elements to make evaluations on when, how, and what to award. Following the data assessment, which may or may not result in any awards or credits being issued, box **2506** is left and diamond **2500** is re-entered. This process continues as long as the casino is in use.

[0179] Looking now at box **2508**, a process is checking data coming in from gaming devices where the player is not using a traditional player-ID and is also not using an APID. Such data will be obvious, as it will show a device being used but will have no ID data of any kind associated with it. After finding at least one, but perhaps many, such gaming devices box **2508** is left and box **2510** entered.

[0180] The actions associated with box **2510** are to check the data associated with gaming devices in use without ID and see if the data matches a predetermined set of criteria. If they do, the highest priority (based on data like length of time played, or most amount of money spent—this allows the casino to find potentially valuable customers) gaming device has some type of enhancement sent to it. A person of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure will see that the types and kinds of awards (enticements) that can be offered are essentially unlimited in variability and richness; a preferred embodiment will use a Newprom interpreter to interpret the data and issue Newprom awards. Box **2510** is left and box **2512** entered. In box **2512**, if a gaming device meets criteria set by the house the player will be enticed to use an APID by immediately granting an award with the use of the APID. Box **2510** is left and diamond **2512** entered.

[0181] Diamond **2512** determines if the player decided to make use of the proffered APID. Making use of the APID also includes the player accepting the enticement by supplying an APID she or he already has—either action is fine. If the player did, the "Y" exit is taken, shown by a dotted line connection to box **2516**. Here, a database entry which associates the accepted APID and its enticements are recorded in the database, along with the already accumulated gaming device data from the current in-play session (if any). At this point, the gaming device will be in the loop (process) headed by diamond **2500**, thus the dotted line link to that process. Note that although not shown, any gaming device which begins to generate use data not associated with an ID becomes part of the loop (process) headed by box **2508**.

[0182] Returning to diamond **2514**, if the player does not make use of the APID or does not supply one, the process continues by looping back to box **2508** and evaluating the gaming devices again.

[0183] Going now to **FIG. 26**, the initial step is indicated by diamond **2600**. Using a low-level connection, the gaming device with be periodically "queried" at which point the gaming device will send back some type of activity indicator (perhaps similar to a process status longword). If the gaming device is not currently in use, then the "N" exit is taken to box **2602**. The action associated with box **2602** is read over the connection any data the gaming device may have collected since the last time data was gathered. After that, box **1602** is left and diamond **2600** re-entered. This loop continues as long as the computer polling the gaming device is up. If the gaming device returns an "in use" status, diamond **2600** is exited using the "Y" exit to diamond **2604**. If an APID is currently in use, then diamond **2604** is exited to box **2606**. Because the link is slow, some form of enticement or reward for using an APID will be issued but it will typically be far less complicated than that used in a fully networked environment. For example, simply awarding a set number of extra game play credits for every 15 minutes the APID is in use might be the extent of the enticement. Whatever is used by the casino is question, an evaluation is carried out and the awards made (if any), and box **2606** left and diamond **2600** re-entered.

[0184] Returning to diamond **2604**, if there is no APID in use diamond **2604** is left and box **2608** entered. The actions associated with box **2608** are similar to those associated withy box **2606**; the difference is that in addition to an enticement, the APID itself must be proffered to the player in whatever form the casino is using. The process then continues by returning to diamond **2600**. Eventually the gaming device will be polled or checked again, and at that time it will be determined if the player chose to use the offered APID and enticement.

[0185] Because of the slow, limited nature of the communications link associated with gaming devices in category (2), a casino may decide to skip any attempt at real time processing such as that described in **FIG. 26** and only use the link to download gaming device use data at periodic times. The specific implementation will determine which type of use is made of the limited bandwidth available. If gaming device use data is downloaded periodically and no further use is made of the link, the process will look very similar to those gaming devices in category (3), standalones.

[0186] The third process type, shown in **FIG. 27**, is for standalone gaming devices. Actions associated with starting box **2700** are to initiate a loop in each standalone gaming device. The loop is shown starting at diamond **2708**, and has individual actions that are similar to those discussed in the last two figures. There is one important difference to be kept in mind—the actions are all carried out within the gaming device itself; no network or automated connection is used.

[0187] Continuing with diamond **2708**, the process checks to see if the gaming device is in use. If not, the "N" exit is taken, looping back to itself and making the same check again. This continues until the gaming device is found to be in use, whereupon the "Y" exit is taken to diamond **2710**. If no APID is being used, diamond **2710** is left for box **2712**, where the gaming device offers some type of relatively fixed incentive for the player to start using an APID. Box **2712** is left and diamond **2708** re-entered, where the process starts over.

[0188] If, at diamond **2710**, an APID is in use then the "Y" exit is taken to box **2716**. The process records data associating the current APID with current gaming device use, the proceeds to box **2718**. An assessment is made of the APID's use, and if certain criteria are met an award is issued so the player will keep using the APID. Typical criteria may be based on amount of money spent, length this gaming device has been in use, and the age of APID. The APID's age indirectly indicates this APID data may be able to be associated with APID-related data on another device, if the data can be collected, so additional award amounts may be given to older APIDs. Box **2718** is now left and diamond **2708** re-entered, and the process loops again.

[0189] Returning to box **2700**, after the process just described is initiated in all standalone gaming devices, box **2702** is entered. The actions associated with box **2702** are to advertise APID enticements at a centralized location, where the APID Class II ITMs are dispensed. This advertising continues as long as the casino is open. Finally, box **2704** is entered, where the action is to gather APID data by offering players enticements to let their Class II ITMs be read as they leave the casino. This essentially makes the players act as the connecting "sneakernet", so each player having an APID and depositing the data at a central location (such as an entrance or exit) transports the gaming device use data the casino wants. Alternatively, the data could be collected after hours by floor walkers who read out data from individual gaming machines onto appropriate media. It is expected that this alternative would rarely be used, as the additional cost of networking gaming devices that can handle Class II ITMs is typically seen as a marginal increment.

[0190] This disclosure has discussed APIDs, which are a type of ID used and kept by players. An ID may also be issued by casinos without the knowledge of players. This type of ID is defined as a transaction identifier, or TID. The disadvantage of TIDs is that a player won't take them from gaming device to gaming device as they play, nor can they be used for anything but play on the machine from which it originates, nor can it be used in anything but the current session. The amount of player tracking information that can be gathered will be little more, if any, than that gathered on a "per playing session" or "per play" basis which is already available for analysis. Some use of TIDs has been made to try and issue game play credits, where extra game play credits are issued based on the amount of time the game has been in use, and/or the amount of "lever pulls" or number of times the game has been played in what appears to be a continuous manner (although this must be assumed). As stated earlier, this is an extremely limited venue because the all the measures of gaming play/use are based on game statistics as kept and keyed by the game and/or the casino, not by the player. TIDs may be used to support APIDs by enticing a player to play until they accept an APID, but TIDs have very little value in themselves and are not the focus of this disclosure.

[0191] The present invention has been partially described using flow charts. As will be understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure, steps described in the flow charts can vary as to order, content, allocation of resources between steps, times repeated, and similar variations while staying fully within the inventive concepts disclosed herein.

[0192] Accordingly, it will be seen that this invention provides a system and method for maintaining player's award credits, gaming states not associated directly with award credits, and provides for Newprom awards in a gaming environment. A player may restore award credits and/or other game state from previously played games when the previously played games are the same game device or from a similarly constructed game. The invention also provides for Newprom awards, allowing credits to be awarded for non-gaming events and based on non-gaming criteria. Although the description above contains much specificity, the description should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing an illustration of the presently preferred embodiment of the invention. The scope of this invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A game device configured to allow at least one player to play at least one game, comprising:

an APID data coordinator operably disposed within said game device;

a game device input device in operable communication with said APID data coordinator, configured to receive at least one form of ITM, said ITM having at least one APID thereon;

a game device output device in operable communication with said APID data coordinator, configured to output APID data.

2. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device is configured to receive GBIs having at least one APID thereon.

3. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device is configured to receive electronic APID data.

4. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device is configured to receive APID data from a network.

5. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device is configured to receive any retrievable APID data from a database, where said APID data is correlated with at least one identified APID.

6. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device is configured to receive retrievable APID data from a database.

7. The game device of claim 1 where said APID data coordinator is configured to collect data from said at least one game and associate said data with an APID.

8. The game device of claim 1 where said APID data coordinator is configured to send APID data correlated with at least one APID and further correlated with at least one of said at least one game to said game device output device.

9. The game device of claim 1 where said game device output device is configured to issue APID data receivable by a player.

10. The game device of claim 9 where said game device output device is further configured to issue GBIs.

11. The game device of claim 1 where said game device output device is configured to output electronic APID data.

12. The game device of claim 1 where said game device output device is configured to output APID data over a network.

13. The game device of claim 1 where said game device output device is configured to output APID data to a database, where said APID data is correlated with at least one APID.

14. The game device of claim 1 where said game device output device is configured to output APID data and an APID to a database independently of each other.

15. The game device of claim 1 where said game device input device and said game device output device are implemented in the same physical device, and further where output of said game device output device may include the return of previously received input.

16. An APID service station comprising:

an APID data coordinator operably disposed within said APID service station;

at least one APID service station display visible to a user operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID data coordinator;

at least one APID service station input device operably disposed within said APID service station, and in communication with said APID data coordinator; and,

at least one APID service station output device operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID data coordinator.

17. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device is configured to operably receive GBIs.

18. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device is configured to receive electronic APID data.

19. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device is configured to receive APID data over a network.

20. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device is configured to receive any retrievable APID data from a database, where said APID data is correlated with at least one APID.

21. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device is configured to receive retrievable APID data from a database.

22. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue at least one form of APID receivable by a player.

23. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue GBIs further having APID data thereon, receivable by a player.

24. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue electronic APID data.

25. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue APID data over a network.

26. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue electronic data further comprising a request for APID data associated with an APID.

27. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to issue electronic data further comprising a request for APID data.

28. The APID service station of claim 16 further configured such that said APID data coordinator, upon receiving APID data from at least one of said at least one APID service station input device, sends a natural language translation of said APID data to one of: said at least one APID service station display, allowing said natural language translation to be visible to a player; at least one of said at least one APID service station output devices, said natural language translation receivable by a player; or, both at least one of said at least APID service station display visible to a player and at least one of said at least one APID service station output device receivable by a player.

29. The APID service station of claim 16 further comprising at least one player input device operably disposed thereon.

30. The APID service station of claim 29 where said at least one player input device further comprises a touch-screen display.

31. The APID service station of claim 29 where said APID data coordinator is further configured to consolidate and recombine APID data received from at least one of said at least one APID service station input device, in accordance

with any input received via said at least one player input device, allowably resulting in reformulated APID data.

32. The APID service station of claim 31 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is further configured to issue APID data, including any reformulated APID data, in one of: a form receivable by a player; an electronic form receivable by a database; an electronic form receivable by another device; or, in both a form receivable by a player and in an electronic form receivable by a database.

33. The APID service station of claim 16 where said at least one APID service station output device is further configured to issue GBIs having thereon APID data correlated with one of: a plurality of games; a plurality of game configurations; or, a plurality of games and a plurality of game configurations.

34. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station output device is configured to output APID data to a database.

35. The APID service station of claim 16 where at least one of said at least one APID service station input device and at least one of said at least one APID service station output device are implemented in the same physical device, and further where output of said game device output device may include the return of previously received input.

36. An APID prize station comprising:

an APID data coordinator operably disposed within said prize station;

at least one prize station display visible to a user and operably disposed within said prize station and in communication with said APID data coordinator;

at least one prize station input device operably disposed within said prize station and in communication with said APID data coordinator; and,

at least one prize station output device operably disposed within said prize station and in communication with said APID data coordinator.

37. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive at least one form of ITM further having APID data thereon.

38. The APID prize station of claim 37 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive GBIs, said GBIs farther comprising APID data thereon.

39. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive electronic APID data.

40. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive APID data over a network.

41. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive any retrievable APID data from a database, where said APID data is correlated with at least one APID.

42. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device is configured to receive any retrievable APID data from a database.

43. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is configured to issue at least one form of ITM, said ITM having APID data thereon.

44. The APID prize station of claim 43 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is configured to issue GBIs, where said GBIs further comprise APID data thereon.

45. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is configured to issue electronic APID data.

46. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is configured to issue APID data over a network.

47. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is configured to issue requests for APID data residing on a database.

48. The APID prize station of claim 47 where said database request further comprises at least one APID, and where said APID data requested is associated with at least one of said at least one APID.

49. The APID prize station of claim 36 further comprising at least one player input device operably disposed thereon.

50. The APID prize station of claim 49 where said at least one player input device further comprises a touchscreen display.

51. The APID prize station of claim 49 where said APID data coordinator is further configured to consolidate and recombine APID data received from at least one of said at least one prize station input device, and further configured to extract any award credit data usable for dispensing prizes contained in said prize station, if any, and further configured to dispense in accordance with any input received via said at least one player input device, allowably resulting in reformulated APID data.

52. The APID prize station of claim 51 where at least one of said at least one prize station output device is further configured to issue APID data, including any reformulated APID data, in one of: a form receivable by a player; an electronic form receivable by one of another device or a database; or, in both a form receivable by a player and in an electronic form receivable by one of another device or a database.

53. The APID prize station of claim 36 where at least one of said at least one prize station input device and at least one of said at least one prize station output device are implemented in the same physical device, and further where output of said prize station output device may include the return of previously received input.

54. A gaming system comprising:

at least one APID game device configured to allow at least one player to play at least one game, where each of said at least one game device further comprises

an APID game device data coordinator operably disposed within said APID game device and in communication with said at least one game,

at least one APID game device input device in operable communication with said APID game device data coordinator, configured to receive APID data, and,

at least one APID game device output device in operable communication with said APID game device data coordinator, configured to output APID data;

at least one APID service station further comprising

an APID service station data coordinator operably disposed within said APID service station,

at least one APID service station display visible to a user operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator,

at least one APID service station input device operably disposed within said APID service station, and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator, and,

at least one APID service station output device operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator; and,

at least one operable APID data exchange mechanism between said at least one APID game device and said at least one APID service station.

55. The gaming system of claim 54 where at least one of said at least one APID service stations is operably e m bedded in an enclosure, said enclosure further containing at least one of said at least one APID game devices.

56. The gaming system of claim 55 where said APID service station data coordinator and said APID game device data coordinator are embodied in the same APID data coordinator.

57. The gaming system of claim 56 where said at least one APID service station display and said at least one APID game device share at least one player-visible display.

58. The gaming system of claim 56 where said at least one APID game device input device and said at least one APID service station input device share a physical device, and where said at least one APID game device output device and said at least one APID service station output device share a physical device.

59. The gaming system of claim 54 where said at least one APID data exchange mechanism further comprises APID data on any media transportable by an individual person.

60. The gaming system of claim 59 where said transportable media further comprises at least one of: vouchers; smart cards; magnetic strip cards; optical media devices; magnetic media devices; IR devices; passive RF devices; and, low-power RF devices.

61. The gaming system of claim 54 where said at least one APID gaming device further comprises a plurality of APID gaming devices, and said at least one APID data exchange mechanism further comprises electronic data exchange between said plurality of APID gaming devices.

62. The gaming system of claim 54 where said at least one APID gaming device further comprises a plurality of APID gaming devices, said at least one APID service station further comprises a plurality of APID service stations, and said at least one APID data exchange mechanism comprises a network between said plurality of APID gaming devices and at least one of said plurality of APID service stations.

63. The gaming system of claim 54 where at least one of said at least one APID data exchange mechanism further comprises at least one automated exchange mechanism.

64. The gaming system of claim 63 where said at least one automated exchange mechanism further comprises a network.

65. The gaming system of claim 64 wherein each of said at least one APID gaming device and each of said at least one APID service station has at least one of: an APID data exchange mechanism comprising a network; or, an APID data exchange mechanism embodied in medium transportable by a person.

66. The gaming system of claim 64 where said network further comprises a server and a database accessible by said server.

67. The gaming system of claim 66 where said server and said database are operably disposed within one of said at least one APID gaming device, where said APID gaming device is operably connected to said network.

68. The gaming system of claim 66 where said server and said database are operably disposed within one of said at least one APID service station, where said APID service station is operably connected to said network.

69. The game device of claim 66 where at least one of said at least one APID service station having a network APID data exchange mechanism is configured to issue a request for, and receive, any retrievable APID data from said database, where said retrievable APID data is correlated with at least one APID.

70. The gaming system of claim 66 where at least one of said at least one APID service station having a network APID data exchange mechanism is configured to issue requests for APID data and receive APID data from said database.

71. The gaming system of claim 54 where said APID service station further comprises at least one user input device operably disposed therein, and where said APID service station data coordinator is in communication with said at least one user input device.

72. The gaming system of claim 71 where said at least one player input device further comprises a touchscreen operably disposed within said at least one APID service station display.

73. The gaming system of claim 71 where said APID service station is further configured to consolidate and recombine any combination of APID data, savable game state data, and newprom data, where said data is received from at least one of said at least one APID service station input device, and said data is consolidated and recombined in accordance with any input received via said at least one player input device, allowably resulting in reformulated data.

74. The gaming system of claim 73 where said APID service station is further configured to output from at least one of said at least one APID service station output device any combination of APID data, newprom data, and savable game state data, in accordance with said reformulated data.

75. The gaming system of claim 74 where said reformulated data is issued using at least one of said at least one APID service station output device configured to issue at least one GBI retrievable by a player, said GBI having said reformulated data thereon.

76. The gaming system of claim 71 where said APID service station is further configured such that said APID service station data coordinator sends a natural language translation of any APID data associated with an APID, including any data associated with said APID on said database, to one of: said at least one APID service station display, allowing said natural language translation to be visible to a user; at least one of said at least one APID service station output devices, said natural language translation receivable by a user; or, both at least one of said at least APID service station display visible to a user and at least one

of said at least one APID service station output device receivable by a user, in accordance with any input from said at least one user input device.

77. The gaming system of claim 54 where at least one of said at least one APID game device further comprises at least one game based on one of: chance, fixed-pool, combination of skill and chance, or combination of skill and fixed-pool.

78. The gaming system of claim 54 where at least one of said at least one APID gaming device further comprises at least one game further comprising a primary game and a secondary game, where said primary game is based on one of chance or a fixed pool, and said secondary game is invoked by the occurrence of at least one predetermined event in said primary game.

79. A gaming system comprising:

at least one APID game device configured to allow at least one player to play at least one game, where said at least one game device further comprises

an APID game device data coordinator operably disposed within said APID game device and in communication with said at least one game,

at least one APID game device input device in operable communication with said APID game device data coordinator, configured to receive APID data, and,

at least one APID game device output device in operable communication with said APID game device data coordinator, configured to output APID data;

at least one APID service station further comprising

an APID service station data coordinator operably disposed within said APID service station,

at least one APID service station display visible operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator,

at least one APID service station input device operably disposed within said APID service station, and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator, and,

at least one APID service station output device operably disposed within said APID service station and in communication with said APID service station data coordinator;

at least one APID prize station further comprising

an APID prize station data coordinator operably disposed within said APID prize station,

at least one APID prize station display visible to a user and operably disposed within said APID prize station and in communication with said APID prize station data coordinator,

at least one APID prize station input device operably disposed within said APID prize station and in communication with said APID prize station data coordinator, and,

at least one APID prize station output device operably disposed within said APID prize station and in communication with said APID prize station data coordinator; and,

at least one APID data exchange mechanism between said at least one APID game device, said at least one APID prize station, and said at least one APID service station.

80. The gaming system of claim 79 where at least one of said at least one APID service station is operably embedded in an enclosure, said enclosure further containing at least one of said at least one APID prize station, and where said APID service station data coordinator and said APID prize station data coordinator are embodied in the same APID data coordinator.

81. The gaming system of claim 80 where said at least one APID service station display and said at least one APID prize station share at least one player-visible display.

82. The gaming system of claim 80 where said at least one APID prize station input device and said at least one APID service station input device share a physical device, and where said at least one APID prize station output device and said at least one APID service station output device share a physical device.

83. The gaming system of claim 79 where said at least one APID data exchange mechanism further comprises information in or on a medium transportable by a person.

84. The gaming system of claim 83 where said transportable medium further comprises at least one of: vouchers; smart cards; magnetic strip cards; optical media devices; magnetic media devices; IR devices; and, low-power RF devices.

85. The gaming system of claim 79 where said at least one APID data exchange mechanism further comprises a plurality of data exchange mechanisms, said plurality of exchange mechanisms comprising at least one medium transportable by a person and at least one automated exchange mechanism.

86. The gaming system of claim 85 where said at least one automated exchange mechanism further comprises a network.

87. The gaming system of claim 86 wherein each of said at least one APID gaming device, each of said at least one APID prize station, and each of said at least one APID service station has at least one of: an APID data exchange mechanism comprising a network; or, an APID data exchange mechanism embodied in medium transportable by a person.

88. The gaming system of claim 87 where said network further comprises a server and a database accessible by said server.

89. The gaming system of claim 88 where said server and said database are operably disposed within one of said at least one APID gaming device, where said APID gaming device further has an APID data exchange mechanism comprising a network.

90. The gaming system of claim 88 where said server and said database are operably disposed within one of said at least one APID service station, where said APID service station further comprises an APID data exchange mechanism comprising a network

91. The gaming system of claim 88 where said server and said database are operably disposed within one of said at least one APID prize station, where said APID prize station further comprises an APID data exchange mechanism comprising a network.

92. The gaming system of claim 88 where at least one of said at least one APID prize station data coordinator embodied in an APID prize station having a network APID data

exchange mechanism is configured to issue a request for, and receive, any retrievable APID data from said database, where said retrievable APID data is correlated to at least one APID.

93. The gaming system of claim 88 where at least one of said at least one APID prize station having a network APID data exchange mechanism is configured to issue requests for APID data and receive APID data from said database.

94. The gaming system of claim 79 where said APID prize station further comprises at least one user input device operably disposed therein, and where said APID data coordinator is in communication with said at least one user input device.

95. The gaming system of claim 94 where said at least one player input device further comprises a touchscreen operably disposed within said at least one prize station display.

96. The gaming system of claim 94 where said prize station is further configured to consolidate and recombine any combination of newprom data and savable game state data, said data associated with at least one APID, received from at least one of said at least one APID prize station input device, in accordance with any input received via said at least one player input device, allowably resulting in one of award credit data or reformulated award credit data.

97. The gaming system of claim 96 where said APID prize station is further configured to issue prizes in accordance with said one of award credit data or reformulated award credit data, if any, and further configured to issue from at least one of said at least one APID prize station output device any combination of newprom data and savable game state data, in accordance with said one of award credit data or reformulated award credit data, and associated with at least one APID.

98. The gaming system of claim 97 where said one of award credit data or reformulated data is issued as a GBI receivable by a user.

99. The gaming system of claim 94 further configured such that said APID prize station data coordinator, upon receiving APID data from at least one of said at least one APID prize station input device, sends a natural language translation of any award credit data associated with said APID data, including award credit data on said database, to one of: said at least one prize station display, allowing said natural language translation to be visible to a user; at least one of said at least one prize station output devices, said natural language translation receivable by a user; or, both at least one of said at least one prize station display visible to a user and at least one of said at least one prize station output device receivable by a user, in accordance with any input from said at least one user input device.

100. The gaming system of claim 79 where at least one of said at least one APID game device further comprises at least one game based on one of: chance, fixed-pool, combination of skill and chance, or combination of skill and fixed-pool.

101. The gaming system of claim 79 where at least one of said at least one gaming device further comprises at least one game further comprising a primary game and a secondary game, where said primary game is based on one of chance or a fixed pool, and said secondary game is invoked by the occurrence of at least one predetermined event in said primary game.

102. An APID system for use in a gaming environment comprising:

a personal identification sequence generator;

a plurality of personal identification sequences, generated by said personal identification sequence generator, said plurality of personal identification sequences configured to be entered into a device manually by a player;

at least one gaming-related device configured to receive player input and operably connected to a database, said database configured to store a plurality of personal identification sequences generated by said personal identification sequence generator and to establish the validity of personal identification sequences input by a user using said player input, and where said personal identification sequence has no association with an individual player's name.

103. The APID system of claim 102 where said at least one gaming-related device further comprises a plurality of gaming devices configured to allow at least one player to play at least one game.

104. The APID system of claim 102 where said at least one gaming-related device further comprises a plurality of gaming devices configured to allow at least one player to play at least one game, and at least one prize station device configured to allow at least one player to input a personal identification sequence and redeem any prizes associated with said personal identification sequence.

105. An APID for use in a gaming environment comprising:

memory device configured to be physically carried by an individual player; and,

at least one identification indicia, said identification indicia generated by a gaming APID generator, readably disposed within said memory device and having no correlation to an individual player's name, and readable by at least one APID input device when operably connected to said memory device.

106. The APID of claim 105 where said memory device comprises a single identification indicia thereon.

107. The APID of claim 106 where said memory device is a voucher.

108. The APID of claim 106 where said memory device is a card with a magnetic strip.

109. The APID of claim 106 where said memory device is a handheld device having an RF interface.

110. The APID of claim 106 where said memory device is a handheld device having an IR interface.

111. The APID system of claim 106 where said memory device further comprises an optical disk, said optical disk further having newprom award data thereon.

112. The APID of claim 105 where said memory device further comprises any combination of game state data and newprom data, and where said memory device is further configured to have data entered, retrieved, and removed.

113. The APID system of claim 112 where said memory device comprises an optical disk.

114. The APID system of claim 112 where said memory device comprises a handheld device having an IR interface.

115. The APID system of claim 112 where said memory device comprises a handheld device having an RF interface.

116. A method for using APIDs in a game device, said game device configured to receive APIDs using an APID input device operably disposed within the game device, said method comprising:

receiving an APID from an individually transportable media through said APID input device;

associating game state data, if any, with said APID;

saving said associated game state data with said APID.

117. The method of claim 116 further comprising:

outputting said associated game state data in a manner receivable by a player and using the same individually transportable media from which said APID was received.

118. The method of claim 116 further comprising:

saving said associated game state data and said APID in said game device in a manner retrievable by a game operator.

119. The method of claim 117 further comprising:

presenting said APID on said individually transportable media to a plurality of games, and storing additional game state data, if any, on said individually transportable media.

120. The method of claim 117 further comprising:

presenting said individually transportable media having thereon at least an APID to a prize station;

identifying prizes eligible for redemption based on game state data, if any;

selecting and one or more prizes eligible for redemption from said identified prizes, if any;

recording a change in said game state data based on said selected prizes, if any; and,

returning said individually transportable media.

121. The method of claim 117 further comprising:

presenting said individually transportable media having thereon at least an APID to a representative of a casino;

identifying eligible awards, if any, based on game state data, if any, to said representative of said casino; and,

communicating to a player what said player is eligible for through said representative of said casino.

122. The method of claim 121 further comprising:

enabling player actions by said representative of said casino, based on said eligible awards.

123. The method of claim 122 where said enabled action includes at least one of: a meal; a desert; a drink; a room for at least one night; or, additional game credits.

124. The method of claim 123 further comprising:

presenting said individually transportable media having thereon at least an APID to an input device configured to receive said individually transportable media, where said input device is located near an activity in a casino;

identifying eligibility for said activity based on game state data, if any, associated with said APID;

communicating to a player what said player is eligible to do or to partake in, at said activity;

allowing said player to partake in said eligible activity if said player so chooses; and,

returning said individually transportable media to said player having thereon game state changed to reflect said players choice of participation in said activity.

125. The method of claim 122 where said activity is a meal at a restaurant, and said individually transportable media received by said player has data changed thereon to reflect usage of said restaurant.

126. A method for using APIDs on a game device, said game device configured to send and receive information from a database, said information comprising APID data and one of: game state data, newprom data, or game state and newprom data, and further configured to interact with individually transportable media, said method comprising:

receiving individually transportable media having APID data thereon;

retrieving said APID data;

requesting any data on said database associated with said APID data;

receiving data associated with said APID data, if any;

changing game device configuration in accordance with said data, if any; and,

allowing play of said configured game device.

127. The method of claim 126 further comprising:

saving game state data and newprom award data generated during game play, if any, in a manner integrated with any previous game state data and newprom data, if any, and associated with said APID on said database.

128. The method of claim 126 where said individually transportable media further comprises data associated with said APID, the method further comprising, after step four:

retrieving data associated with said APID data on said individually transportable media; and,

integrating any data retrieved from said database and any data retrieved from said individually transportable media.

129. A method of gathering information on players' use of gaming devices and casino services, said method comprising:

providing at least one incentive associated with an APID;

issuing said APID to a player;

generating device use data when said APID is presented to a device;

generating casino services use data when said APID is presented in conjunction with the use of casino services;

associating all of said use data with said APID;

saving said APID and associated use data.

130. The method of claim 129 further comprising:

providing additional incentives associated with said APID each time a player uses said APID in a gaming device; and,

informing said player about the newly awarded incentives.

131. The method of claim 131 where said saving of said use data is carried out on a database operably connected to said gaming devices and operably connected to at least one individually transportable media input device, said individually transportable media input device usable by either casino

representatives or a player when said player presents said APID for use with a casino service.

132. A method for rewarding anonymous players using APIDs, the method comprising:

identifying gaming devices being used with APIDs; and,

issuing incentives to a player using an APID based on the use of the gaming

device the player is using.

133. The method of **132** where said second step further comprises:

determining incentives based on APID use, including any combination of time played in the casino, time played on at least one in-use gaming device, and amount spent; and,

issuing said determined incentives directly to a player at an in-use gaming device.

134. The method of claim 132 where said second step further comprises determining incentives based on a new-prom award analysis.

* * * * *