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(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ENHANCING COLLECTIBLE EXPERIENCES

UID	Item Name	Item Type	Collectible Item No.	Retailer Code	Retail value	Buyback value
000001	1847 5 cent stamp	stamp	100000	S5 1847	3,900	4,000
000002	1847 5 cent stamp	stamp	100001	S5 1847	3,900	4,000
000003	1848 5 cent coin	coin	200000	C51848	200	210
000004	1848 10 cent coin	coin	210000	C101848	250	260
000005	1849 5 cent stamp	stamp	110000	S51849	450	460
000006	1849 5 cent stamp	stamp	110001	S51849	400	410
000007	1850 5 cent stamp	stamp	120000	S551850	300	410
000008	Autographed 1 <sup>st</sup> ed. "Crime and Punishment"	book	300000	B1000	10,000	10,100

FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A system and method to enhance collecting of various collectible items is provided which allows users to resell completed collections as an incentive to continue further collecting. A database is provided where items are assigned identifying numbers such that they may be tracked as they are added to user accounts, where once a preselected series of numbered items are acquired and automatic buyback is offered to the user. Still further, social network functionality is provided to enable trading of collectible items by users to further stimulate the acquisition of completed collections.

## TITLE

**System and Method for Enhancing Collectible Experiences**

## BACKGROUND

[1] The collectible industry has existed for many years, for example in the areas of antiques, trading cards, figurines and toys and in the area of "licensed properties", i.e., popular book series, comic books, official sports and entertainment merchandise. Often collectors attempt to complete collections by acquiring one of every item in a series. Collectors of the same genre will often buy, sell or trade extra items within their collection in an effort to complete a set of related items.

[2] However, once a set is completed there is little for the collector to do other than either retain it or demolish it piece by piece by selling or trading of pieces to other collectors or disposing of the complete set to a retailer at a steep discount. Since most collectors already possess portions of a collection, they are simply not interested in buying an already completed set. There is no reward provided to collectors for completing a collection, other than the laborious task of disposing of it, often at far less than the cost of acquisition, once they are done enjoying it. For example, many completed collections are disposed of at pawn stores, antiques dealers or other dealers in such merchandise at less than 50% of their retail value or sold in pieces on auction sites such as EBay.

[3] The collectibles industry has been affected by the rise of the use of the Internet, which is a grossly compelling phenomenon. Millions of websites allow users to learn about virtually any subject, buy virtually any good or service, perform research, meet people and/or be diverted/entertained for hours on end. However, the disadvantage that many "content" websites have experienced is that although they are effective in attracting audiences, they often have

difficulty extracting revenue from their visitors, who have grown accustomed to the idea that Internet "content" is free. In addition, the disadvantage many commerce-based websites have experienced is that they must expend large amounts of resources on marketing and advertising because to compete with their "bricks-and-mortar" counterparts and other Internet-based businesses that sell the same products. Commerce-based websites have the additional disadvantage of competing with content websites for the attention of customers, who often find content websites more compelling. Furthermore, the collectible industry does not provide for a method for centralizing various genres of collectibles, so collectors are typically forced to join various online communities, each focused on a narrow area. Thus they are unable to centralize, communicate, trade, sell or otherwise be rewarded for their collections within one community

[4] There is a clear need in the art for a system and method that allows the collector of real world items to be rewarded for collecting, and to organize, store and trade all or parts of their collection. There is a further need for such a system that provides the ability of overcoming the unique challenges of creating revenues and customer loyalty in the on-line environment.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[5] In an aspect of the present invention a system and method of selling collectible items having preselected numbers corresponding to elements of a collection and incentivizing retailer offerings by buying back full collections or parts of collections where collection items have the same numbers is provided.

[6] In another aspect of the present invention a system and method of acquiring a collection of items, trading or otherwise manipulating that collection to obtain a collection of items having particular preselected numbers and then reselling that collection of items to the retailer is provided.

[7] In a further aspect, a social network is provided which allows users to acquire trade or dispose of items via auction or buy and sell offers in order to build a collection of items having particular preselected numbers.

[8] In yet another aspect, a communication system is provided to enable users to communicate with each other concerning their collections and to arrange trades, dispositions, sales or purchases of items.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[9] Figure 1 depicts an exemplary table storing instances of collectible items and data associated therewith.

[10] Figure 2 depicts an exemplary user account table linking users to collected items.

[11] Figure 3 shows an exemplary network structure linking user clients to a database and 3<sup>rd</sup> party service provider.

[12] Figure 4 depicts an exemplary user page showing the contents of a collection.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[13] The present invention relates to a method and system for assisting a collector of collectible items in acquiring, maintaining and disposing of a personal collection of items. The collectible items may be coins, stamps, comic books, books, figurines, artworks, trading cards, motor vehicles, recordings or autographed documents, or any other collectible. In this application, a class of collectible items means a group of collectible items that originally were manufactured essentially identically. A category of collectibles means a group of collectibles all of the same type, e.g. coins or stamps, which had one or more similarities at the time of issue or manufacture, but also have one or more significant differences, such as a different date.

[14] Embodiments of the present invention include software modules that allow user registration; acquisition of collectibles; display of collections to other users; social network features such as posting, private messages and chat; and disposal of collectibles or collections to other users or buyers, including the community operator, which may be for example, the retailer of the collectibles or the website operator. Suitable computer hardware used in database operations are employed, for example servers, cloud or distribute computing systems, to maintain the database infrastructure as well as servers to communicate with client computing devices over the Internet or other networked connection. In order to implement embodiments of the present invention a database is utilized to store user data such as user profiles, contents of each user's collection and other data described herein below. Said database may reside on a central server, be distributed across internal servers or reside on a cloud computing system. Communication with users occurs over the Internet or other computing network, preferably a global computer network.

[15] In embodiments of the present invention a vendor of collectibles organizes an inventory made of unique items, termed a "collection", such as for example, books, documents, stamps, coins, art objects, sports trading cards or sports memorabilia, but any collectible object may be utilized as part of a collection. Each item in a collection is registered in a collectibles database with a unique identifier. Items also receive a number relevant to the collection that they are a member of, referred to herein as a "collectible item number". For example, "stamp 7" may be assigned to one or more collections and corresponds to a particular stamp, for example an 1847 U.S. # 1 5 cent Franklin postage stamp. Thus any collectible item (whether unique such as an art object, or part of a

manufacture run, such as all 1950 U.S. Quarters) may be assigned a number and assigned to one or more collections.

[16] In embodiments of the present invention a user may decide to collect items assigned to a particular collection, which, for exemplary purposes, may include several stamps, some books and other art objects, though it is understood that collections may be composed of any arrangement of collectibles, including members of a series, e.g., coin denominations arranged by date. The user then loads that collection onto his personal webpage and proceeds to fill his collection by collecting items assigned to that gathering. The user preferably acquires the needed items from other users or from retailers advertising items bearing the item number needed. Alternatively, or in addition, a user may acquire items arbitrarily or according to their number, for example a user may acquire all items numbered "7" and proceed to trade or sell these to users needing particular items to complete their collection.

[17] In yet another embodiment of the present invention, a collector may complete a collection by collecting all of the required items, and then may trade for the same items, as determined by the website (for example trading one 1964 U.S. Quarter for another), the trading is done by the user with the aim of converting their collection to one composed of items bearing the same number, for which the collector is then rewarded by the operator of the website or retailer thereon with an irrevocable offer to buy the completed collection. For example, a stamp collection composed of all Russian stamps issued in a particular year may be composed of 25 individual stamps, an instance of each of which is to be collected to complete the collection. Should the user complete the 25 stamp collection with particular stamps numbered stamp 1, #7, stamp 2 #7 so forth to stamp 25 #7 they will be eligible to sell

back the collection for an amount of money greater than the retail price of the individual stamps on the website. Thus the user is encouraged to obtain and trade collectibles until they achieve a sellable collection. It is to be understood that "stamp 1", etc. is merely exemplary and the name of the actual collectible (e.g. "Sputnik Commemorative Stamp", is intended).

[18] Referring now to Fig. 1, a portion of an exemplary table assigning collectible item numbers to items available for collecting is provided. The table includes string or numeric variables for item name, item type, collectible item number, retailer code, retail value, and buyback value. It is understood that the item type variable may be either a number corresponding to a key (e.g. stamps are item type = 1, dolls item type = 2, or a text string such as stamp, dolls, etc.). Of course, other forms of arrangement work equally well, such as a series of database tables each dedicated to a particular item type, or to a particular retailer's inventory. The database is query-able by SQL or like database query to retrieve data. The collectible item number is utilized to keep track of which instance of an item a collector possesses, such that if their object is to acquire a collection of items bearing collectible item number "7" they would then trade for the instance of the item bearing the number 7 until each item in their collection was a "7" item. In embodiments of the present invention, the collectible item number may also correspond to the quality of an item with for example collectible item number 1 of a particular coin being a "fine" condition coin and collectible item number 9 being an "Au" (almost uncirculated). Thus users may advance their collect or set a level at which they would like to collect in terms of item quality and cost.

[19] Users may maintain a personal webpage that lists the collectibles they have purchased. Collectibles may be delivered to or held personally by the collector or in

storage by the retailer on behalf of the collector. When a user purchases a collectible they are prompted to add that collectible to their personal page. Referring now to Fig. 2, an exemplary database table for storing user collections is provided. Such a table provides a user id and item identifier so that a collectible item may be associated to a user. The user's personal webpage includes software which queries the database for a user's collection items and returns the result by displaying images associated with each collectible, preferably pictures of the actual collectible purchased by the user. Such digital pictures may be stored and linked to the collectible item via the database. Further, in the case of predefined collections, pictures of items left to be acquired may also be displayed, preferably in a grayed out fashion to indicate items left to purchase to complete the collection.

[20] Each icon for a collectible item preferably links to an option to publish the item publicly to a user's public profile within a social network community dedicated to collecting. Such a community may then post comments on the item, make offers to trade the item for another item, or outright purchase the item from the user. Furthermore, an auction function is provided whereby a user may post the items within his collection which are available for sale, and still further a user may solicit barter type trades via text posts, chat, private message or public post calling for open trades of other items (e.g. make user an offer of your choice) or particular items (e.g. looking for a particular item in exchange for this item). Such a system is implemented by software means residing upon the host and client computing systems, or on connected networks maintained by third party software providers and includes known auction, communication, chat, messaging and forum posting applets or software such as auction software (for example that provided by Beyond Solutions), phpBB, internet relay chat, live messaging, or their equivalents.



[21] More particularly, and referring now to Fig. 3, an architecture interconnection diagram illustrating the hardware portion of an exemplary system 100 according to an embodiment of the invention is shown. The connection 103 between the plurality of clients 102 and the application host computer 104 is preferably a standard HTTPS connection. Advertisements and data synchronization between the client and the application host take place over this connection 103. General information about a user's collection and their profile (age, address, collection interests), and for example user decisions to publish items in the collection to a user's public profile page, are obtained using this connection. The connection also facilitates the transmission of data concerning a user's collection to the user, such as the items in the collection, images of items, item numbers and any other data associated with the collection. Still further the connection 103 serves to transmit and receive communications between users located at the clients 102. Clients 102 while depicted as mobile, may also be fixed computers or any device capable of establishing an internet connection. One skilled in the HTTPS art will understand that a client request may result in an HTTP/HTTPS redirect response. As a result, the client in some instances will communicate directly with a 3rd party system 101. Thus, certain functions such as auction services, sales of collectibles and hosting of the social network community may be outsourced to 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites.

[22] In order to incentivize collecting, upon detection by the host system that a user has completed a collection or part of it (for example to add upon a user's collections) by obtaining all items of the collection bearing the correct collectible item numbers, an offer will be sent to that user to sell the collection to the operator of the host system or to the retailer of the collection items. The price of the buy-back may be increased (in accordance

with offer) in the period of selling of collection items depending on quantity of sold items by the operator or retailer. Said offer may be sent, for example, by private message, preferably containing a link whereby a user may automatically sell their collection back to the operator of the system or vendor of the collectibles (the "buyer"). Said link automatically generates a mailing label for use in transmitting the collection back to the buyer, and initiates a query to the database to determine the buyback value of the particular collection using the buyback prices for the items of the collection. The database is capable of storing historic retail and buyback prices in the event retail and buyback pricing changes occur in between the initial purchase by the user and the sale back of the completed collection. Thus the user is always offered more in buyback than the retail value of the item at the time of acquisition. The buyback prices are then tallied and a fixed offer is displayed to the user. He may then credit an account on the website by accepting the offer whereupon the credit posts on receipt of the returned collection merchandise. Preferably the mailing label includes a bar code to facilitate scanning and confirmation of receipt of the returned collection.

[23] Referring now to Fig. 4, an exemplary user's collection is displayed. The user has completed the collection, in this case of a popular book series, and thus all boxes of the collection are marked as filled. Should the user have acquired or traded for books bearing the same collection identification number, for example number 5, they would become eligible to resell their collection to the retailer for a bonus beyond the price paid. Such an opportunity fosters increased interest in the book collection and allows the possibility to interact with others interested in the same subject matter in the quest to locate books of the same collection identification number. Alternatively the set capable of being sold back may be of any combination of collection identification numbers as determined by

the retailer. It is planned that there will be limited editions of items bearing the correct number, thus causing collectors to hunt for the right item to complete a resalable collection.

[24] In further embodiments, the collection items displayed as in Fig. 4 are linkable to content describing the item and editable by the user. For example in the case of coins, a detail level collection screen in a coin collection application may be displayed if the item has been selected by clicking on the item icon. The detail level includes a header section which includes the screen title, a toggle to take the user back to the main level collection and an "edit" toggle which permits data to be entered into the screen and edited, such as user generated or entered descriptions of the item, user acquired historical information, or other data the user wishes to display. The main navigation area contains detailed information pertinent to the collectible. Each pertinent detail includes a detail heading, and a data entry area in which the user can enter the information. In an exemplary coin application, the pertinent detail includes a Coin Category Name, Mint Method, the Mintage and the Approximate Value. The foregoing detail information is preferably always located in the same place in the main navigation area. The main navigation area also includes a scrollable list of detail items and other details. In a mobile embodiment, the list may be scrolled by rubbing a finger up or down on the list, and thus the list details may not always appear at the same place. Each detail item includes a heading and a piece of detail data. In this particular example, the detail items that are on the scroll list include grade, date acquired, purchase price, sale price, certification authority and the certification number, where the coin was purchased, the purchase price, and the purchase date (in other words details pertinent to coin collectors). The detail screen also includes a notes data entry area where the user can enter any additional data pertinent to the coin. A sale process for this coin may be initiated by

clicking on a sale toggle which posts the collectible item for sale or trade to the online community as described above.

[25] In the preceding detailed description of embodiments of the invention, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the embodiments of invention. However, it is known to a person skilled in art that the embodiments of invention may be practiced with or without these specific details. In other instances methods, procedures and components known to persons of ordinary skill in the art have not been described in details so as not to unnecessarily obscure aspects of the embodiments of the invention. Furthermore, it is clear that the invention is not limited to these embodiments only. Numerous modifications, changes, variations, substitutions and equivalents will be apparent to those skilled in the art, without parting from the spirit and scope of the invention.

In the claims:

1. A method of administering a collection of items comprising:
  - (a) assigning a set of numbers to instances of a series of items
  - (b) determining a set of items having preselected numbers
  - (c) offering instances of a series of items for sale to one or more users
  - (d) storing user purchased items and corresponding numbers
  - (e) offering to repurchase user purchased items upon completion of a set of items bearing preselected numbers or a portion thereof.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the items are physical collectibles shipped to a user.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the items are physically stored at a location remote from the user.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the items are digitally displayed to the user.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein the graphically displayed items link to data concerning the items.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the user may auction, acquire, buy, sell or trade one or more items with other users via a social network and other available means of communications between the users.
7. The method of claim 5 wherein the data concerning the items may be edited or augmented by the user.
8. A system or administering a collection comprising:
  - (a) a database of instances of a series of items,
  - (b) a first software module which writes information to the database by assigning a set of numbers to instances of a series of items,

(b) a second software module which determines a set of items by assigning preselected numbers to the set,

(c) a third software module which offers instances of a series of items for sale to one or more users and updates a user account with each purchase,

(d) storage means for storing user purchased items and corresponding numbers and

(e) a fourth software module to identify when a user account has a set of items matching the preselected numbers assigned by said second software module.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the fourth software module initiates a buyback offer to the user account.

10. The system of claim 8 wherein the user account can communicate with another user account to initiate and receive offers to auction, buy, sell or trade items.

UID	Item Name	Item Type	Collectible Item No.	Retailer Code	Retail value	Buyback value
000001	1847 5 cent stamp	stamp	100000	S51847	3,900	4,000
000002	1847 5 cent stamp	stamp	100001	S51847	3,900	4,000
000003	1848 5 cent coin	coin	200000	C51848	200	210
000004	1848 10 cent coin	coin	210000	C101848	250	260
000005	1849 5 cent stamp	stamp	110000	S51849	450	460
000006	1849 5 cent stamp	stamp	110001	S51849	400	410
000007	1850 5 cent stamp	stamp	120000	S551850	300	410
000008	Autographed 1 <sup>st</sup> ed. "Crime and Punishment"	book	300000	B1000	10,000	10,100

FIG. 1

User Name	Collectible Item No.
User1	100001
User2	100007
User3	100010
User4	200001
User5	200007
User6	200005
User7	300003
User8	300006

*FIG. 2*



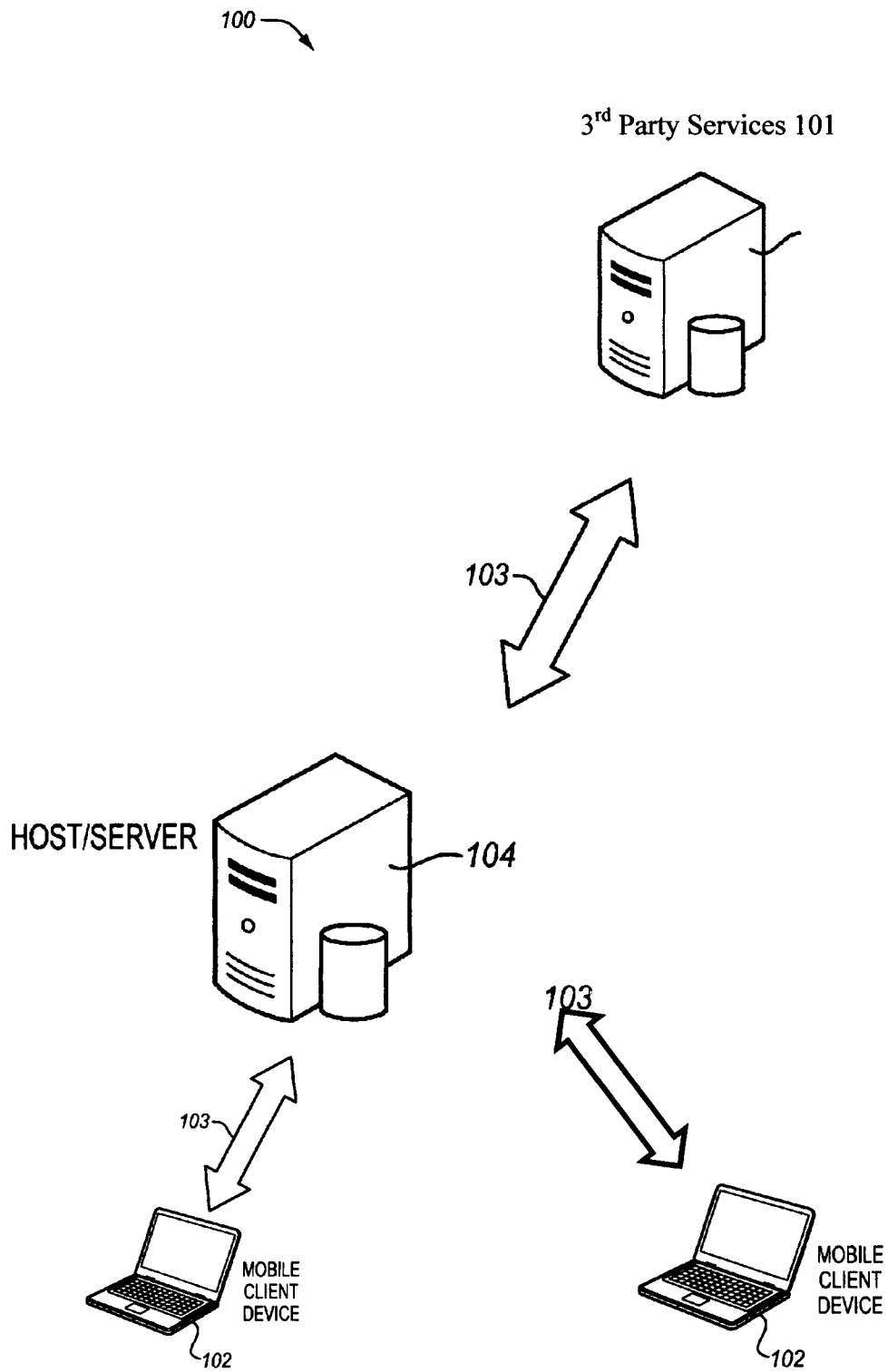


FIG. 3



FIG. 4

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/IB 201 1/003079

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		<i>G06Q 30/06 (2012.01)</i> <i>G06F 15/16 (2006.01)</i> <i>G06F 17/30 (2006.01)</i>	
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC			
B. FIELDS SEARCHED			
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)			
G06Q 30/00, 30/06, G06F 3/00, 3/01, 3/048, 5/00, 15/16, 17/00, 17/30			
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched			
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)			
RUPAT, Esp@cenet, PAJ, DWPI, PCT Online, PatSearch, WIPO, USPTO			
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages		Relevant to claim No.
X	US 201 1/001 6025 A1 (R. BRANDON GAISFORD) 20.0 1.201 1, paragraphs [0003], [0011]-[0019], [0050]-[0056], [0064], [0067], [0070], [0071], [0080], [0088], [0094], [0107], fig. 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 21		1-10
A	US 2001/0049606 A1 (BRUNO LUCARELLI) 06.12.200 1		1-10
A	US 6108639 A (PRICELINE.COM INCORPORATED) 22.08.2000		1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.		<input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.	
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"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
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