Title: A SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ELECTRONIC TICKETING

(57) Abstract: A ticketing method is described comprising creating an account for a user (130-133) on a ticketing server (110, 111). The user (130-133) purchases entrance rights to an event and is provided with an entrance pass configured to identify the user’s account on the ticketing server (110, 111). The purchase information is then transmitted to a relevant access control (160, 161) located at a particular venue. When the user arrives at the venue, the user’s entrance pass will be read by scanner (170, 171) and this information will be compared with user purchase information stored on the access control unit (160, 161). The ticketing method rewards the user attending an event by crediting the user’s account by a number of points which may subsequently be used by the user to obtain one or more benefits.
A SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ELECTRONIC TICKETING

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to the field of network transaction services.
More particularly, the invention relates to an improved system and method for providing electronic ticketing services over a network.

Description of the Related Art

Current ticketing systems are economically inefficient in a number of ways. The most obvious problem is that when an individual purchases a ticket (e.g., for a movie or a concert) at a box office, he or she must often wait in line for an extended period of time. Even assuming that the individual calls ahead to reserve a seat, he or she still purchases the ticket anonymously. The organization promoting the event does not learn anything about the individual and, therefore, cannot market future events directly to the individual based on his or her preferences.

In addition, current ticketing systems are overly rigid and incapable of reacting dynamically to supply and demand changes for event seating. For example, aside from a few theaters that market a “discount matinee,” the price for a movie ticket is the same notwithstanding vast fluctuations in supply and demand throughout the week and hours of the day.

Several additional shortcomings exist with respect to season ticket programs. First, there is no simple way for a group of individuals to share a single set of season tickets. Under most programs, the group is simply given a pack of tickets to divide amongst themselves for the season. When these tickets are lost they cannot easily be replaced. In addition, organizing and coordinating such a system is burdensome – particularly with a large group of ticket purchasers. Finally, current season ticketing systems do not provide a simple mechanism for selling or exchanging a guaranteed seat once the purchase has been made.
Accordingly, what is needed is an improved, more efficient system and method for providing electronic ticketing.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A ticketing method is described comprising: creating an account for a user on a ticketing server; providing the user with an entrance pass, the entrance pass configured to identify the user’s account on the ticketing server; and rewarding the user for attending an event by crediting the user’s account by a number of points which may subsequently be used by the user to obtain one or more benefits.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A better understanding of the present invention can be obtained from the following detailed description in conjunction with the following drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary network architecture which includes elements of the present invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates an exemplary computer architecture which includes elements of the present invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates a ticket/point transfer from a first user to a second user.

FIG. 4 illustrates a ticket/point transfer from a first group of users to another.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In the following description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without some of these specific details. In other instances,
well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form to avoid obscuring the underlying principles of the present invention.

Embodiments of the present invention include various steps, which will be described below. The steps may be embodied in machine-executable instructions. The instructions can be used to cause a general-purpose or special-purpose processor to perform certain steps. Alternatively, these steps may be performed by specific hardware components that contain hardwired logic for performing the steps, or by any combination of programmed computer components and custom hardware components.

Elements of the present invention may be provided as a machine-readable medium for storing the machine-executable instructions. The machine-readable medium may include, but is not limited to, floppy diskettes, optical disks, CD-ROMs, and magneto-optical disks, ROMs, RAMs, EPROMs, EEPROMs, magnet or optical cards, propagation media or other type of media/machine-readable medium suitable for storing electronic instructions. For example, the present invention may be downloaded as a computer program which may be transferred from a remote computer (e.g., a server) to a requesting computer (e.g., a client) by way of data signals embodied in a carrier wave or other propagation medium via a communication link (e.g., a modem or network connection).

**AN EXEMPLARY NETWORK ARCHITECTURE**

Elements of the present invention may be included within a client-server based system 100 such as that illustrated in Figure 1. According to the embodiment depicted in Figure 1, one or more electronic ticketing servers 110 communicate to a plurality of clients 130-133 and ticketing access control units 160-161. The clients 130-135 and access control units 160-161 transmit and receive data from the electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 over a variety of communication channels including (but not limited to) a local area network 140 and/or a larger network 125 (e.g., the Internet). Alternative communication channels such as wireless communication via satellite broadcast (not shown) are also contemplated within the scope of the present invention.

Electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 include one or more databases for storing various types of ticketing data. This may include, for example, specific client data.
(e.g., client account information and client preferences) and/or more general data. The database on electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 in one embodiment runs an instance of a Relational Database Management System (RDBMS), such as Microsoft™ SQL-Server, Oracle™ or the like.

A user/client (e.g., the ticket purchaser) interacts with and receives feedback from electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 using a variety of communication devices and/or communication protocols. According to one embodiment, a user connects to electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 via client software which may include a browser application such as Netscape Navigator™ or Microsoft Internet Explorer™ on the user’s personal computer which communicates to electronic ticketing servers 110, 111 via the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (hereinafter “HTTP”). In other embodiments included within the scope of the invention, clients may communicate with electronic ticketing servers 110 via cellular phones and pagers (e.g., in which the necessary transaction software is embedded in a microchip), handheld computing devices (e.g., personal digital assistants), and/or touch-tone telephones.

AN EXEMPLARY COMPUTER ARCHITECTURE

Having briefly described an exemplary network architecture which employs various elements of the present invention, a computer system 200 representing exemplary clients 130-133, servers 110, 111, and access control units 160, 161 for implementing elements of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figure 2.

One embodiment of computer system 200 comprises a system bus 220 for communicating information, and a processor 210 coupled to bus 220 for processing information. Computer system 200 further comprises a random access memory (RAM) or other dynamic storage device 225 (referred to herein as main memory), coupled to bus 220 for storing information and instructions to be executed by processor 210. Main memory 225 also may be used for storing temporary variables or other intermediate information during execution of instructions by processor 210. Computer system 200 also may include a read only memory (ROM) and/or other static storage device 226.
coupled to bus 220 for storing static information and instructions used by processor 210.

A data storage device 227 such as a magnetic disk or optical disc and its corresponding drive may also be coupled to computer system 200 for storing information and instructions. The computer system 200 can also be coupled to a second I/O bus 250 via an I/O interface 230. A plurality of I/O devices may be coupled to I/O bus 250, including a display device 243, an input device (e.g., an alphanumeric input device 242 and/or a cursor control device 241).

The communication device 240 is used for accessing other computers (servers or clients) via a network 125, 140. The communication device 240 may comprise a modem, a network interface card, or other well known interface device, such as those used for coupling to Ethernet, token ring, or other types of networks.

**ONE EMBODIMENT OF THE SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ELECTRONIC TICKETING**

As used herein “client” or “user” refers to a ticket-purchaser and “customer” refers to a subscriber of the electronic ticketing system and method described herein. In one embodiment of the system and method, the ticketing servers 110, 111; access control units 160, 161; and/or ticket scanners 170, 171 are used to provide an entrance solution which replaces a paper ticket with a device that acts as an “entrance pass” to various types of entertainment events. This device may be a magnetic-strip card but various other devices could be used without departing from the underlying principles of the invention. For example, the device could be a smart card, a wireless phone, Java Jewelry™, digital DNA™, an existing card (e.g., credit card, student id, driver’s license . . . etc) handheld device, fingerprint, retinal scan or any other product or feature capable of linking an individual to a unique identification code (e.g., a primary key residing in the database on the ticketing servers 110, 111).

Users may initially be required to register by logging in to one of the ticketing servers 110, 111. If the user owns a personal computer (e.g., represented by clients 130-133), in one embodiment of the invention, he/she may simply direct a web browser to a registration page (e.g., www.justarrive.com/login/login.html) where he/she will
enter a user name, password, e-mail address and payment information such as a credit card number. Once the user is registered, he/she will be assigned a unique user identification number and a user entrance pass (e.g., a magnetic-strip card). All of the user's purchase information and other preferences will be stored in a database on ticketing servers 110, 111. One embodiment of the system includes an Interactive Voice Response ("IVR") system which allows users to login and access the database on ticketing servers 110, 111 using a standard telephone keypad.

Subsequently, to purchase entrance rights to a particular event, the user may simply login and pay using his/her credit card information. The purchase information is then transmitted from one of the ticketing servers (e.g., 110) to a relevant access control unit (e.g., 160). For example, if the user purchases rights to see a movie at a particular venue, ticketing server 110 will transmit this information to an access control unit 160 physically located at the venue. When the user arrives, his/her entrance pass will be read by a scanner 170 and this information will be compared with user purchase information stored on the access control unit 160. If the purchase information has been updated by the ticketing servers 110, 111, the user will be granted access. If, however, the access control unit 160 has not yet been updated (i.e., and the user is not listed as a "yes" for entrance), then, in one embodiment of the system, the access control unit 160 will automatically connect to the ticketing servers 110, 111 to retrieve the user's purchase information. This embodiment allows users to purchase entrance rights only a few minutes before an event (e.g., by logging in with a cellular phone) and ensures that the purchase information will be available (i.e. either directly available or accessible via download) at the venue when the user arrives.

The benefits of the foregoing system are clear. Customers subscribing to the system (e.g., movie theaters, sports franchises . . . etc) benefit from the technology by tracking users' attendance to various types of events, thereby learning more about the preferences of each of their customers. By providing cross-event, cross-venue, or cross-product tracking and analysis the system allows customers to facilitate new deals or services for their current users, and/or to attract new users.

In one embodiment, software-based plug-ins executed on ticketing servers 110, 111 are uniquely tailored to the needs of each customer subscribing to the system.
Accordingly, movie theaters may be provided with different software plug-ins than college sports organizations based on the different types of user information and functionality sought by these customers. Plug-ins provide many of the ticketing system features described herein. Several specific implementations of the foregoing system architecture will now be described.

**Merit-Based Ticketing**

Merit-based ticketing uses the concept of “points” (or other numerical indicators) to create entrance-based benefits for customers. Earned points are stored on the ticketing database on servers 110, 111 and are associated in the database with the user’s identification information. Depending on the particular implementation, a user may earn points based on different criteria, including, for example, the event itself (e.g., the number of times a user watches a particular team), the venue for the event (e.g., all events at Madison Square Garden) and/or the geography in which the event occurs (e.g., all events in the city of Palo Alto), or any combination thereof. Moreover, points can be earned by attending events either in the same season, or across several seasons. This type of merit-based, cross-event functionality was not possible using traditional ticketing systems because there was no mechanism in place for tracking each individual user purchasing the tickets.

The per-event (or per-group event) number of points to which a user is entitled may also be based on a variety of factors. For example, a sports franchise or a college team may grant few, if any, award points for the “big” (e.g., popular/important) games during the season (e.g., homecoming, playoff games . . . etc). By contrast, these organizations may award a substantial number of points for pre-season games or other regular season games with traditionally low attendance rates.

Similarly, movie theaters may use the system to grant users more award points for viewing a movie during a weekday or specific times during a day when attendance is low (e.g., the matinee). The same theaters may choose to award few award points for blockbuster hits, even during these same days/times. Thus, as previously stated, the present system is easily configurable to meet the particular needs of each customer.
based on the plug-ins selected for that customer and the manner in which the plug-ins are configured.

The benefit itself can take various forms. For example, in the case of the “big” games for which limited seats are available, the benefit may amount to a guaranteed seat. In this embodiment of the system, users who have accumulated a sufficient number of points for a guaranteed seat may be e-mailed a confirmation several days before the event (i.e., so that they don’t need to risk an unnecessary trip to the event location). These users may either purchase their guaranteed ticket online or, alternatively, may be given priority over other users to buy a ticket at the event location on the day of the event (or they may transfer it to another user as described below). This may be accomplished via a “guaranteed seat” entrance on the day of the event. Only users with guaranteed seats to the event will be permitted through this entrance until some period of time before the event (e.g., 30 minutes), at which time, other users will be admitted (e.g., on a first-come basis or based on their accumulated points).

Additional benefits within the scope of the present invention include a shorter wait in line than the average public, a better seat at the event, or the right to buy a ticket to a future event (e.g., a playoff ticket).

One additional embodiment of the system allows users to trade or auction earned benefits or points online. For example, as illustrated in Figure 3, if User X (client 132) has sufficient points for a guaranteed seat but will not be able to make the game, he can login to his account and transfer a portion of his points and/or his guaranteed seat (depending on the embodiment) to User Y (client 133). He may identify User Y by his account number or his user ID. Once User Y’s account has been updated accordingly, he will receive an e-mail (or alternatively, he can login and check his account) indicating that he now has a guaranteed seat. As previously described, on the day of the game, an access control unit 160 located at the event will be updated (either in real-time, via a batch update) to include User Y as one of the individuals with a guaranteed seat.

Loyalty Programs
In addition to the event benefits which a user can earn through points (described above), users may also earn points or other types of rewards through loyalty programs. For example, customers subscribing to the system may allow users to accrue points or may grant event benefits described above for related activities such as donations, volunteer work, or support of the team through going to games at other venues away from the home stadium. The rewards can be the same as the event benefits offered in the merit system, or can take other forms such as gift-certificate to local businesses, online store credits where points can be exchanged and used for currency, or special deals from event sponsors. This feature provides customers subscribing to the system with an extended channel for satisfying users, extending sales, and managing customer relations.

**Season Ticketing**

One embodiment of the system and method substantially improves on currently available season ticket techniques by utilizing a fluid, online point marketplace where entrance rights, seat upgrades, rewards and/or points can be easily shared and/or traded.

Season ticket sharing is particularly simplified under the current system. For example, a group of families or individuals may purchase one set (e.g., four seats) of season baseball tickets to be shared among all group members. At the beginning of the season, each of the families/individuals are assigned games which they have indicated a desire to attend. Once the season begins, however, certain families/individuals will realize that they will not be able to/want to attend a certain game for which they are assigned entrance rights. Under the present system, these families/individuals can login to ticketing server 110 and trade, sell or give away entrance rights for that day to one of the other families/individuals.

This type of transaction is illustrated in Figure 4 where Family 1 (or a member of Family 1 having authority over the entire family account) logs in to the ticketing server 110 and transfers each of it’s guaranteed seats for a particular day to Family 2. If the transfer is part of an exchange (i.e., if Family 2 is expected to transfer seats for a different event to Family 1 in return) one embodiment of the system allows Family 1 to
condition their transfer on the subsequent transfer by Family 2. In this way, Family 1 is protected from Family 2 not keeping its side of the transfer bargain.

This embodiment of the system is also particularly useful for businesses which purchase season tickets to be used by its clients and/or employees. If a client/employee is not able to pick up a physical ID card, one embodiment of the system allows a member of the business to login to the ticketing server 110 and transfer the entrance rights to an actual ticket for one-time use to be picked up at Will Call (i.e., by someone with proper identification).

It should be noted that the families/members purchasing season tickets as a group may not even know each other at the beginning of the season. The organization maintaining the ticketing server 110 operator has the ability to aggregate the tickets based on demand. Thus, if three separate families/individuals indicate a desire to purchase a ticket for 1/3 of a season, the operator of the ticketing server 110 can combine each of these demands and apportion an entire set of season tickets between the three families.

In another embodiment of the system, a preset number of games and/or points (e.g., an entire season’s worth) may be allocated between any given number of ID cards (or other ID devices). Under this embodiment, any one of the ID cards can be used to obtain entrance to an event on any given day, until all of the seats corresponding to the set of cards have been filled. With this system, members of the same family or a close group of friends can simply coordinate with one another before the game without logging in and transferring entrance rights on the ticketing server.

Any individual or group of individuals purchasing season entry rights may also be granted a number of guest identification cards. These guest cards can then be distributed to friends, co-workers or clients for entry to a particular event or group of events.

When used in combination with the merit based system previously discussed, season ticket holders may be awarded benefits based on points they acquire for attending games (although they already own season tickets, this will still encourage
them to support the team and the concessions stands). For example, when a better seat becomes available, those users with the highest number of awards points will be given the first opportunity to upgrade. Moreover, it should be noted that any of the benefits discussed above may be applied to the season ticket holder feature.

One embodiment of the system allows individuals to give away entrance rights to their favorite charity or sell the entrance rights for the charity’s benefit (e.g., the individual sells the entrance rights to the highest bidder and donates the proceeds to charity). To encourage this type of transaction, the ticketing server 110 operator or the customer subscribing to the ticketing service may credit a substantial number of reward points to the user’s account when the user donates tickets in this manner.

Additional benefits realized by the season ticket system include the ability of multiple events to cross-promote their season ticket subscription and the ability to allow individuals to pay for season ticket in increments (e.g., on a monthly basis) using the credit card information already stored on the ticketing server(s) 110, 111.

**Unsold Seats Marketplace**

Once a variety of different customer have subscribed to the ticketing system and method described herein (e.g., movie theaters, entertainment companies, sports franchises, concerts venues... etc), a significant base of ticket purchasers will develop, providing a new channel for direct marketing of unsold seats. For example, based on a certain user’s profile (which may be compiled via marketing questions answered during registration and/or his ticket purchase history) it may be determined (e.g., by statistical marketing analysis software running on the ticketing server) that he would be willing to attend a matinee on a Tuesday if the price were low enough. Accordingly, he – and other users with similar profiles – would subsequently be e-mailed an offer for a low price ticket to a movie on this particular time/day (presumably a time/day when attendance is low). Thus, the new system set forth herein, establishes a new business model for the entertainment industry that eradicates fixed-price seats and allows for dynamic pricing of seating, distribution of unsold seats, and direct marketing to users. It also creates a previously non-existent marketplace of a community of people who have the card (device) and attend various types of events. The end result is better
values for consumers and gained revenue from the sale of peripheral items for venues such as concessions and parking.

One Specific Example of the System and Method for Electronic Ticketing

One particular embodiment of the merit-based ticketing system will now be described using a Stanford Men’s basketball team season as an example. It should be noted, however, that the following description and associated figures are for the purpose of explanation only and, as such, the specific details set forth should not be read to limit the scope of the invention.

Registration

Instead of allocating tickets based on year in school or a line (which inherently favors large groups and dorms), an embodiment of the merit-based system described above was developed that prioritizes solely based on individual students’ “diehardness.” Students register for men’s basketball passes and a “6th-Man Club” by going to www.justarrive.com/stanford (i.e., a web page on one of the ticketing servers 110, 111). No limits are established on the number of students who can register.

From this page they will choose their username, enter their email address, and provide payment information. At the first game of the season, fans pick up their entrance pass and a 6th-Man Club shirt (i.e., if they have selected this package option during the initial registration process). The 6th-Man Club will also hold a barbecue that night, where members can enjoy food, hear the coach talk about the season, and watch highlights from past seasons. If students miss the scrimmage, an alternative location and date is provided for fans to pick up their cards.

Before each game, fans will receive an email filled with content including, for example, scouting reports of the opposing team, the latest poll results, spirit info, and the keys to victory. All of this content will be available and expanded on the ticketing server 110 Web site throughout the season.

One hour before tip-off, fans can enter Maples Pavilion (the event location) by simply swiping their entrance pass at the student entrance. Admission to the first game
in this embodiment of the system is restricted to the first 1200 fans and is determined on a first come, first serve basis. Since most games will likely not attract more than 1200 fans, and since some fans will stay home to study, most games should not reach capacity. This is not true for popular games, however, which are explained below.

"Regular" Games
For each "regular" game that a fan attends, he or she will earn 10 points. As will be explained below, points are used to determine entry to the more popular games. This solution allows for a greater base of potential fans, since there are always fans who cannot attend games. Now their tickets are not wasted. The entrance pass fits in a wallet and can be easily replaced if lost (compared to old paper tickets). Moreover, the card swiping solution is faster and more efficient than waiting for the paper ticket to be punched.

Obviously, certain games will be in higher demand (for example the Connecticut game of last season). For these "priority games," between 50 and 80 percent of the seats will be guaranteed. Fans will earn "guaranteed entrance" based on the Fanaddict points that they earn by attending the other "regular" games.

"Priority" Games
Prior to each "priority game," the Stanford Department of Athletics will set a minimum point level necessary for earning a guarantee. Each time a fan swipes their card at a regular game, their account is credited with 10 points. Therefore, by attending games, fans are rewarded with guaranteed entrance to the more popular ones.

The remainder of the unguaranteed seats will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Therefore, if a student still really wants to attend a game, but has not earned a guarantee, he or she can still get in from the first come, first serve allotment. Alternatively, he or she can receive a guarantee from another student via a guarantee exchange online. For priority games, there will be separate lines set up outside of the student entrance to Maples Pavilion: one for students with a "guarantee" and one for first come, first serve.
The other major difference between priority games and regular games is that there are no points awarded for priority games. Before each priority game, a personalized email will inform each fan of his or her point level, guarantee status, and the number of first come, first serve seats available. A list of “priority” games is established at the beginning of the season and is subject to change throughout the season.

In sum, dedicated fans are rewarded for their support, everyone still has a chance to see the game, and the ticketing system informs all fans about their status for priority games through personalized email and the ticketing Web site. In addition, the fan base is expanded to a larger, more inclusive group of fans. Games also attract more fans because there is an incentive to attend.

Payment

In past years, students could only purchase season passes. By contrast, the new ticketing system allows fans to “pay as you go” with payment on a per-game basis. With this specially designed pricing structure, the more games fans attend, the cheaper each successive game becomes. The maximum price any student pays (in this particular example) will be $55 – the exact same cost as last year’s season ticket and 6th-Man Club membership.

The following is the current pricing schedule for the men’s basketball season. It should be noted that the “Games” count refers to the number of games the fan has actually attended. The purpose of this declining scale is to reward fans for going to more games.

6th-Man Club Membership = $25; or Regular Membership = $10

+ 

Using “Pay As You Go:”

Games Cost
1-2  $5.00
3-4  $4.00
5-6  $3.00
7-9  $2.00
10-16 free!

During registration, students will have the option to pay either by credit card or by check. If the student chooses the credit card method they will be charged an initial registration fee and then be charged automatically after every two games throughout the season. If the student does not attend a game, no charge will appear.

If the student chooses to pay by check, they will pay the full amount of the season ticket at the beginning of the season and then will be refunded any unused portion at the end of the season.

It should be noted that Regular Membership includes only the entrance pass. 6th-Man Club Membership adds a 6th-Man Shirt, 10 bonus points, and other benefits of the 6th-Man Club (i.e., additional loyalty rewards).

The bottom line is that prices are no more than in previous years and are flexible based on fans’ interest levels, “pay as you go” rewards frequent fans with declining prices for more games, and credit card billing is convenient and safe.

Throughout the foregoing description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details were set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. For example, the embodiment of the invention described with respect to the Stanford basketball team set forth numerous specific prices and other specific details. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the invention may be practiced without some of these specific details. Accordingly, the scope and spirit of the invention should be judged in terms of the claims which follow.
CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A ticketing method comprising:
   creating an account for a user on a ticketing server;
   providing said user with an entrance pass, said entrance pass configured to
   identify said user’s account on said ticketing server; and
   rewarding said user for attending an event by crediting said user’s account by a
   number of points which may subsequently be used by said user to obtain one or more
   benefits.

2. The ticketing method as in claim 1 wherein the number of points credited
   to said user’s account is based on demand for said event.

3. The ticketing method as claimed in claim 2 wherein relatively more points
   are credited to said user’s account for events with relatively greater demand and
   relatively fewer points are credited to said user’s account for events with relatively
   lower demand.

4. The ticketing method as in claim 1 further comprising:
   transferring points from said user’s account to a second user’s account
   responsive to a transfer request.

5. The ticketing method as in claim 1 further comprising:
   reserving said user a guaranteed seat for a particular event when said points
   accumulated in said user’s account reach a threshold value.

6. The ticketing method as in claim 5 further comprising:
   transferring said user’s guaranteed seat to a second user responsive to a transfer
   request.

7. The ticketing method as in claim 1 further comprising:
upgrading said user's seat for a particular event when said points accumulated in said user's account reach a threshold value.

8. The ticketing method as in claim 1 further comprising:
reducing the price for a particular event when said points accumulated in said user's account reach a threshold value.

9. The ticketing method as in claim 1 further comprising:
transmitting to said user a notification of a reduced price for seats at a specified event based on a threshold number of unsold seats for said specified event. 

10. An electronic ticketing method comprising:
establishing entries for a group of N users in a database;
reserving a group of M seats for said N users for a series of events over a period of time;
guaranteeing a seat for M of said N users for one of said events by associating each of said M seats with M of said N users in said database; and
identifying said M users associated with said M seats for said event using entrance passes containing identification information identifying said M users in said database.

11. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 10 further comprising:
transferring a guaranteed seat in said database from one of said M users to any other user, responsive to a transfer request.

12. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 9 wherein M is less than N and said N users purchase said M seats as a group for an entire event season.

13. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 9 further comprising:
transmitting to one or more of said N users a notification of a reduced price for seats at a specified event based on a threshold number of unsold seats for said specified event.
14. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 13 wherein said specified event is not one of said series of events.

15. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 14 wherein said series of events are sporting events and said specified event is a non-sporting event.

16. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 10 further comprising: transferring a guaranteed seat in said database from one of said M users to an actual non-electronic ticket.

17. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 16 wherein said actual non-electronic actual ticket is sent to will call to be picked up at said event by a user.

18. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 10 wherein one or more of said N users are granted guest entrance passes containing identification information corresponding to a guest entry in said database.

19. The electronic ticketing method as in claim 18 further comprising: transferring a guaranteed seat in said database from one of said M users to a guest entry.

20. An electronic ticketing system comprising: an entrance pass scanner located at a venue of a particular event and adapted to read user identification information from a user entrance pass; and a ticketing database on a ticketing server comprised of a plurality of user entries, said user entries identified by said identification information an access control unit communicatively coupled to said entrance pass scanner and adapted to receive said identification information from said
### Family 1

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<td>7292895</td>
<td>San Francisco vs Los Angeles July 4, 2000</td>
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</table>

After login to ticketing server:
- Transfer entrance rights, # 8082345 on 7/4/00 → # 7292892
- Transfer entrance rights, # 8082346 on 7/4/00 → # 7292892
- Transfer entrance rights, # 8082347 on 7/4/00 → # 7292892
- Transfer entrance rights, # 8082348 on 7/4/00 → # 7292892

### Family 1

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**FIG. 4**
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
   IPC(7) :G06F 17/60
   US CL :705/5
   According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED
   Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
   U.S. : 705/5, 10, 14

   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)
   EAST (US Patents, JPO, EPO, Derwent), Dialog (Business, Financial and Marketing databases) see attached

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>US 3,622,995 A (DELKS et al) 23 November 1971, Fig. 1, col. 8., lines 13-57.</td>
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<td>US 5,948,040 A (DELMORNE et al) 07 September 1999, see abstract.</td>
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<td>US 5,724,520 A (GOHEEN) 03 March 1999, col. 5, lines 33-65.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>ANONYMOUS. No Tickets Required (In airline industry, ticketless travel, or electronic ticketing, is a trend that is gaining momentum; travel agent groups work to be included). Travel Agent. 08 May 1995. Vol. 275. No. 6. pp 28.</td>
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   □ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.    □ See patent family annex.

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

Date of the actual completion of the international search: 04 JANUARY 2001
Date of mailing of the international search report: 04 APR 2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231
Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer: TARIQ HAFIZ
Telephone No. (703) 305-9643

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