**Title:** TRANSFER OF REWARDS AND OTHER ITEMS BETWEEN WEBSITES

**Abstract:** A first website earns rewards, e.g. points and items, for carrying out activities. Those rewards can be transferred to a second website. For example, a parent's website allows the parent to carry more adult tasks and also earn points. The points can be transferred to the child's website. A center of the universe website allows obtaining rewards for any of these websites. A social networking component operates across multiple websites.
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TRANSFER OF REWARDS AND OTHER ITEMS BETWEEN WEBSITES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Many children's websites exist which host activities that are intended for children's age groups, for example, children in the 3-to 13 year-old range or older. These activities can be carried out by other people of various age groups, but are often tailored towards things that will be found interesting by the specific age group or demographic.

[0002] The assignee of the present application, GANZ, hosts the website webkinz.com. A detailed description of this website is found in copending application no. 11/027,647, filed December 30, 2004, the contents of which are herewith incorporated by reference. In general, this website is intended for children, for example children who are younger than 14, and hence the games and activities on this website would likely be found most interesting by those children.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present application describes websites which have activities intended for different users.

[0004] An embodiment allows interaction between the websites to allow rewards earned on one website, or virtual objects purchased through one website to be transferred in a special way to another website.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] These and other aspects will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0006] Figure 1 shows the websites; and

[0007] Figure 2 shows an exemplary computer connection;

[0008] Figure 3 shows a multiple website communication capability; and
Figure 4 shows a center of the universe embodiment with a universe of websites.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Activities on a first website, such as for example, the Webkinz® website, allow participants to carry out certain activities and obtain "rewards" for the activities. The rewards can be points, virtual money, or virtual items that can be used on the website. It may also be possible to purchase rewards on the website.

For example, the virtual money can be used to buy food which can be used to feed a virtual pet or other virtual character on the website. The virtual money may be usable to buy additional things such as clothing, furniture, room decorations, interactive objects, additional virtual pets, medical care, or other, on the website.

Website participants often take actions to increase their rewards, to buy food for their virtual pets, and to provide fun activities on the website.

The inventors recognized that during certain times when the children were not playing, e.g., during the day when the children are at school or at other times when the children are busy, parents and other relatives could visit the site, and play on the site in order to get rewards for their children. For example, the mother of a six-year-old might have logged on to the website, and carried out some of the activities on the website. This may be done in order to get rewards for her child. If done, the game and/or activities may be uninteresting for the parent(s), but their children appreciate the increased rewards for their virtual pets.

Embodiments disclosed herein describe connections between websites that allow rewards to be earned on one website and transferred to another.

An aspect of the application describes a second website, such as for instance, a "parent website" having different kinds of activities intended for a different group of individuals, but that is linked to the first website. Here, the first website (e.g., webkinz.com) is a website intended for children, for example children between 2 and 13 years old, where rewards are earned, and these rewards can be used by the users on the first website. The second website has activities intended for adults, e.g., parent age or grandparent age. For example, the activities
may include gossip type trivia questions, Wheel of Fortune type problems, brainteasers, or others. The activities may be either age- or gender-specific or both. For instance, such activities can be tailored for interest to a woman of the 30 to 40-year-old age range. Other games may include crossword puzzles and other adult type activities. The website may charge a fee for entry, or may be supported by advertising. The second website may be used not only by parents and grandparents, but also by friends, relatives and the users themselves, or, in essence, by anyone.

[0016] When an activity of a certain type is successfully carried out on the second website, the user (e.g., the parent) or other adult in the child's life (e.g., a teacher) gets certain kinds of points for carrying out this activity on the second website (e.g., parent website). The points can be transferred to the child's account on the child website.

[0017] Figure 1 illustrates a relationship between the sites. 100 shows a child's site, shown here with the child called "child 1". The child's site 100 may include, for example, a virtual pet 106, which is a virtual representation of a plush toy that interacts within a room, chat room, or other activities within an activity center 105. The child may interact with the virtual pet 106 within the activity center 105. The activity center may also include virtual furniture, clothing, equipment, as well as other virtual and animated virtual objects.

[0018] The child's site 100 may also include a list of other activities shown generically as 110. A status bar 115 shows different aspects of the child's operation within the child's site 100.

[0019] The status bar shows the accumulated rewards. The child can accumulate rewards both on the child's site 100 and also on the parent site 150, which can include points received from his/her own activities on the child's site 100 and points transferred from others. The rewards can also include earned and transferred items. The items can include, for example, food to feed to the virtual pet 106, clothing or other items that can be used to dress the virtual pet, or toys or other items that facilitate interaction with the virtual pet 106 within the activity center 105.
[0020] The parent site 150 hosts different activities that are more appropriate for an adult to carry out, such as crossword puzzles and other puzzles, trivia information, information on parent issues and school issues, child health issues, pregnancy issues, first aid and medical issues, and other family issues. The parent site 150 may provide points as a reward for carrying out certain activities. For example, a parent can take a training course about proper child education and receive points for completing the course. The accumulated points or rewards are shown generically as 155, and the activities are shown generically as 160.

[0021] The parent site 150 may allow using or redeeming the points or rewards 155 on the parent site 150, but also includes a transfer function 161. Selection of the transfer function 160 brings up a separate transfer page shown as 165. At 156, the user can select one of multiple different sites, e.g., Webkinz.com, or some other site, here referred to as "new site". There may be a list of sites that can receive this transfer of rewards from the parent site 150.

[0022] Many of the parents may have multiple children, and any or all of these children can be registered in advance on the parent site 150. 170 allows selection of the recipient for the transfer. A list of the existing registered children or the possibility of adding a new child is also provided.

[0023] 171 allows selection of, and entry of, a personalized message to send along with the transfer.

[0024] The transfer screen also includes the ability to decide what specifically will be transferred. A points or virtual cash transfer 176 is possible, where the user enters the number of points they want to transfer into the box 177. An item transfer 178 may bring up a separate window such as 180 which allows buying an item for transfer. This provides a list of the different items that the parents can buy, the number of points it will take to buy it, and allows purchase and transfer of that item to the child.

[0025] When the child has received a transfer, the next time they log in, a pop up transfer notification is displayed. For instance, the notification says "you have received a reward transfer from parent 1" shown as 116. The transfer may say the number of points or may provide further
detail about what the child has received. If a personalized message has been sent, this is displayed as 117.

[0026] In this way, the parent can carry out activities that are more interesting to the parent. The actions, however, may still provide rewards to their child.

[0027] A specific way in which this is carried out may also use a prize pack which can be awarded or purchased at specified intervals. For example, the adult may be able to purchase or subscribe to a monthly "prize pack". The prize pack allows the adult to send some number of gifts, for example 10 gifts, to the children on the site of their choice. The prizes are presented by the parent to the child. For example, the parents may encourage good off-line activities and good behavior in the children. In one example, the parent may tell the children that if they go outside and play for an hour, or brush their teeth all week, or clean their room, then they will get a reward. The parent can choose to send a gift and can include the personalized message shown as 117 with the gift. The next time the child logs onto their account, they receive the gift and the message.

[0028] As described above, the parent may also receive free rewards such as loyalty points for playing on or otherwise using the parent site 150. In addition to playing games, the parent site 150 may provide points for completing surveys, clicking on ads, or other conventional website actions. Using the parent site 150 provides loyalty points for the parents. The points can be exchanged for virtual money or special items.

[0029] In one embodiment, the items that can be purchased at 180 may be exclusive items that can only be received from the parent site 150 and cannot be obtained at all from the child's site 100. In this case, the child's site 100 may display the exclusive items, but may appear grayed or faded out, or have some other indication to demonstrate that the items cannot be obtained from the child's site 100. The child's site 100 may indicate that they can only receive these items by a transfer from the parent site 150. This may provide further motivation for the parent to carry out actions on the parent site 150, since the rewards will be even more special.

[0030] Each of the sites may have their own form of virtual cash, e.g., Webkinz® cash for the Webkinz® site "(KinzCash™)"); but more generically, Sitel cash for a Sitel, and Site2 cash
for a Site2. The embodiment may allow cash from one site to be exchanged for cash from another site, as part of the rewards transfer.

[0031] Another embodiment may allow a user to block rewards from being received. For example, if the recipient does not want to receive a reward or gift from the transferring person, they can click the "block" button 114 when the message pops up indicating that a reward transfer was received. This can add, for example, the transferee to the user's permanent block list. As a result, the user can effectively block the receipt of gifts or rewards from someone that they do not like or do not want to receive gifts from, or the like.

[0032] Another embodiment is illustrated in Figure 3. In this embodiment, a number of different websites allow different activities. Reward presentations can be transferred from any of these websites to any other website, and used on that other website. As in the above embodiments, the rewards can be used to take an action that could not be taken without the reward, e.g., to purchase an item, or change some aspect of a character or other virtual item on the website.

[0033] While the following describes only certain enumerated websites, others can also be included.

[0034] The Webkinz® site 300 is a site for children, similar to the child's site 100 described above. The parent site 305 is similar to the parent site 150, which is also described above as a site that primarily deals with parental issues, and is intended for parents, guardians, and/or grandparents of the children on the Webkinz® site 300.

[0035] The preschool site 310 is a site intended for younger children, such as preschool age, and more generally can be any site intended for preschool age children. The preschool site 310 intends to allow user interaction with virtual pets and other activities without requiring reading as would be required on the Webkinz® site 300. These sites described above can generically be considered as sites intended for preschool and elementary school children, e.g. sites which have activities that are intended for preschool and elementary school age children, and as sites which more specifically allow and facilitate interfacing with virtual pets. Apart from such child-
specific sites, other sites designed for parental age users who have or care for preschool or elementary school children can operate cooperatively with such child-specific sites.

[0036] The competitive matches site 315 hosts activities that allow training and competitive matches such as fighting or dueling among characters hosted on the site. For example, each of the products on the competitive matches site 315 may be a specific product such as a ninja assassin, a ninja runner, or a kung fu expert. Each character can be purchased or otherwise obtained, in a default state, with attributes, skills and talents that are predetermined for that specific character. The attributes skills and talents are described according to a numerical designation, for example a designation between 0 and 10. Each of the skills can also have subsets, which can be described using the same kind of numerical designation.

[0037] For example, the ninja assassin character may have starting attributes with a skill of 3, speed of 1, strength limit of 8, energy limit of 8, and also have some starting talents such as hide in the shadow, and back stab. The ninja assassin can be trained, however, to increase its skill, speed, strength and energy, making it a unique character different than the default. The ninja assassin can also learn additional talents, such as different kinds of moves, either through the training or through acquiring moves by redeeming rewards. However, these skills, attributes and talents can have predetermined limits. The limits can be hard limits, e.g. a specified number that the character cannot train beyond, or soft limits, e.g. where character training becomes much more difficult beyond a soft limit.

[0038] The competitive matches site 315 enables competitions for fighting, where points, bonuses, incentives or other virtual prizes are awarded. Recipients of such rewards can convert and/or apply their rewards earned on the competitive matches site 315 to another site (e.g., another parent's site or a child's site). Other sites described herein may carry out analogous operations for other types of characters, e.g. baseball players, or others. These sites may also allow training and competitions among the trained characters.

[0039] Statistics are maintained on any of these sites, for example the win-loss record of a ninja assassin character may be recorded.
The animal site 320 is a different category of website which enables virtually interacting with animals in different ways, e.g., by collecting, breeding and/or otherwise interacting with animals in at least some of the same way(s) that one interacts with real animals. Figurines or plush toys representing the animals can also be obtained. The figurines can also include registration codes that allow registration of the figurines as described in our application no. 11/027,647 referenced above. Also, as in that application, rewards can be obtained for games, or interactions with the pets or others, and these rewards can be used on either the animal site or on other sites.

One advantage of a rewards transfer in this kind of site (e.g., virtual collection site) is that multiple friends can pool their rewards to buy something that they could not otherwise pay for with their individual rewards, for example, and arrange a sharing agreement.

355 is a school site, which is like the parent site 150, but intended for educators. The educators are presented with different things of interest to professional educators. This also allows the educators to provide rewards to the children in their classes. For example, once a teacher registers on the school site 355, and registers the names of their children, they may be allowed to provide specified kinds of rewards to the children participating on some other sites based on their grades, homework or class behavior.

Any of these sites may allow the rewards earned thereon to be either used on the same site, or to be transferred either as virtual cash, points, or a purchase to another site.

The embodiments disclosed herein may operate over a website, where a client computer shown as 200 receives content over a channel such as the Internet 202 from a server computer 210. The server computer may also send the same or similar content to other clients shown generally as 205. The channel can be any existing channel including wired or wireless channels, and can be the Internet, private network, or other comparable ways of sending information from an information provider to a user.

Figure 4 illustrates a center of the universe embodiment, where a special 'central' website links all the other websites in the universe.
[0046] A number of the websites previously described, including, e.g., the Webkinz®
website 410, preschool site 415, competitive match site 420, animal site 425, and generic
site 430 collectively form a universe 401 of websites. All of these are connected to the center of
the universe site shown as 400.

[0047] Many of the sites in the universe 401 have a few things in common. The sites may
operate to link a real world item or product with a virtual copy of that item. Each of the products
may be limited editions - that is, that limited numbers of the products are produced, after which,
the products can no longer be obtained from the manufacturer. Each site in the universe 401 may
allow the user to further develop the character linked to the product. Each site uses some kind of
currency or reward system that allows users to purchase virtual objects and develop their
characters' characteristics. Also, each of the sites in the universe 401 has a place where the users
can trade or sell their possessions; be they virtual or real possessions. Other websites may also
be added to the universe 401 that do not include some or all of these features.

[0048] Each website in the universe 401 has merits of its own, that make the websites
independently appealing to a target demographic. The center of the universe site 400 therefore
allows interaction with a universe 401 of websites that collectively appeal to virtually everyone.
While only a few sites have been described for this purpose, it should be understood that other
sites of any and all types can be used in the embodiments.

[0049] The center of the universe site 400 therefore does not intend to be applicable to one
demographic, but rather intends to be a hybrid site that provides a little bit of everything, making
it appealing to people of all demographics and ages. Any type of site on the Internet can be used
as the center of the universe site 400.

[0050] However, the center of the universe site 400 is linked with the other universe 401
sites, and provides rewards, called center of the universe dollars, that can be used on any of the
universe 401 sites. In addition, the center of the universe site 400 provides cross site advertising.

[0051] The center of the universe dollars can be used in various ways. They can be
exchanged for the currency of choice on any other site in the universe 401. For example, these
other sites may each use their own specific form of virtual cash, e.g., Sitel cash. The center of
the universe dollars may be convertible into Sitel cash. Alternatively, the center of the universe dollars can be universal virtual cash that can be used directly on any of those sites.

[0052] Center of the universe dollars can also be used to purchase items directly on the center of the universe site 400. The items on the center of the universe site 400 are exclusive items that can be used on other sites, but are exclusive in the sense that they cannot be purchased on the other sites themselves. Therefore the user can send these items to either themselves or to someone else on a different site by addressing the recipient by username or through a feature code that can be emailed to the user and/or then emailed to the intended final recipient.

[0053] The center of the universe site 400 may be financed through advertising or membership fees, but may also allow users to use real money to purchase items on the center of the universe site 400 for those users who do not want to invest the time to earn the center of the universe dollars. This can form another source of revenue. Moreover, this site may appeal to anyone who knows anybody else who enjoys any of the other universe 401 sites. Anyone can go to the center of the universe site 400, and buy special limited edition gifts; either real or virtual, for themselves or for someone else, it forms a cross-demographic draw. Moreover, since the intent of the universe 401 is to appeal to literally every different possible demographic and interest, presumably everyone will know someone who is interested in one of the universe 401 sites. Therefore, for example, a gift for any age person can be obtained on the center of the universe site 400.

[0054] Instead of needing to visit multiple different sites or multiple different stores to find multiple different gifts, this could facilitate purchasing gifts for a myriad of different people all at the same place.

[0055] The center of the universe dollars, however, can alternatively be obtained by engaging in activities on the center of the universe site. For example, center of the universe dollars can be obtained by reading, obtaining information, or simply visiting the site, for example. Other activities on the site can also be used for obtaining such rewards.
[0056] The transfers that can be carried out in Figures 3 and 4 may also use the blocking technique described with reference to Figure 1, so that a user can block specified people from sending them rewards and/or gifts.

[0057] Another embodiment illustrated in Figure 5 uses a social networking feature along with the center of the universe architecture of previous embodiments. This embodiment allows interaction between the different sites in order to carry out social networking functions between the multiple sites. The social networking functions according to the present embodiment include certain new functions for social networking that have not been available from any previous social networking systems. More generally, however, the social networking according to the present embodiment may include any kind of function where one user can show and/or discuss and/or trade and/or otherwise interact with their items that are stored or otherwise cataloged on a website. In the present embodiment, the items and discussions, however, can be from any of the sites within the universe of websites. In one embodiment, the universe of sites each allow playing a game using the characters on the website, those characters being either toys, or figures or other participants in an online based game.

[0058] According to this embodiment, each of a plurality of sites includes a social networking component. This social networking component is unlike other social networking components, since it includes not only information about the user itself, but also information about the characters that the user has acquired and/or trained on any of the universe of sites.

[0059] Figure 5 shows the fighting site 510 having a social networking part 511 which allows any user to include their individualized character 512, here shown as character x, as part of the social networking. The user can also include personalized information about themselves, such as their interests, picture, age, or other types of information that might be found on MySpace® or Facebook® type websites. In addition, however, each of the sites in the universe of sites has its own version of a social network that is specific to the specific site.

[0060] The social networking component may include a purchase component shown as 514 which may offer characters for sale or trade on either one or multiple different websites. The component 514 may allow setting a specific price for the character. Alternatively, or in addition, the component may include an amount that will be necessary to trade the character. The
component 514 may simply allow listing the character in a way that allows making an offer, or may be more sophisticated. In an embodiment, the center of the universe site may host all of the trades. The component 514 may also provide additional information allowing it to become a one-stop process of buying or trading items for virtual cash. An initial value for the item to be sold or traded may be set, for example by a user, as an asking price. A value determination estimator may provide users with data from which they can determine a market value of the item. The value can be based on previous sales or trades, e.g., last five trades of similar items, averages over time for trades, value when new, number of similar items that are currently for sale, or, for a rare item, the last time that a similar item was sold and information about that sale, such as the price and/or condition of the item.

[0061] The purchase component may allow the items to be purchased in center of the universe dollars, for example, after which, the seller receives the payment in center of the universe dollars. Once purchased, a secure code is provided for the transfer. The code allows the new owner to register their new item on the appropriate website. The previous registration code, used by the previous owner to register the item, is also cancelled.

[0062] Figure 5 shows a universe of websites, including a virtual fighting site 510, the Webkinz® site 520 (the details of which are described, for example, in application number 11/027647, filed December 30, 2004, the contents of which are herewith incorporated by reference herein), and the animals site 530, which are all connected to the center of the universe site 500. Other sites, including any of the other sites described in this application, may also be added to this universe. Each site may have its own specific social networking function that is specific to the characteristics of the site.

[0063] Each of the individual sites making up the universe may also transfer its information to the center of the universe site. For example, the fight site 510 may allow a social networking function which allows displaying one or more of the user's trained characters, such as 511, in the social networking area 512. These trained characters are, in general, unique, based on the training they have received. In addition, the character, and all the contents of the social networking, can also be transferred to and displayed on, the center of the universe site 500. The transferred social networking is shown on the Center of the Universe site as 505.
Other sites may similarly have social networking components that include display of collected characters from their websites. The Webkinz® site 520 allows displaying the user's collection of different Webkinz® characters 521, 522, and transferring those displays to the center of the universe site 500. The animals site 530 displays the animal(s) and transfers the display of those animals to the center of the universe site.

The center of the universe site then allows any user to choose any or all of these characters as well as their specific user information to present their data to all other viewers on the network. That is, the social networking carried out by the center of the universe site 500 can include any or all of the content from any or all of the sites that are connected thereto.

In any of these sites, the character can be featured or displayed in a number of different ways. For example, this may allow a user to show off their character(s) on the site itself, or on the center of the universe site, or via the center of the universe site to any of the other sites or on all of the sites. The character such as 511 may be shown as a screenshot of the character itself, e.g., as an image or an animation. The character can also be customized, for example, to show different clothes, colors, poses or views as customized. Alternatively, the character can be identified via a link to the originating site. A database of different characters can alternatively be used and displayed.

In sites such as the Webkinz® site 520, there may be a number of items, shown in figure 5 as 521, 522. Some subset of those items may be a flagged as part of the user's personal collection. The items shown in the center of the universe site's version of the social networking may be dynamically updated. For example, when the user obtains a new Webkinz® character, it may be automatically added to the viewed collection both on the Webkinz® site, and also on the Center of the Universe site 500. Similarly, as a Fighting character such as 511 is trained, it may take on a new look, and that new look may be added to the local site and center of the universe sites.

The characters viewed may be images, and the image may be updated each time something in one of the other sites changes, such as the character.
The items which are sent and displayed may not be limited to characters but may be whole rooms. For example, the Webkinz® site may have personal rooms with furniture and the like and with items in the room. For example, 526 illustrates a room which has various pieces of furniture 523 as well as an item 524. The entire room 526 may be sent to the center of the universe site and viewed thereon as part of the social networking.

The above has described how social networking may be carried out using a center of the universe site. Also, as in both previous embodiments, interacting with the website in any way may result in rewards being provided to the user. For example, carrying out the social networking may provide center of the universe dollars to the user of the social networking.

The trades and other operations may be carried out using any of a number of different currencies. The center of the universe site may also carry out currency exchanges. The center of the universe dollars may be usable on any of the sites, as described above. As an alternative, however, the center of the universe site 500 may provide currency exchange 502 between sites. For example, the Webkinz® site may use only a currency called KinzCash™. The center of the universe site may allow providing a conversion between center of the universe dollars and the KinzCash™. The center of the universe site may also provide a universal exchange that allows exchanging between KinzCash™ and some other cash available and/or usable on one of the other sites in the universe.

According to these features, the center of the universe site may allow trading items and or selling items for different currency, and currency conversion. The virtual currency can also be stored in a virtual "bank account".

The general structure and techniques, and more specific embodiments which can be used to effect different ways of carrying out the more general goals are described herein.

Although only a few embodiments have been disclosed in detail above, other embodiments are possible and the inventors intend these to be encompassed within this specification. The specification describes specific examples to accomplish a more general goal that may be accomplished in another way. This disclosure is intended to be exemplary, and the claims are intended to cover any modification or alternative which might be predictable to a
person having ordinary skill in the art. For example, other sites and rewards can be used. The above describes a manual action to transfer the points and rewards, but alternatively, the rewards can be automatically transferred.

[0075] Also, the inventors intend that only those claims which use the words "means for" are intended to be interpreted under 35 USC 112, sixth paragraph. Moreover, no limitations from the specification are intended to be read into any claims, unless those limitations are expressly included in the claims.

[0076] The computers described herein may be any kind of computer, either general purpose, or some specific purpose computer such as a workstation, running any program.

[0077] The programs may be resident on a storage medium, e.g., magnetic or optical, e.g. the computer hard drive, a removable disk or other removable medium. The programs may also be run over a network, for example, with a server or other machine sending signals to the local machine, which allows the local machine to carry out the operations described herein.
CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method, comprising:

   allowing carrying out of at least one activity on a first website, and based on said at least one activity, providing at least one first reward that is stored on the first website, and wherein said at least one first reward can be used on the first website to take an action on said first website that could not be taken without said at least one first reward;

   allowing carrying out of another activity on a second website which is separate from the first website, and based on said another activity, providing at least one second reward stored on the second website; and

   allowing transfer of said at least one second reward from the second website to the first website as a transferred reward, and allowing the transferred reward to be used on the first website to take said action.

2. A method as in claim 1, wherein said allowing transfer comprises allowing a user to transfer numerical points from the second website to the first website.

3. A method as in claim 1, wherein said allowing transfer comprises allowing transfer of items from the second website to the first website.

4. A method as in claim 3, wherein said items that are transferred from the second website to the first website are exclusive items that are available on the second website and are not available on the first website.

5. A method as in claim 1, wherein said at least one activity on said first website comprises virtual care of a virtual character.

6. A method as in claim 5, wherein said another activity on said second website comprises completing a survey.
7. A method as in claim 1, wherein said allowing transfer comprises providing a screen which indicates which of a plurality of different transferees should receive said transferred rewards.

8. A method as in claim 1, further comprising, responsive to said allowing transfer, providing a message on the first website indicating that a transfer has been received and indicating information about a person who made the transfer.

9. A method as in claim 8, further comprising allowing sending a personalized message from the second website to the first website associated with said transfer, and wherein said providing said message on the first website includes said personalized message.

10. A method as in claim 1, wherein said allowing transfer comprises providing a prize pack that allows a specified number of transfers in a specified amount of time.

11. A method as in claim 1, wherein said allowing transfer comprises allowing selection of one of a plurality of websites to which to make the transfer.

12. A method, comprising:

   storing an indicator that indicates at least a plurality of rewards on a first website;

   allowing obtaining more rewards on said first website, and, responsive to said obtaining more rewards on said first website, changing said indicator;

   allowing obtaining of rewards on a second website separate from the first website;

   allowing transferring of at least one of the rewards from the second website to the first website as a transferred reward, by taking a first action on the second website which indicates a transfer of the at least one of the rewards, providing information which indicates a first user to receive the rewards on the first website, providing information about the first website, and indicating a specific one of said rewards to be transferred;

   on said first website, responsive to said allowing transfer, showing information about the transferred reward which has been transferred, and displaying a message indicating that the
transferred reward has been transferred, said message indicating an identity of a second user who transferred the transferred reward from the second website; and

on said first website, allowing using at least a part of said transferred reward to take a second action on the first website, which second action could not be taken without said at least a part of said transferred reward.

13. A method as in claim 12, wherein said transferred reward is a different reward than any of a plurality of available rewards that are available on the first website.

14. A method as in claim 12, further comprising allowing the second user to enter a personalized message on said second website, which appears as part of said message when the specific one of said rewards is transferred.

15. A method as in claim 12, further comprising, on the second website, defining a prize pack which provides a specified number of said rewards within a specified time.

16. A method as in claim 12, wherein said first website has activities intended for children, and said second website has activities intended for adults.

17. A method as in claim 12, wherein said displaying the message comprises detecting that the first user receiving the transferred reward is not logged in, and displaying the message the next time the first user receiving the transferred reward logs in.

18. A method as in claim 12, wherein said first website is a website for children, and said second website is a website for adults.

19. A method as in claim 12, wherein at least one of said websites is a competitive match website, that allows matches between different characters that have been collected and trained, and wherein training of said characters allows increasing an ability to participate in said matches.

20. A method as in claim 12, wherein at least one of said first website and said second website is a website for teaching professionals that allows said teaching professionals to provide rewards to their students.
21. A method, comprising:

- on a first website, allowing actions to be taken which earn rewards which can be used, or stored as part of said actions on said first website;

- displaying, as part of said first website, at least one indication of a number of said rewards which have been stored;

- allowing said first website to receive rewards from a second website, which said rewards from the second website are transferred from said second website to said first website;

- responsive to receiving said rewards from said second website, increasing an indication of the number of said rewards which have been stored and providing a message to a user of the first website indicating that rewards have been transferred; and

- allowing using the rewards that were transferred as part of activities on said first website, whereby either said rewards that are earned or said rewards that are transferred can be used to take an action that could not be taken without said rewards.

22. A method as in claim 21, wherein said rewards include points and items, wherein said items can be purchased with said points on said first website, and wherein at least one of the rewards includes an item which cannot be purchased with said points on said first website.

23. A method as in claim 21, wherein at least one of said websites allows competitions between different characters that have been collected and trained.

24. A method, comprising:

- carrying out a first action on a first website, wherein said first action is of a first specified type;

- earning at least one first reward for carrying out said first action, said earning being responsive to said carrying out the first action;
allowing accumulating of said at least one first reward on the first website, and allowing
using said at least one first reward on the first website;

carrying out a second action on a second website, where the second action is a second
specified type of action that is different from said first specified type;

earning at least one second reward for carrying out said second action on said second
website, responsive to carrying out said second action;

allowing accumulating of said at least one second reward on the second website and
allowing using said at least one second reward on the second website;

on a third website, purchasing at least one gift, and transferring said at least one gift from
said third website to a transferred website that can be either of said first or second websites; and

allowing the transferred gift to be used on the transferred website for at least one purpose
that is the same as said using.

25. A method as in claim 24, wherein the first website is a website having first content that is
intended for children, and the second website is a website having second content that is intended
for adults.

26. A method as in claim 24, wherein said transferred gift includes an item which can be
used on at least one of said first or second website.

27. A method as in claim 24, wherein said item is an exclusive item that cannot be obtained
on either said first or second website.

28. A method as in claim 24, wherein said gift includes virtual currency that can be used on
at least one of said first or second website.

29. A method as in claim 24, wherein said gift includes universal virtual currency that can be
used on both of said first or second websites.

30. A method as in claim 24, wherein at least one of said first, second, and third websites is
for training characters and carrying out competitions between trained characters.
31. A method as in claim 24, wherein at least one of said first, second and third websites is a website for carrying out actions to virtually maintain virtual representations of specified animals.

32. A method, comprising:

   taking an action on a first website that results in obtaining a first reward and a second reward on said first website; and

   first converting said first reward to obtain a converted first reward to be used on a second website, and using said converted first reward on said second website;

   second converting said second reward to obtain a converted second reward to be used on a third website, and using said converted second reward on said third website, where said second converting is a different operation than said first converting;

   carrying out a first action on said second website; and

   carrying out a different second action on said third website,

   wherein said first action cannot be carried out on said third website, and said second action cannot be carried out on said second website.

33. A method as in claim 32, wherein said taking said action comprises carrying out said action that provides a free reward.

34. A method as in claim 32, wherein said taking said action comprises purchasing a gift for another person.

35. A method as in claim 32, wherein said at least one of said first converting or said second converting comprises entering a username to receive said converted first reward or said converted second reward.

36. A method as in claim 32, wherein at least one of the converted first reward and the converted second reward is converted into virtual cash.
37. A method as in claim 32, wherein the rewards are items that can only be obtained on said first website and cannot be obtained on the second or third websites, and wherein said first and second converting comprise changing an ownership of said items to a new owner on one of said second and third websites.

38. A method as in claim 32, wherein each of said second and third websites operate to link a real world item with a virtual copy of said item, wherein the items are related to characters and the characters have attributes that can be changed.

39. A method, comprising:

   on a first website, allowing a first user to exchange virtual cash for plural different items; and

   on a second website, allowing a second user to obtain exclusive items for the first user on the first website, wherein said exclusive items are not available on said first website but can be used on said first website.

40. A method as in claim 39, further comprising allowing the first user to block said exclusive items from being sent by the second user.

41. A method as in claim 40, wherein said allowing the first user to block said exclusive items comprises automatically adding information indicative of the second user to a block list associated with the first user.

42. A method, comprising:

   on a first website, allowing users of the first website to accumulate first virtual cash that is in a first format associated with the first website, and allowing said users to use said first virtual cash to purchase at least one virtual item on the first website;

   on a second website, allowing users of the second website to accumulate second virtual cash that is in a second format associated with the second website, wherein said second format is
different format than said first format of virtual cash, and allowing said users of the second
website to use said second virtual cash to purchase at least another virtual item on the second
website; and

on a central website, providing universal cash which can be used on either said
first website or said second website to purchase either said one virtual item or said another
virtual item.

43. A method as in claim 42, further comprising converting said universal cash to one of said
first virtual cash or said second virtual cash.

44. A method as in claim 42, further comprising using said universal cash directly on one of
said first or second websites in place of said first or second virtual cash respectively.

45. A method as in claim 42, further comprising allowing at least one user to exchange one
item for another item.

46. A method, comprising:

    carrying out first social networking on a first website, where the first website allows
registration of an item that is stored on the first website responsive to the registration, and said
first social networking includes displaying at least one item that can be viewed by viewers other
than a user who is displaying the item; and

    communicating between the first website and a second website, where the second website
receives information indicative of the item, and wherein said second website provides second
social networking on said second website, including said item displayed on the first website.

47. A method as in claim 46, wherein the first website is a website that allows at least one
game to be played, where the game includes the items that are displayed playing a game using
the characters on the website, those characters being either toys, or figures or other participants
in an online based game.

48. A method as in claim 47, wherein the items that are displayed are items that have been
personalized by the user.
49. A method as in claim 48, further comprising allowing changing the items on the first website, and automatically changing information about the items that are displayed on the second website responsive to said changing on said first website.

50. A method as in claim 46, further comprising selling the displayed items on at least one of the first or second website.

51. A method as in claim 50, wherein said selling includes determining information related to a probable value of the item.

52. A method as in claim 50, further comprising entering a purchasing code on said at least one website that allows a user to register the item on the website, wherein the item on the website can be purchased by entering said purchasing code on the at least one website, and wherein said selling comprises providing a transaction including providing a new registration code allowing a new owner to register the purchased item on the website, and wherein said selling further comprises deactivating the purchasing registration code.

53. A method as in claim 46, further comprising communicating between a third website and said second website, said third website allowing a third social networking operation including displaying a third item, and said second website receives information indicative of the third item, and said second website displays said second social networking portion based on said displayed item from the first website, and also another social networking portion based on the third item received from said second website.

54. A method as in claim 46, wherein said item is an image of a toy.

55. A method comprising:

- collecting a number of virtual items on a first website;
- on said first website, allowing interacting with any items within said collection of virtual items;
- carrying out a social networking operation on said first website, where said social networking operation includes providing personal information about a user who is hosting said
social networking operation, and also includes providing at least one viewable image indicative of plural items of said collection of virtual items; and

transferring said social networking operation to a second website, and displaying at least part of said social networking information on said second website.

56. A method as in claim 55, wherein said interacting on said first website comprises playing a game on said first website.

57. A method as in claim 55, further comprising allowing obtaining rewards on said first website which rewards can be used on said first website to purchase virtual items, allowing obtaining rewards on said second website that can be used to purchase virtual items, and wherein said rewards obtained on said second website can also be used on said first website.

58. A method as in claim 55, further comprising changing a characteristic of said collection of virtual items on said first website, and automatically updating information about at least one of said items on said social networking operation on said second website.

59. A method as in claim 55, further comprising:

   allowing obtaining a collection of virtual items on a third website, said virtual items being different types of items than those on said first website;

   allowing a social networking operation on said third website; and

   transferring said social networking operation on said third website to said second website, whereby said second website displays both results from said first website and from said third website.

60. A system comprising:

   a first website that hosts a virtual collection of items, and also carries out first social networking, where the first website includes a registration component that allows registration of an item, and after registration, each item is stored on the first website responsive to the registration as one of said virtual collection of items, and said first social networking includes
displaying at least one of said items within said virtual collection of items, and wherein said at least one of said items can be viewed by viewers of the first website other than a user who is displaying the item; and

a second website, communicating to said first website, where the second website receives information indicative of the at least one of said items, and wherein said second website provides second social networking on said second website, and said second social networking including said at least one of said items displayed on the first website and at least one item of personal information about said user.

61. A system as in claim 60, wherein the first website is a website that allows at least one game to be played by interaction between said user and a first item in said virtual collection of items, where the game includes said first item being displayed as part of playing the game.

62. A system as in claim 61, wherein said items are images of toys.

63. A system as in claim 61, wherein the items that are displayed are items that have been personalized by a user in a way that changes their original characteristics to a revised set of characteristics.

64. A system as in claim 60, further comprising a component that allows changing the items on he first website, and wherein said social networking on said second website automatically changes information about the items that are displayed on the second website responsive to said component.

65. A method, comprising:

collecting a number of virtual items on a first website as a collection of virtual items;

on said first website, allowing playing a game using any of said collection of virtual items;

carrying out a social networking operation on said first website, where said social networking operation includes personal information about a user who is hosting said social networking operation, and also includes at least one viewable image indicative of plural items of
said collection of virtual items;

transferring said social networking operation to a second website which is associated with said first website, and displaying at least part of said social networking information on said second website;

allowing obtaining a collection of second virtual items on a third website, said second virtual items being different types of items than the virtual items on said first website;

carrying out a social networking operation on said third website;

transferring said social networking operation on said third website to said second website; and

using said second website to display both results from said first website and from said third website as part of said social networking.
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/CA2008/002016

A CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC G06Q 30/00 (2006 01) , H04L 12/16 (2006 01)
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)
IPC (2006 01) AU classes

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

Electronic database(s) consulted during the international search (name of database(s) and, where practicable, search terms used)
Canadian patent database, QPAT (FAMPAT), the Web website*, web site*, trade* exchange*, buy*, sell*, points, avatar*, character*, virtual, gold, gold trading, transfer*, import*, export*, credits, credit, personnag*, between, entre, game*, jeu, assets, property

C DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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<td>Erica Naone, &quot;Moving Freely between Virtual Worlds Players hope to connect their separate domains to form a 3-D Internet &quot; Technology Review (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 29 October 2007), online Technology Review Moving Freely between Virtual Worlds <a href="http://www.technologyreview.com/web/19629/pagel/">http://www.technologyreview.com/web/19629/pagel/</a></td>
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[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C
[X] See patent family annex

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
22 January 2009 (22-01-2009)

Date of mailing of the international search report
02 March 2009 (02-03-2009)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/CA
Canadian Intellectual Property Office
Place du Portage 1, Cl 14 - 1st Floor, Box PCT
50 Victoria Street
 Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0C9
Facsimile No 001-819-953-2476

Authorized officer
Leigh Matheson 819-997-1425

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet ) (July 2008)
## Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. [ ] Claim Nos because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely

2. [ ] Claim Nos because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically

3. [ ] Claim Nos because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

## Observations where unity of invention is lacking

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows

**Group A:** Claims 1 to 38 and 42 to 65 define methods and a system for performing activities on different websites to earn rewards and virtual "items", wherein the rewards and items may be transferred from one website to another, and

**Group B:** Claims 39 to 41 define methods for using virtual cash on a website to obtain an item to give to another user, wherein that user may block such gifts from the giver

1. [ ] As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims

2. [X] As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees

3. [ ] As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claim Nos

4. [ ] No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims, it is covered by claim Nos

**Remark on Protest**  
[ ] The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee

[ ] The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation

[ ] No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees
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