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(54) **MENU SELECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD OF OPERATION THEREOF**

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(57)   **ABSTRACT**

Abstract of the Disclosure

A menu selection system (1) including a game server (2) and a user access facility in the form of a computer work-station (3) with an associated display (5) and a pointing device (5a). The workstation (3) is remotely located from the game server (2) and communication between the two is provided across communications network (4).
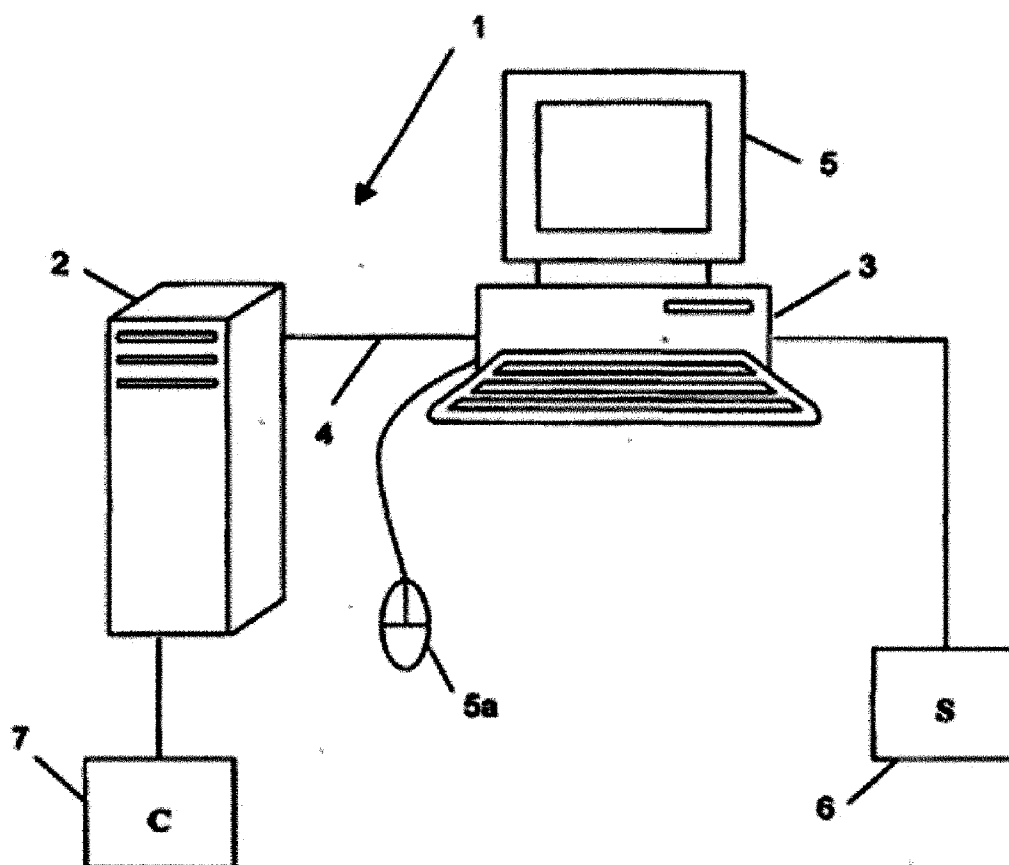
Figure 1

MENU SELECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD OF OPERATION THEREOF

Detailed Description of the Invention

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a menu selection system and, more particularly, to a menu selection system that is operable by a user of the system to make a selection of a game which the user wishes to play, from list of available games. The invention extends to a method of operation of the menu selection system.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

[0002] Menu selection systems are widely utilised in graphical user interfaces ("GUIs") for online casinos.

[0003] An online casino generally includes a gaming server and a user access facility in the form of a computer workstation remote from the gaming server and linked thereto by means of an open communication network such as the Internet.

[0004] One or more casino games are executable at the instance of a player client of the online casino. Each casino game consists of a server process, which is executable in the gaming server, and a client process, which is executable in the computer workstation. The server process generates, upon request of the client process, one or more random events upon which an outcome of the casino game depends. Such random events can correspond, for example, to the roll of a die, the spin of a roulette wheel or the deal of a playing card, depending on the which particular casino game is being played by the player. The client process, on the other hand, presents to the player a simulation of the casino game being played. Such a simulation presents to the player a realistic image of a playing surface or a playing apparatus pertaining to the particular casino game being played. The client process also enables the player to place wagers on, and to control the progress of, the casino game, and displays to the player the outcome of the game as a function of the random events generated by the server process.

[0005] In order to communicate with the gaming server of the online casino, the computer workstation operates under control of a casino client interface program. The client interface program includes a menu subsystem that displays to the player a menu of casino games that are offered by the particular online casino. The player is then able to select any one of the particular games that he wishes to play. When selecting a particular game for the first time, the casino client interface program causes a software program corresponding to the client process for that particular casino game to be downloaded from the gaming server to the computer workstation where it is stored and installed locally on a mass storage device such as a hard disk. Once downloaded, the player can install the software program on the computer workstation. Once the client process for a particular casino game has been downloaded in this manner, the casino game can be played without the necessity for further downloads.

[0006] In one particular menu subsystem, a list of casino games that are available on the gaming server is displayed to the player as an unstructured, tiled display of individual game display windows. Each game display window includes a name of a corresponding game, as well as salient details and rules associated with the game. Where a client process associated with a particular game has not yet been downloaded from the gaming server to the computer workstation, the corresponding game display window in the menu subsystem includes an icon that can be activated by the player to initiate a download of the corresponding client process from the gaming server to the computer workstation. Where there are more games available than can be simultaneously displayed on the computer workstation, the player is required to bring the corresponding game display windows of the remaining games into view by causing the display to scroll.

[0007] This type of menu subsystem is disadvantageous as it is inflexible and inconvenient for the player to browse through in order to select a casino game that he wishes to play.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It is an object of this invention to provide a menu selection system that will, at least partially, alleviate the above-mentioned difficulties and disadvantages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] In accordance with this invention there is provided a menu selection system, comprising:

[0010] a categorisation facility operable to categorise a number of casino games playable by a user in an on-line casino environment, into a number of different game categories; and

[0011] a display means instructable to display to the user display data relating to all the casino games in any selectable one of the number of different game categories.

[0012] Further features of the invention provide for each one of the number of casino games to be categorisable in a plurality of different game categories, for the different game categories to include any one or more of progressive jackpot games, table games, video poker games, slots games and new games, for a further one of the different game categories to relate to casino games which are preferred by the user, for the display means to include a display screen having an associated pointing device, and for the pointing device to be a mouse or a touch pad.

[0013] Still further features of the invention provide for the display data corresponding to each casino game to include primary and secondary game data, for the primary game data to include a name of the casino game and a type of the casino game, for the secondary game data to include any one or more of the name of the casino game, the type of the casino game, data relating to a jackpot which can be won on the casino game, a description of the casino game, a set of rules applicable to the casino game, and a game status, for the game status to be an active status when the casino game is ready for playing by the user, and an inactive status when the game is not ready for playing by the user, and for the game to be ready for playing by the user when the casino game has been previously downloaded from a gaming server, or when an updated version of the casino game has been downloaded from the gaming server.

[0014] Yet further features of the invention provide for the display means to be instructable to display the different

game categories on the display screen as tabbed categories, for the primary game data of all the games in a selected tabbed game category to be displayed in a scrollable window on the display screen, and for the secondary game data corresponding to any particular game in the selected game category to be displayed in an adjacent non-scrollable window when the primary game data in the scrollable window is brought into focus by means of the pointing device.

[0015] There is further provided for the menu selection system to include a selection means activatable by the user to add and remove any one or more of the casino games to the category of casino games preferred by the user.

[0016] There is still further provided for the display means to be instructable to also display the game categories and the casino games in each category by means of a conventional fly-out menu interface display.

[0017] There is further provided for the menu selection system to include a recommendation facility operable to provide the user with a personalised recommendation of any one or more of the number of casino games which is likely to be of interest to the user, for the recommendation facility to provide the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of the casino games contained in the category of casino games preferred by the user, for the recommendation facility to provide the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a history of a number of games most recently played by the user, and for the recommendation facility to provide the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a user-supplied profile of preferred games.

[0018] The invention extends to a method of operation of a menu selection system, comprising the steps of:

[0019] categorising a number of casino games playable by a user in an on-line casino environment, into a number of different game categories; and

[0020] displaying to the user display data relating to all the casino games in any one of the number of game categories.

[0021] There is further provided for categorising each one of the number of casino games into a plurality of different game categories, for categorising the casino games into the categories of progressive jackpot games, table games, video poker games, slots games and new games, for providing a further game category relating to casino games which are preferred by the user, and for displaying the data relating to the casino games on a display screen having an associated pointing device.

[0022] There is still further provided for classifying the display data corresponding to each casino game into primary and secondary game data, for including in the primary game data a name of the casino game and a type of the casino game, for including in the secondary game data any one or more of the name of the casino game, the type of the casino game, data relating to a jackpot which can be won on the casino game, a description of the casino game, a set of rules applicable to the casino game, and a game status, for setting the game status to be active when the casino game is ready for playing by the user, and inactive when the game is not ready for playing by the user, and for setting the game status to be inactive when the casino game has not previously been

downloaded from a gaming server, or when an updated version of the casino game must be downloaded from the gaming server.

[0023] There is yet further provided for displaying the different game categories on the display screen as tabbed categories, for displaying the primary game data of all the games in a selected tabbed game category in a scrollable window on the display screen, and for displaying the secondary game data corresponding to any particular game in the selected game category in an adjacent non-scrollable window when the corresponding primary game data in the scrollable window is brought into focus by means of the pointing device.

[0024] There is also provided for the method to include the further steps of:

[0025] adding any desired one or more of the casino games to the category of casino games preferred by the user; and

[0026] removing any casino game from this category when it is no longer preferred by the user.

[0027] There is also provided for displaying the game categories and the casino games in each category by means of a conventional fly-out menu interface display on the display screen.

[0028] There is also provided for providing the user with a personalised recommendation of any one or more of the number of casino games which is likely to be of interest to the user, for providing the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of the casino games contained in the category of casino games preferred by the user, for providing the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a history of a number of games most recently played by the user, and for providing the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a user-supplied profile of preferred games.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0029] A preferred embodiment of the invention is described below, by way of example only, and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0030] FIG. 1 is a schematic representation of a menu selection system according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE
INVENTION

[0031] Referring to FIG. 1, a menu selection system is indicated generally by reference numeral (1).

[0032] The menu selection system (1) includes a gaming server (2) and a user access facility in the form of a computer workstation (3) with an associated display means (5) such as a display monitor, and a pointing device (5a), such as a mouse or, alternatively, a touchpad. The computer workstation (3) is located remotely from the gaming server (2) and communication between the computer workstation and the gaming server is provided across a communication network (4) that is, in this embodiment, the Internet.

[0033] The computer workstation (3) is a conventional personal computer operating under a Windows 2000 operating system, which is well known and commercially avail-

able from the Microsoft Corporation of Seattle, Wash., USA. The gaming server also operates under the Windows 2000 operating system. The computer workstation (3) operates under the control of a stored program (6), the operation of which will be outlined in the description that follows. Each casino game includes a client process (not shown) that is executable on the computer workstation (3) and a corresponding server process (not shown) that is executable on the gaming server (2). Each server process is another computer program that generate one or more random events that determine the outcome of the corresponding casino game. The client process obtains he result of the random event from the gaming server (2), across the communication network (4) and displays the outcome of the game on the display monitor (5) in an intelligible manner. The gaming server (2) can execute any one of a number of different casino games under instruction of a user through the computer workstation (3). In order to play any particular casino game, the corresponding client process for that game must be downloaded from the gaming server (2) to the computer workstation (3).

[0034] The menu selection system (1) includes a categorisation facility (7) operable to categorise each one of the different casino games available on the gaming server (2) into one or more different categories. Examples of such categories include, for example, progressive jackpot games, table games, video poker games, slots games, and new games that have not previously been accessible through the menu selection system. The categorisation also includes a further category of casino games, which are preferred by the user. The significance and function of this category of casino games will be described below.

[0035] The stored program (6) of the computer workstation is instructable to display to the user on the display monitor (5), display data relating to each one of the casino games categorised into any one of the game categories. The display data for each casino game is classified into primary and secondary display data, the former including a name of the casino game and a brief description of a type of the casino game, and the latter including the name of the casino game, the type of the casino game, data relating to a jackpot which can be won on the casino game, a more detailed description of the nature of the casino game, a set of rules applicable to the casino game, and a status of the casino game. The status of the casino is displayed as being active when the casino game is ready for playing by the user, and inactive when the game is not ready for playing by the user. The game status is set to be inactive when a client process of the casino game has not previously been downloaded from a gaming server and stored locally on a storage device (not shown) on the computer workstation (3), or when an updated version of the client process of the casino game is available on the gaming server and must be downloaded in order for the game to be played by the user

[0036] The different game categories are displayable on the display screen as a series of tabbed categories, according to a display standard that is well known in the art. The user is able to view game data relating to all the casino games in any desired category by selecting, or bringing in to focus, with the pointing device (5a), a corresponding tab for that game category. The primary game data of all the casino games in selected tabbed game category is displayed in a scrollable window on the display screen. When the primary game data of any particular casino game displayed in the scrollable window is brought into focus by means of the pointing device (5a), the secondary game data corresponding to that particular game in the selected game category is displayed in an adjacent non-scrollable window.

[0037] The stored program (6) of the computer workstation (3) provides the user with a selection means that is operable by the user to add and remove any one or more of the displayed casino games in any one of the tabbed game categories to the category of casino games preferred by the user. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the user is thus able to configure the menu selection system (1) to provide for simple and rapid navigation to a subset of the available casino games on the gaming server (2) that are of particular interest to the user.

[0038] Numerous modifications are possible to this embodiment without departing from the scope of the invention. In particular, the different game categories, and the different games in each category are displayable by means of a conventional menu fly-out interface display, of a type, which is well known in the Windows operating system software from the Microsoft Corporation of Seattle, Wash. in the United States of America. Further, the secondary game data corresponding to any casino game is displayable to the user even when the game status for that particular game has been set to be inactive. This facility makes it possible for the user to make an informed decision, on the basis of the secondary game data thus displayed, as to which casino game to download from the entire library of casino games available on the gaming server (2).

[0039] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the categorisable menu system described above will facilitate selection by a user of desirable casino games to download from a gaming server in order to play such games. Despite this advantage, it may still remain a daunting task, in situations where a large number of casino games are available on the gaming server (2), and where each game category itself contains a large number of games, to rapidly identify games that the user may wish to play. In order to overcome this problem, the menu system may also include a recommendation facility that is operable to provide the user with a recommended list of games that it deems might be of interest to the user. Such a recommendation list may be constructed, for example, as a function of the games in the user's own preferred category of games, or as a function of a history of a number of games most recently played by the user, or both. It will be further appreciated by those skilled in the art that such a recommendation may also be made as a function of other parameters and information, such as a user-supplied profile of preferred games.

[0040] The technical problem solved by this invention is that of simplifying and speeding up the making of a selection from a menu of available choices. The use of configurable categories into which individual available choices can be categorised, together with the use of a specific category for personally preferred choices, and automatic pre-selection enables a user of the menu system to make a selection in a reduced time relative to other prior art menu systems. Display data corresponding to each choice is divided into primary and secondary subsets. The primary subset for each choice, which is kept small, is used as a key to access the corresponding secondary subset and to effect final selection of a desired choice.

[0041] The invention therefore provides a menu selection system that provides a simple and convenient user interface for an on-line casino, and which is customisable by a user to enables rapid access to a subset of available casino games that are preferred by the user.

1. A menu selection system, comprising: a categorisation facility operable to categorise a number of casino games playable by a user in an on-line casino environment, into a number of different categories; and a display means instructable to display to the user display data relating to all the casino games in any selectable one of the number of different game categories.

2. A menu selection as claimed in claim 1 in which each one of the number of casino games is categorisable in a plurality of different game categories.

3. A menu selection system as claimed in either one of the claim 1 in which the different game categories to include any one or more of progressive jackpot games, table games, video poker games, slots games and new games.

4. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 2 in which a further one of the different game categories relates to casino games that are preferred by the user.

5. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 1 in which the display data corresponding to each casino game includes primary and secondary game data.

6. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 5 in which the primary game data includes a name of the casino game and a type of the casino game.

7. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 5 in which the secondary game data includes any one or more of the name of the casino game, the type of the casino game, data relating to a jackpot which can be won on the casino game, a description of the casino game, a set of rules applicable to the casino game, and a game status indicator.

8. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 7 in which the game status is an active status when the casino game is ready for playing by the user, and an inactive status when the game is not ready for playing by the user.

9. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 8 in which the game is ready for playing by the user when the casino game has been previously downloaded from a gaming server, or when an updated version of the casino game has been downloaded from the gaming server.

10. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 1 in which the display means includes a display screen having an associated pointing device.

11. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 10 in which the display means is also instructable to display the different game categories as tabbed categories on the display screen.

12. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 11 in which the primary game data of all the games in a selected tabbed game category is displayed in a scrollable window on the display screen.

13. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 12 in which the secondary game data corresponding to any particular game in the selected game category is displayed in an adjacent non-scrollable window on the display screen when the primary game data in the scrollable window is brought into focus by means of the pointing device.

14. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 4 in which the menu selection system includes a selection means

activatable by the user to categorise and de-categorise any one or more of the casino games in the category of casino games preferred by the user.

15. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 1 in which the display means is instructable to display the game categories and the casino games in each category by means of a conventional fly-out menu interface display.

16. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 4 that includes a recommendation facility operable to provide the user with a personalised recommendation of any one or more of the number of casino games that is likely to be of interest to the user.

17. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 16 in which the recommendation facility provides the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of the casino games contained in the category of casino games preferred by the user.

18. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 16 in which the recommendation facility provides the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a history of a number of games most recently played by the user.

19. A menu selection system as claimed in claim 16 in which the recommendation facility provides the user with the personalised recommendation as a function of a user-supplied profile of preferred games.

20. A method of operation of a menu selection system, comprising the steps of: categorising a number of casino games playable by a user in an on-line casino environment into a number of different categories; and displaying to the user display data relating to all the casino games in any one of the number of different game categories.

21. A method as claimed in claim 20 in which each one of the number of casino games is categorised into a plurality of different game categories.

22. A method as claimed in claim 20 in which the casino games are categorised into the categories of progressive jackpot games, table games, video poker games, slots games and new games.

23. A method as claimed in claim 21 that includes the step of providing a further game category relating to casino games which are preferred by the user.

24. A method as claimed in claim 20 in which the display data corresponding to each casino game is classified into primary and secondary game data.

25. A method as claimed in claim 24 that has the step of including in the primary game data a name of the casino game and a type of the casino game.

26. A method as claimed in claim 24 which has the step of including in the secondary game data any one or more of the name of the casino game, the type of the casino game, data relating to a jackpot which can be won on the casino game, a description of the casino game, a set of rules applicable to the casino game, and a game status indicator.

27. A method as claimed in claim 26 in which the game status indicator is set to be active when the casino game is ready for playing by the user, and inactive when the game is not ready for playing by the user.

28. A method as claimed in claim 26 in which the game status indicator is set to be inactive when the casino game has not previously been downloaded from a gaming server, or when an updated version of the casino game must be downloaded from the gaming server.

29. A method as claimed in claim 20 in which the data relating to the casino games is displayed on a display screen having an associated pointing device.

30. A method as claimed in claim 21 in which the different game categories are displayed on the display screen as tabbed categories.

31. A method as claimed in claim 30 in which the primary game data of all the games in a selected tabbed game category is displayed in a scrollable window on the display screen.

32. A method as claimed in claim 31 in which the secondary game data corresponding to any particular game in the selected game category is displayed in an adjacent non-scrollable window when the corresponding primary game data in the scrollable window is brought into focus by means of the pointing device.

33. A method as claimed in claim 23, which includes the further steps of: adding any desired one or more of the casino games to the category of casino games preferred by the user; and removing any casino game from this category when it is no longer preferred by the user.

34. A method as claimed in claim 20 in which the game categories and the casino games in each game category are selectively displayed by means of a conventional fly-out menu interface display on the display screen.

35. A method as claimed in claim 23 that includes the step of providing the user with a personalised recommendation of any one or more of the number of casino games which is likely to be of interest to the user.

36. A method as claimed in claim 35 in which the user is provided with a personalised recommendation as a function of the casino games contained in the category of casino games preferred by the user.

37. A method as claimed in claim 35 in which the user is provided with the personalised recommendation as a function of a history of a number of games most recently played by the user.

38. A method as claimed in claim 35 in which the user is provided with the personalised recommendation as a function of a user-supplied profile of preferred games.

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