

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
AUSTIN DIVISION

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AUSTIN DIVISION
2005 JUL -8 PM 3:41

ORIGINAL
BGI, INC.,

Plaintiff,

v.

WORLDS OF GAMES, LLC AND
KEITH HEFLIN

Defendants.

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Civil Action No.

A0504527 SS

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

The Parties

1. Plaintiff BGI, Inc. (hereinafter "BGI") is a corporation with an address of 2311 W. Rundberg Lane, Suite 175, Austin, Texas 78758.
2. Defendant Worlds of Games, LLC (hereinafter "Worlds of Games") is, upon information and belief, a Tennessee company with an address in Shelbyville, Tennessee.
3. Defendant Keith Heflin (hereinafter "Heflin") is an individual with, upon information and belief, a residence in Shelbyville, Tennessee.
4. Heflin is, upon information and belief, the owner of Worlds of Games.

General Averments

5. Heflin is listed as the inventor for U.S. Patent Nos. 6,213,874 ("the '874 patent") and 6,722,977 ("the '977 patent") (collectively the '874 patent and the '977 patent are referred to as the "Defendants' Patents"). A copy of the Defendants' Patents is set forth in Exhibit A.
6. One or more of Defendants are the owners of the Defendants' Patents.
7. Upon information and belief, Defendants offer to sell and/or sell, and/or have offered to sell and/or sold, products or services in Texas. Upon information and belief,

Defendants offer to sell and/or sell, and/or have offered to sell and/or sold, products or services in this district.

8. BGI provides certain machines to third parties, including machines that dispense credits for telephone services.

9. Defendants have sent a series of letters to BGI and BGI's customer. Several letters have been sent by Defendants to BGI in Austin, Texas. In its letters Defendants have asserted that one or more BGI products are covered by Defendants' Patents. Defendants have asserted in a letter sent to Austin, Texas that there is evidence that BGI's machines infringe at least one claim of the '874 patent. Defendants have also asked, in a letter sent to Austin, Texas, if BGI wishes to settle for "past damages for infringement."

10. To buttress their infringement assertions, Defendants have asserted that telephone calling cards are collector cards, as that term is used in the Defendants' Patents.

11. During the prosecution of Defendants' Patents, however, Defendants said the opposite. For example, when faced with a rejection over prior art, Defendants stated (emphasis added):

Rademacher describes a PIN vending dispenser for selling telephone calling cards. In contrast to the present invention, Rademacher specifically describes that the preferred "cards are no-value cards" and that a label can be adhered to the no-value card. See Col. 2-3. This use of an adhered label would destroy or alter the value of the collector cards dispensed by the present invention. This directly teaches away from the value of the collectable cards of the present invention. In the present invention, the user is paying money for the value of the card being dispensed from the machine and not a no-value card with some other associated value accessed by PIN number that happens to be printed on the card for convenience. Therefore, the Rademacher reference directly teaches away from the distribution of collector cards and their inherent value as taught by the present invention.

Finally, neither Holch nor Rademacher suggests the combination of a card dispenser with a gaming device for collector cards. Both of these patents teach that the cards are valueless without the associated transactions. This directly teaches away from the value of the collectable cards of the present invention where the user is paying money for the value of the card being dispensed from the machine and not a no-value card with a value associated with some account balance. For instance, Holch uses an account balance associated with a valueless card and Rademacher uses the PIN number that happens to be printed on the no-value card for

convenience. Therefore both the Holch and Rademacher references directly teach away from the present invention involving the combination of the collector card and its inherent value in combination with a reward-for-purchase gaming system.

Jurisdiction and Venue

12. Jurisdiction is proper in this Court pursuant to, at least, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1332, 1338, 2201, and 2202. This is a declaratory action for noninfringement, invalidity, and unenforceability. This case arises under the Patent Laws of the United States, Title 35 of the United States Code.

13. Upon information and belief, venue is proper in this district.

COUNT I – DECLARATORY JUDGMENT OF PATENT NONINFRINGEMENT

14. BGI repeats and realleges the allegations of paragraphs 1-13 of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

15. The products manufactured, used, sold, offered for sale, and/or imported into the United States by BGI and the methods taught by BGI do not (either literally or by the doctrine of equivalents) infringe, contributorily infringe, or induce infringement of any valid, properly construed and/or enforceable claim of the Defendants' Patents.

16. Defendants are estopped, by virtue of the prosecution record made in the United States Patent and Trademark Office during the pendency of the applications resulting in the Defendants' Patents, from construing any claim of Defendants' Patents as covering any of BGI's products or the methods taught by BGI.

17. BGI therefore is entitled to a declaratory judgment that it has not (either literally or by the doctrine of equivalents) infringed, contributed to the infringement, or induced others to infringe, and that it does not infringe, contribute to infringement, or induce others to infringe the Defendants' Patents.

COUNT II – DECLARATORY JUDGMENT OF PATENT INVALIDITY AND UNENFORCEABILITY

18. BGI repeats and realleges the allegations of paragraphs 1-17 of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

19. Upon information and belief, the claims of the Defendants' Patents are invalid and/or unenforceable under one or more provisions of Title 35 of the United States Code §§ 101, et seq., including at least one of §§ 102, 103, and/or 112, or by virtue of the equitable doctrines of laches, estoppel, unclean hands, misuse, and/or waiver. Defendants have, for example, misused the Defendants' Patents by alleging that machines that sell telephone calling cards infringe the Defendants' Patents, especially when Defendants told the Patent Office the opposite when they were procuring Defendants' Patents. Defendants do not have a reasonable basis to allege that BGI infringes, induces infringement of, and/or contributorily infringes the Defendants' Patents.

20. BGI therefore is entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Defendants' Patents are invalid and unenforceable.

DAMAGES

21. BGI repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1 through 20 of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein. BGI has suffered, is suffering, and will continue to suffer irreparable harm and injury as a result of Defendant's aforesaid activities. Defendants will, unless restrained and enjoined, continue to act in the unlawful manner complained of herein, all to BGI's irreparable damage. BGI's remedy at law is not adequate to compensate for the injuries suffered and threatened. By reason of Defendant's acts complained of herein, BGI has suffered monetary damages in an amount that has not yet been determined.

REQUEST FOR JURY TRIAL

22. BGI hereby demands that this cause be tried by a jury.

PRAYER

23. WHEREFORE, BGI demands judgment:
- a. declaring the Defendants' Patents invalid;
 - b. declaring that BGI has not infringed, and is not infringing, either literally or by the doctrine of equivalents, the Defendants' Patents;
 - c. declaring that BGI has not induced and is not inducing others to infringe, either literally or by the doctrine of equivalents, the Defendants' Patents;
 - d. declaring that BGI has not contributed, and is not contributing, either literally or by the doctrine of equivalents, to any other's infringement of the Defendants' Patents;
 - e. declaring the Defendants' Patents unenforceable due to laches, estoppel, unclean hands, misuse, and/or waiver;
 - f. declaring that BGI's case is exceptional under 35 U.S.C. § 285 and awarding BGI its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs;
 - g. awarding injunctive relief that bars Defendants from asserting the Defendants' Patents against BGI (including its products and methods) and from wrongly stating to third parties that BGI (including its products and methods) infringe the Defendants' Patents; and
 - h. granting such other and further relief to BGI as the Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,



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(12) **United States Patent**
Hefflin

(10) **Patent No.:** US 6,213,874 B1
(45) **Date of Patent:** Apr. 10, 2001

(54) **COLLECTOR CARD/PHONE CARD DISPENSING SYSTEM WITH PROMOTIONAL FREE SPIN/FREE DRAW GAME FEATURE**

(76) **Inventor** Keith Hefflin, 439 Naron Dr., Shelbyville, TN (US) 37160

(*) **Notice:** Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) **Appl. No.:** 08/925,860

(22) **Filed:** Sep. 9, 1997

(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** A63F 9/22

(52) **U.S. Cl.** 463/17; 463/36; 463/4; 273/118

(58) **Field of Search** 463/16, 17-19; 273/118 A; 194/215, 217; 235/1 B, 1 R

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Primary Examiner—Valencia Martin-Wallace

Assistant Examiner—John M Hotaling, II

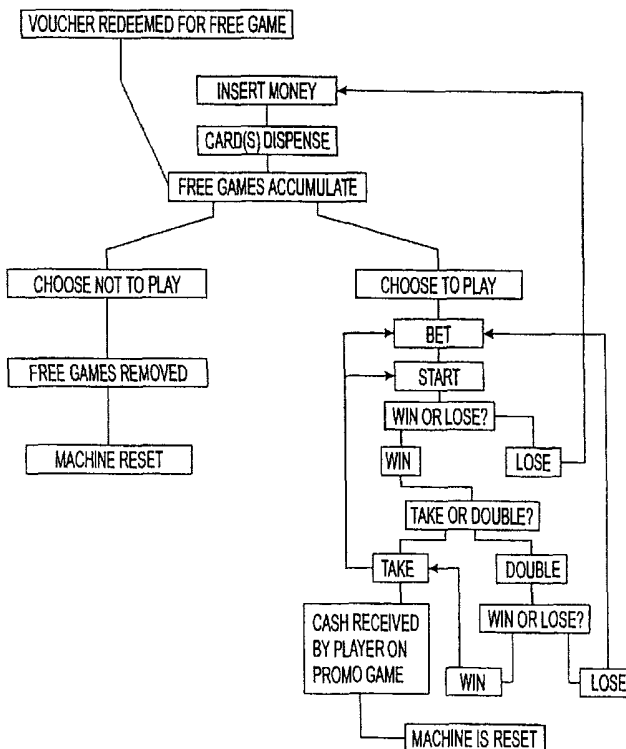
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Waddey & Patterson; Mark J. Patterson

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system for dispensing collector's series cards to a collector includes a currency acceptor and card dispenser controlled by a computer. As a promotion to encourage the sale of the collector's cards, the system includes a game subsystem that provides the purchaser with an opportunity to play a game of chance with the credits that the person receives with each collector's series card purchased. The purchaser may then save such credits or play them, and to the extent that a person wins, a promotional prize will be awarded.

9 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets

COLLECTORS CARD DISPENSER AND PROMOTIONAL GAME FLOW CHART



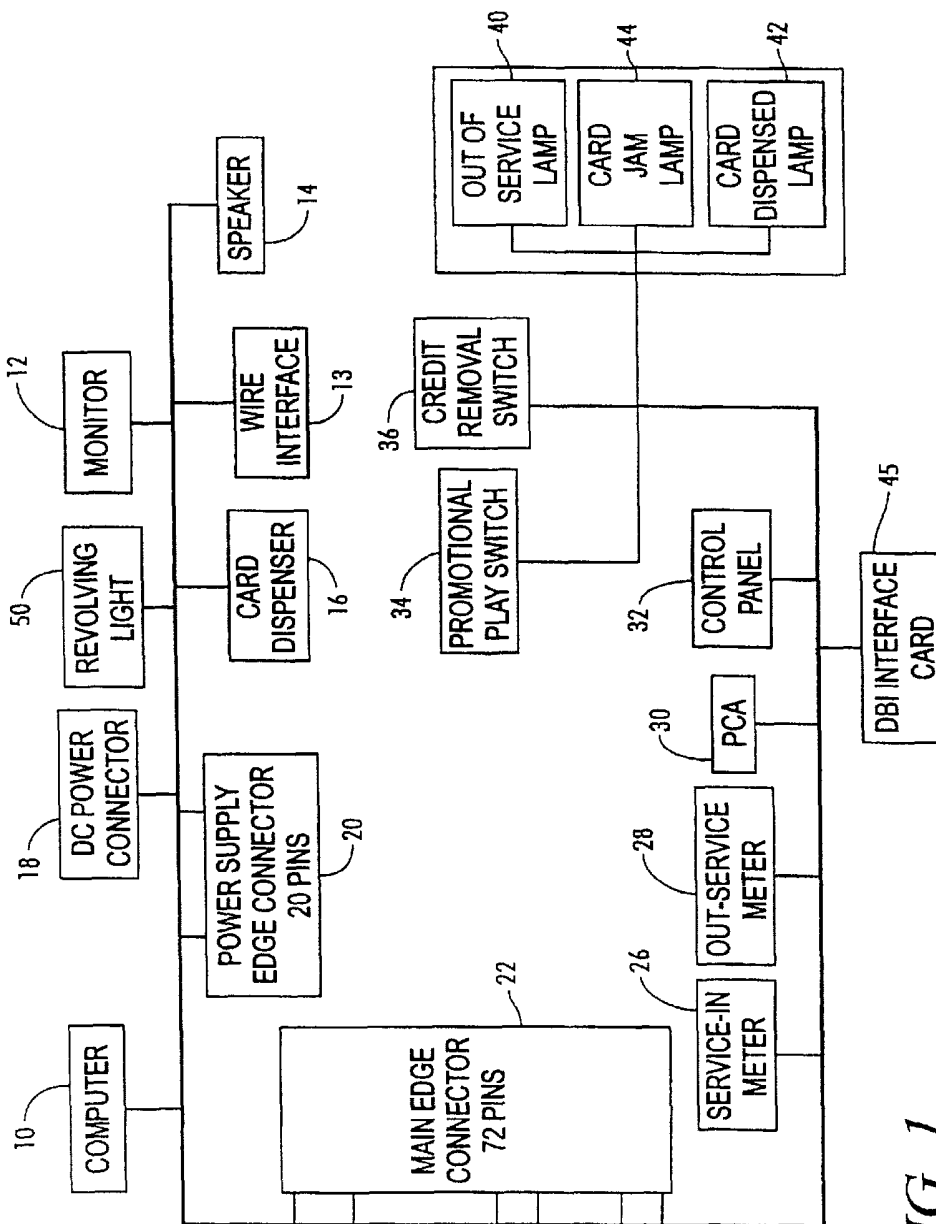


FIG. 1

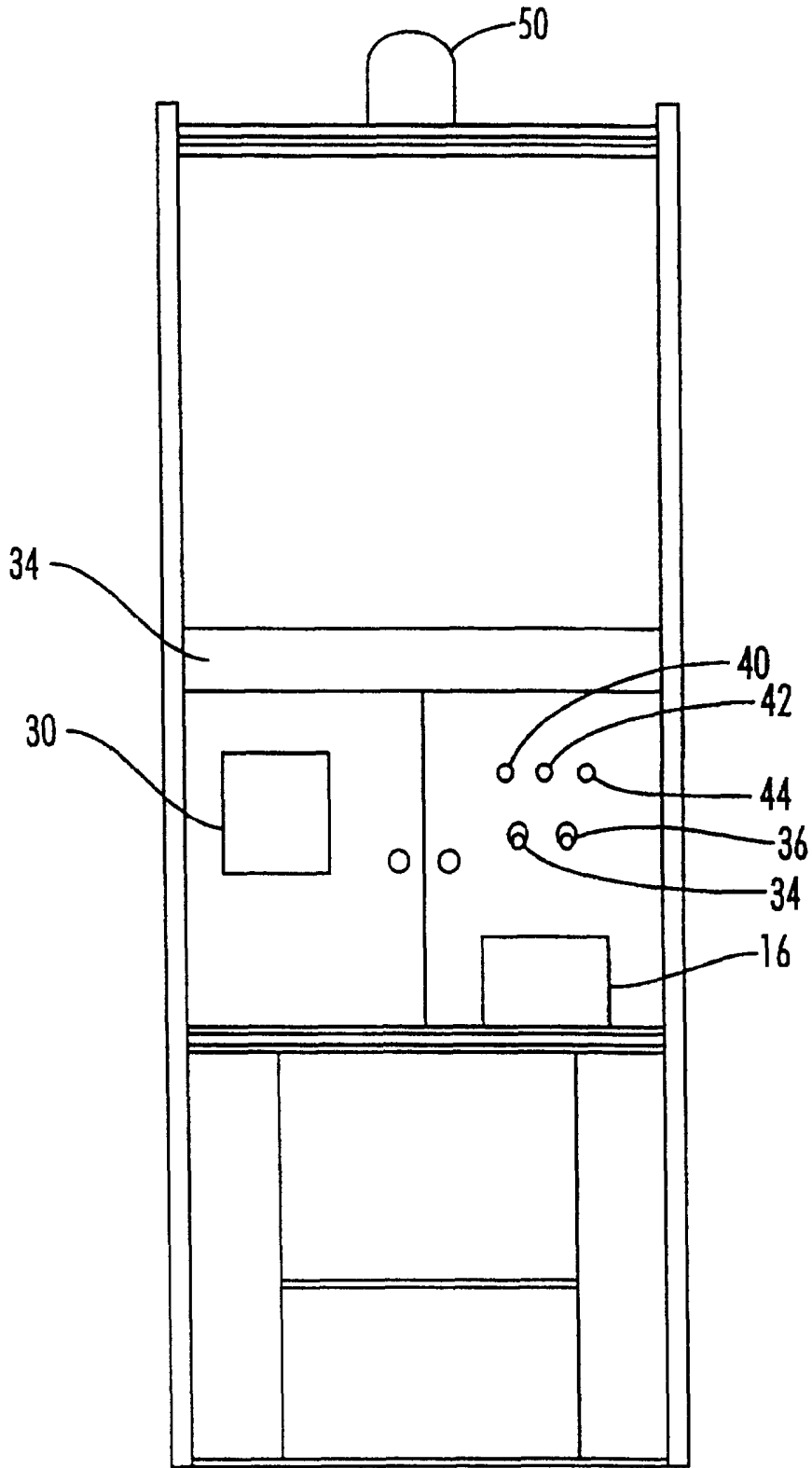


FIG. 2

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**COLLECTOR CARD/PHONE CARD
DISPENSING SYSTEM WITH
PROMOTIONAL FREE SPIN/FREE DRAW
GAME FEATURE**

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS
PATENT

Be it known that I, Keith Heflin, a citizen of United States, residing at 439 Naron Drive, Shelbyville, Tenn. 37160; have invented a new and useful "Collector Card/Phone Card Dispensing System with Promotional Free Spin/Free Draw Game Feature."

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to collector's series card distribution, and, in particular, to a card dispensing machine and system that includes a promotional Free Spin/Free Draw game feature used to increase interest in purchasing such cards. A distinctive feature of this system is the unique manner in which the cards are dispensed in conjunction with an opportunity to play credits obtained with the purchase of a card on an instant win game.

Collecting special collector's series cards has become increasingly popular with the general public. Such cards are used for entertainment purposes in various ways, such as exchanging them with other collectors or saving them as a memento containing special significance to the collector. Collecting these cards has grown to such a great extent that it is reported that certain distributors of collector's series cards disburse over one billion cards each year. Therefore, distributors are continuously looking for new and unusual ways to distribute the cards and to increase interest in their particular brand of cards.

Most new collector's cards are purchased at retail stores and specialty shops from counter stock or display stock. The customer selects the card or card package and then pays a clerk or cashier. Promotions are often tied into the sale, such as bubble gum, three-dimensional cards, and stickers, to increase distribution. Therefore, it is advantageous to a distributor to provide a distinguishing promotion in order to encourage adults to purchase their collector's series cards. What is needed, however, is a method of distributing collector's cards to customers that is efficient and low cost and that adds promotional value to the transaction.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an automated dispenser system and method for distributing collector's series cards that includes a promotional device that offers an opportunity to play an instant win game. In accordance with one object of the invention, a dollar bill valuator accepts a bill from a collector and then a computerized card dispenser delivers a collector card to the collector in response thereto. To increase the value to the collector, the card dispensing device includes a promotional feature which confers a credit to play, for amusement, a video game simultaneously with the purchase of a collector's card. The holder of the credit can then play an instant win game in order to try to win more credits. After playing the game, the holder then has the option to save any won credits for future use in an attempt to accumulate more credits, which could eventually lead to a promotional prize. At any point during the game, after the holder accumulates more points than he received for promotional play, the holder has the option to obtain a prize in exchange for the credits

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The operation of the system is overseen by a licensee who is able to assist in the distribution of games. The licensee is needed to enter credits into the video game system for persons with vouchers for free games, and the licensee further provides for later continuance of the game by withdrawing credits and resetting the number of credits on the machine.

A preferred embodiment of the system combines a conventional microprocessor or computer and video display monitor, operatively connected to a promotional game subsystem that provides the method for operation of the game, and an interface card which allows the card dispenser to work in conjunction with the distribution of the collectible cards and credits after the insertion of the required amount of money.

When the card dispenser is depleted of cards, two things occur. An interrupt switch is activated by the interface card to disable the system from playing until the licensee of the system places more cards in the dispenser. Concurrently, an "Out of Service" light on the cabinet is illuminated and the licensee of the system is thereby notified to replenish the system with cards.

The game is played by programming the computer with a simple game algorithm of the licensor's choice. In one embodiment of the system, first, either money is inserted and a collector's card is distributed, or a licensee provides a free credit through the promotional play switch. The user then has the option of playing the game. If the user chooses not to play, then the free games are removed and the machine is reset through a credit removal switch. If the user chooses to play, a simple algorithm for the game allows the user to play his credits.

If the user loses, the game automatically removes his played credits and asks if he wishes to play again through the purchase of another collector's series card. If the user wins, he has the option to either take or double-up. If he takes, then he has the option to either play and go through the process again, or he can choose to receive the promotional prize awarded for the amount of credits that he has accumulated. If he doubles-up, the game is played and if he wins then he has the opportunity to take the winnings or play again. If he loses, then he returns to play the remainder of his credits.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of the card dispenser and promotional game system of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a front side view of the system cabinet showing the control panel and display.

FIG. 3 is a side view of the system in the cabinet.

FIG. 4 is a flow chart showing the basic sequence of playing the promotional game.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED
EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows the connection of the main components of the collector's card dispensing system of the present invention, a computer 10, a card dispenser apparatus 16, and a user interface/control panel 32. These components are integrated together via a wired interface 13 through a 72-pin main edge connector 22. The interface will incorporate a power supply bus and a data bus to provide for communication of electrical signals and commands to the various electronic and electromechanical devices shown on FIG. 1.

The card dispenser 16 is a conventional electromechanical machine used to distribute the collector's series cards upon

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insertion of money into the paper currency acceptor ("PCA") 30. The PCA 30 is conventionally used in food vending machines, and sends an electrical signal to the computer 10 to register the correct amount of currency received credits in relation to the value of the bill inserted. The computer 10 through the use of an interface card 45 then directs the card dispenser 16 to issue the cards and provides the user the opportunity to play a promotional game

The user communicates all actions of the game through the user interface provided by the control panel 32, as shown in FIG. 3. The control panel 32 is a conventional interface between the user and the computer program that allows the user to play the game. The control panel 32 includes buttons to register the user's plays, and to allow the user to double-up or withdraw from the game

In the operation of the card dispensing system 16, the user first enters paper currency into the PCA 30 and the promotional play switch 34 is set to position "A". The PCA 30 then sends a signal to the computer 10 in relation to the value of the bill entered and registers the play credits on the service-meter 26.

During operation of the game, the computer 10 can generate effects to make the game more exciting. A speaker system 14 may be connected to the computer 10 to allow for sound effects or any other type of beneficial sound. Further, a revolving light 50 may be placed on top of the cabinet containing the system to be activated when a user wins, as shown in FIG. 2.

When the user is finished, the licensee removes the credits by activating the credit removal switch 36 and the credits are removed from system memory. The system memory (not shown) is conventional RAM compatible with the computer 10. The remaining credits would then accumulate in the out-service meter 28. The out-service meter 28 would then provide the licensee a physical record, stating the number of credits won or unused by the user.

If the card dispenser 16 should become empty, an interrupt switch located inside the card dispenser 16 would prevent operation of the system until the card dispenser 16 is refilled. Simultaneously, an "Out of Service" lamp 40 would be illuminated, thereby notifying the licensee to replenish the card supply.

Further, the system provides for two other indicator lamps. A "Card Jam" lamp 44 notifies licensee if the dispenser becomes jammed. A "Card Dispensed" lamp 42 notifies the user that the collector's series card has been delivered into the retaining area of the cabinet 42.

The computer 10 generates the game using a simple algorithm as part of a promotional game sub-system incorporated into the system software. The basic sequence of logical operations implemented by the software, including the promotional game subsystem, is shown on the flow chart of FIG. 4. A person skilled in the art of computer programming could easily implement these steps in software compatible with the particular processor selected for use with the computer 10. After the user inserts money into the PCA 30, a corresponding currency received credit signal is sent to the computer 10 and to the interface board 45. The interface board 45 signals the card dispenser 16 to deliver the collector cards to the user. The computer 10 then determines the available credits from either the insertion of money in the PCA 30, at which time the promotional play switch 34 is set to position "A", or through the licensee entering credits via the promotional play switch 34 being set to position "B". The credits accumulate at that point and the user has the option of playing the promotional game.

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The information needed to advise the user of his game playing options before and during game play is generated by the computer 10 and is displayed to the user via the monitor 12. The user then communicates with the promotional game, the system is reset via the credit removal switch 36, and the credits are registered in the out-service meter 28.

If the user chooses to play the promotional game, then the computer 10 allows the user to play his credits. If the user loses, then the system is reset by the computer 10 and the system resets to offer a new card and game to the same or different user for a specified amount of money

If the user wins, then he has the option to either quit the game or to double-up. If the user chooses not to play, then he can receive the accumulated credits and a promotional prize, or he can play again. If the user chooses to double-up, then he plays again. If he loses, the game automatically requests another amount to play. If he wins, he has the option to either take the credits or play again. If he takes the credits, then he receives the accumulated credits that can be used to get a promotional prize awarded for the amount of credits that he has accumulated.

When the user does decide to withdraw from the game, the licensee would then activate the credit removal switch 36, which would then signal the computer 10 to send the accumulated points into the out-service meter 28. The user would then sign a promotional play form to receive his prize.

As a further option, a user may request a free game voucher from the licensee of the system. When the user presents the game voucher to the licensee, the licensee can enter promotional game credits for that user by means of the promotional play switch 34, which is set to position "B".

Thus, although there have been described particular embodiments of the present invention of a new and useful Collector Card/Phone Card Dispensing System with Promotional Free Spin/Free Draw Game Feature, it is not intended that such references be construed as limitations upon the scope of this invention except as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for dispensing collector cards to a user comprising
 - a. a currency acceptor;
 - b. a card dispensing mechanism;
 - c. a processor operatively connected to the currency acceptor and to the card dispensing mechanism whereby a signal is sent to the card dispensing mechanism by the processor to dispense the collector cards in response to receipt of a pre-determined amount of currency at the currency acceptor;
 - d. a display and user control panel each operatively connected to the processor; and
 - e. the processor including a promotional game sub-system, the game sub-system generating information at the display and receiving information from the user control panel whereby the user can play an electronic promotional game in response to and conditioned on purchase of the collector cards.
2. The system of claim 1 further comprising a game credit accumulator means for electrically storing game credits available to the user for playing the electronic promotional game.
3. The system of claim 2 further comprising a game credit dispensing means for issuing to the user a physical record of game credits available to the user for future play
4. The system of claim 3 further comprising switch means for a licensee of the system to input user game credits or delete user game credits from the system.

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5. A method of dispensing collector cards from a collector card dispensing system to a collector comprising the steps of:

- a. accepting currency from the collector at an electromechanical currency acceptor associated with the system, 5
- b. processing in the system currency received signals from the currency acceptor;
- c. automatically dispensing the collector cards from a card dispensing mechanism associated with the system 10 when the currency received signals processed reach a predetermined level; and
- d. providing the collector an option to immediately play an electronic promotional game associated with the system as a reward for purchasing the collector cards.

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6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of accumulating game credits in the system when the collector successfully plays the promotional game

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of issuing to the collector a physical record of game credits accumulated by that collector.

8. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of issuing a prize to the collector in exchange for game credits accumulated by the collector

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of issuing a physical record of game credits to the user and electrically entering the game credits reflected on the physical record into the system so that the user can play the promotional game.

* * * * *

(12) **United States Patent**
Heflin

(10) **Patent No.:** US 6,722,977 B1
 (45) **Date of Patent:** Apr. 20, 2004

(54) **COLLECTOR CARD/PHONE CARD DISPENSING SYSTEM WITH PROMOTIONAL INSTANT WIN GAME PIECE FEATURE**

(76) **Inventor:** Keith Heflin, 439 Naron Dr, Shelbyville, TN (US) 37160

(*) **Notice:** Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(21) **Appl. No.:** 09/398,967

(22) **Filed:** Sep. 17, 1999

Primary Examiner—John M. Hotaling, II

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Wadley & Patterson; Mark J. Patterson

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 08/925,860, filed on Sep. 9, 1997, now Pat. No. 6,213,874.

(51) **Int. Cl.**⁷ A63F 13/00

(52) **U.S. Cl.** 463/17; 463/36; 463/4, 273/118

(58) **Field of Search** 463/1, 16, 46, 463/17, 18; 273/138 2, 139, 118 A; 221/1, 2, 3, 9

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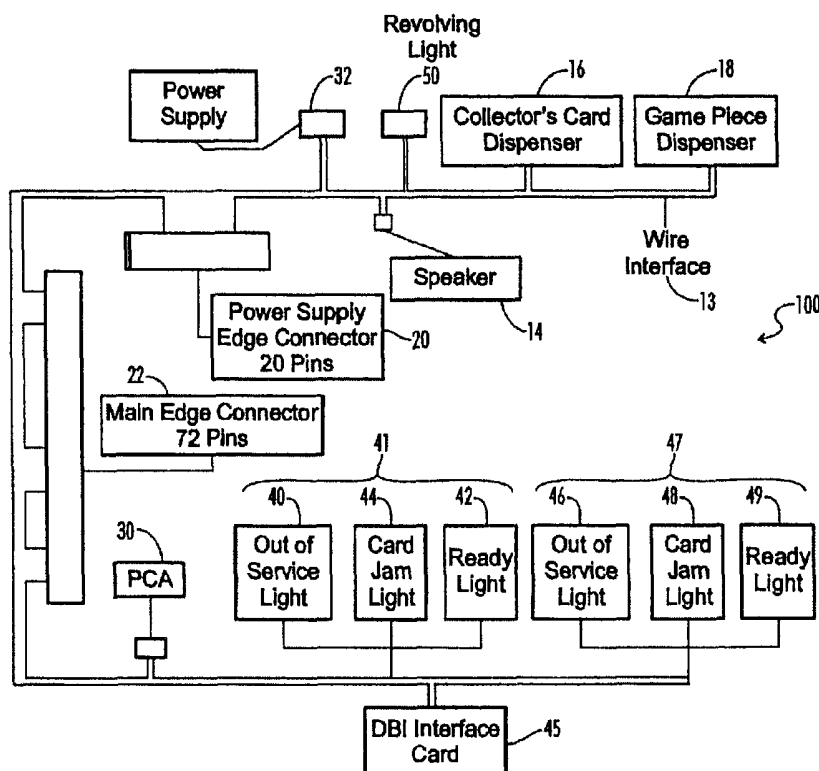
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and method for promoting and dispensing collector's cards to a plurality of users. The system includes a microprocessor connected to a currency acceptor, a collector's card dispenser, and a game piece dispenser. When currency is inserted into the currency acceptor, the microprocessor registers the signal provided by the currency acceptor and directs the collector's card dispenser to distribute at least one collector's card according to the amount of currency entered. As a promotion to encourage the sale of the collector's cards, the system also dispenses a game piece simultaneously with the collector's card, that allows the user to play a game of chance.

25 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



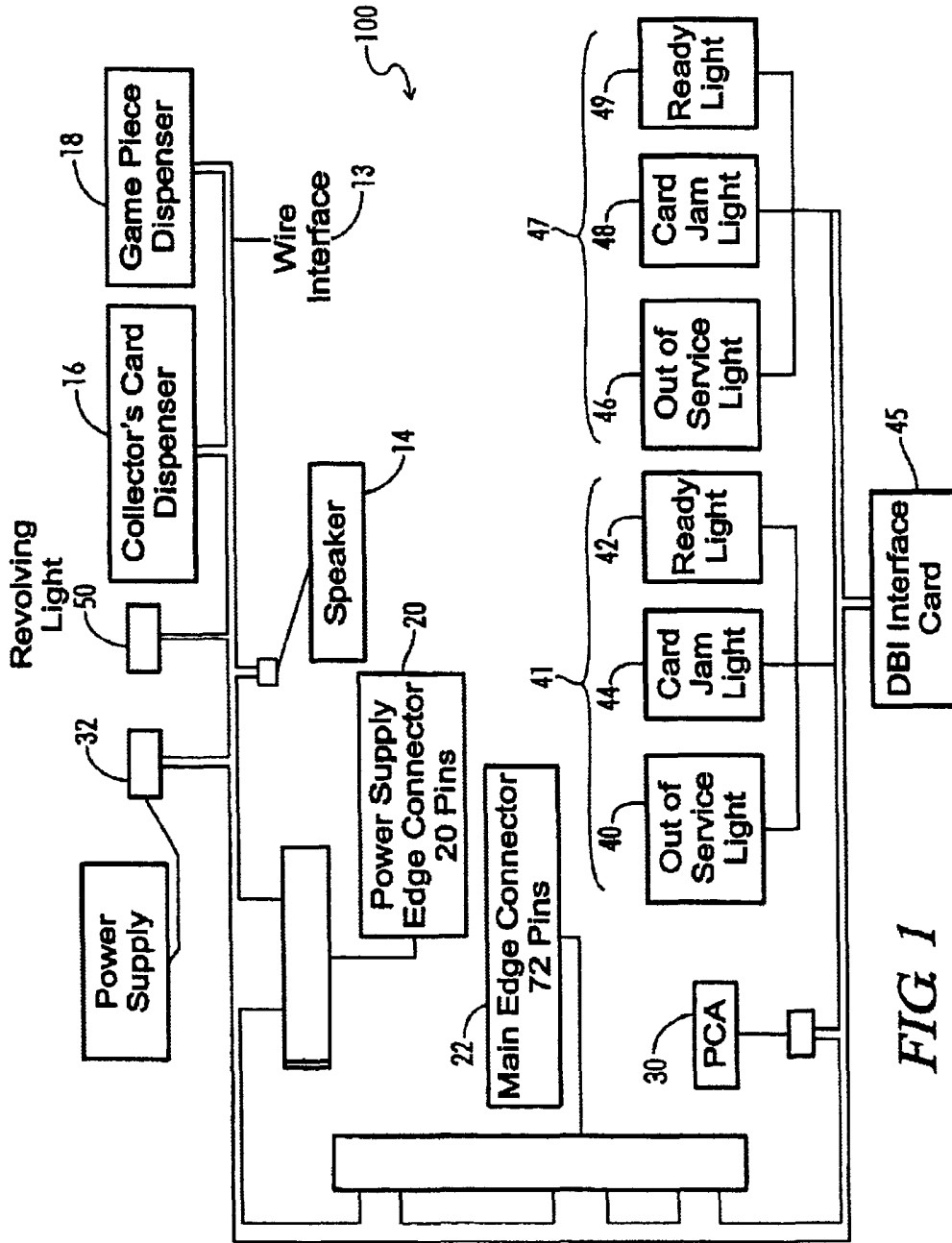


FIG 1

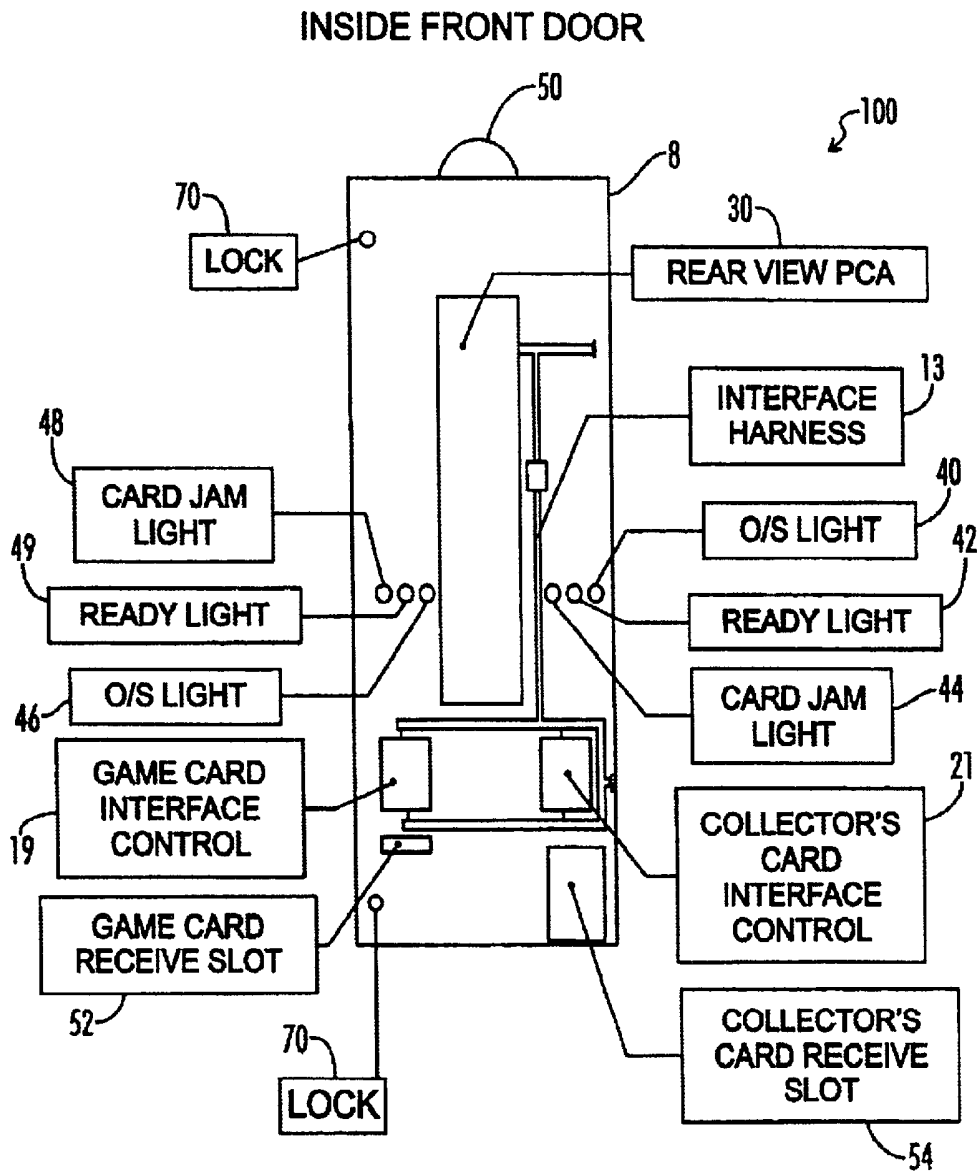
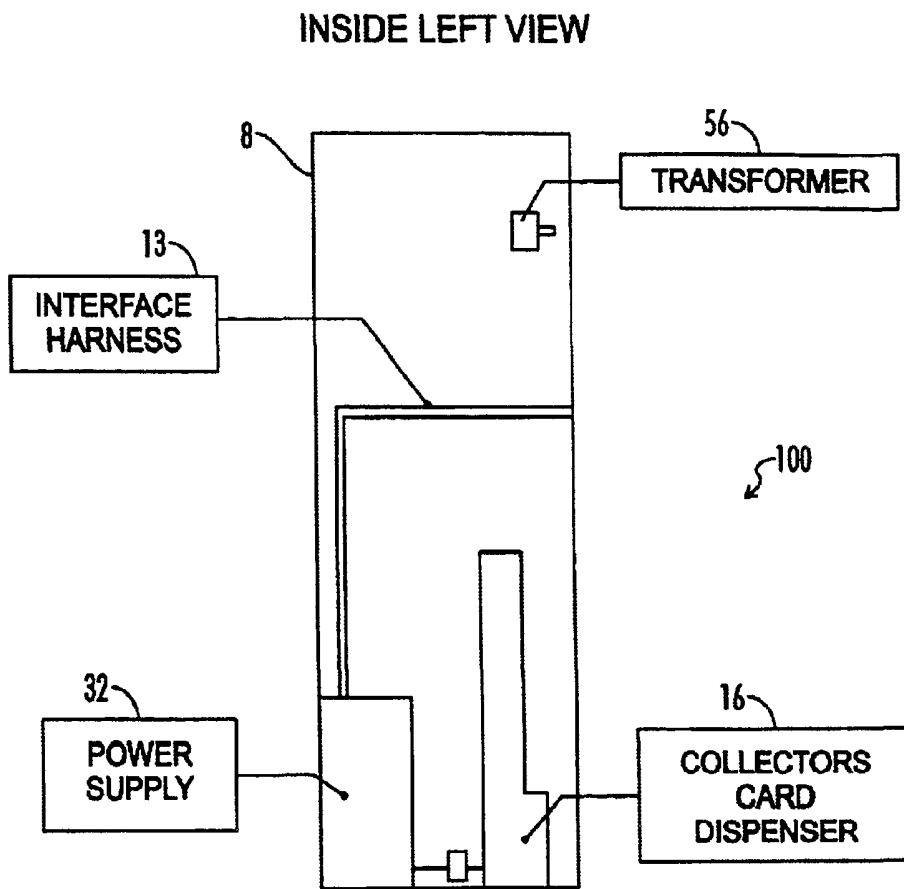


FIG 2



INSIDE RIGHT FRONT VIEW

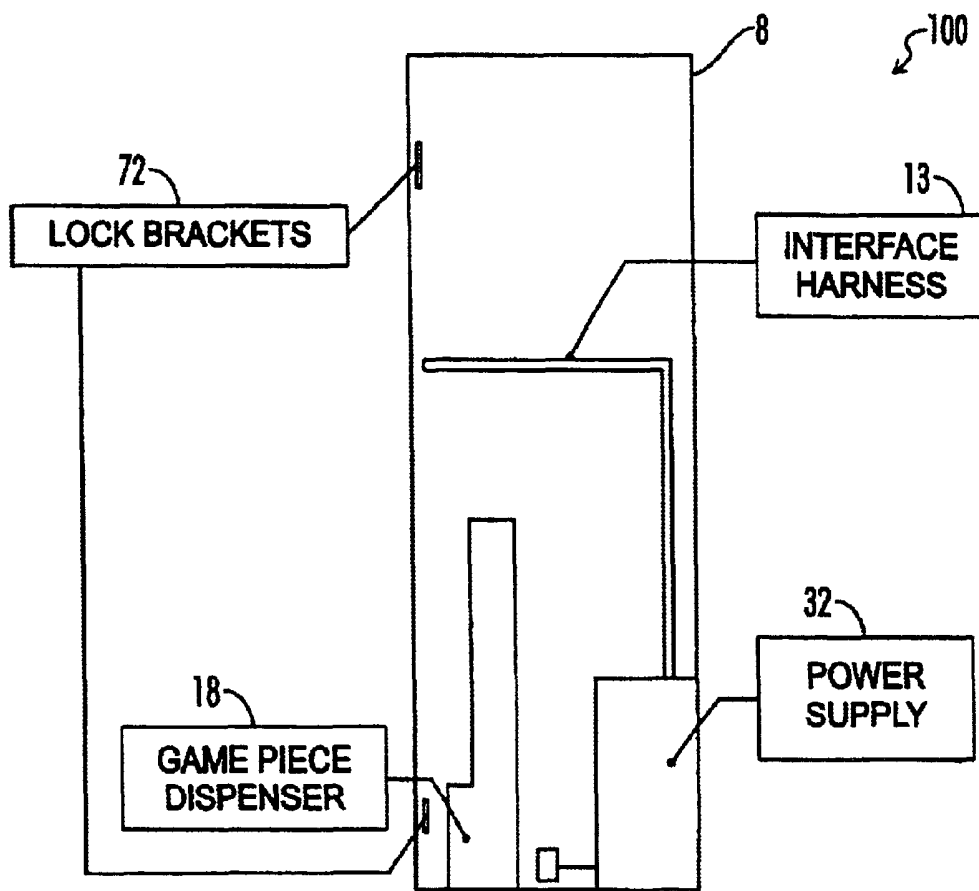
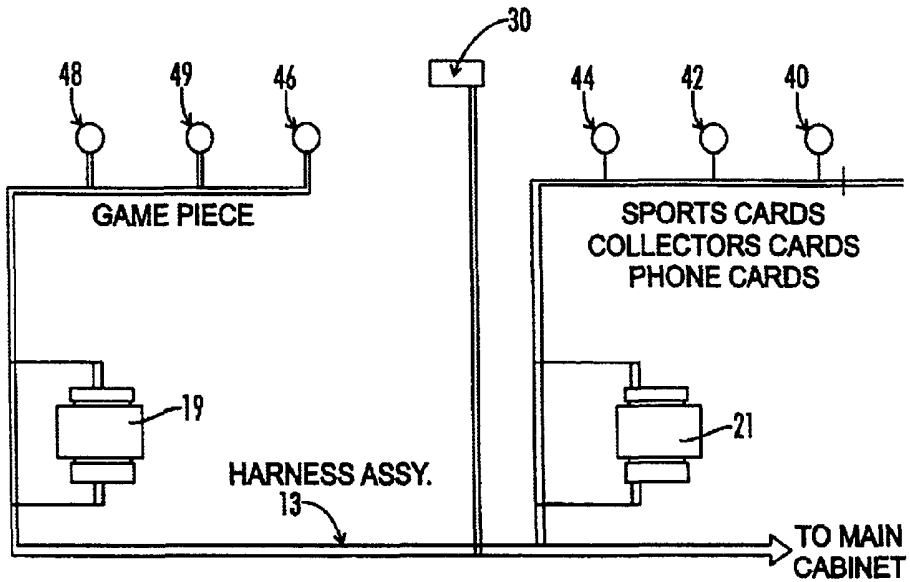


FIG. 4



FRONT DOOR ASSEMBLY (HARNESS)
FREE TAB
VENDOR WITH PROMO GAME PIECE

FIG. 5

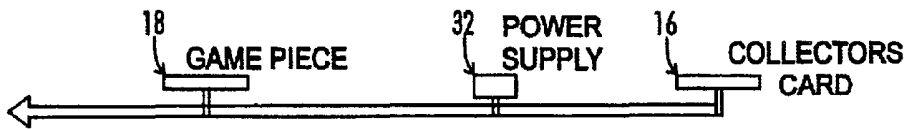


FIG. 6

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**COLLECTOR CARD/PHONE CARD
DISPENSING SYSTEM WITH
PROMOTIONAL INSTANT WIN GAME
PIECE FEATURE**

This application is a continuation-in-part application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 08/925,860 filed Sep. 9, 1997, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,213,874 entitled "Collector Card/Phone Card Dispensing System with Promotional Free Spin/Free Draw Game Feature."

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to a device for distributing cards, and, in particular, to a card dispensing machine and system that includes a promotional Instant Win Card game feature used to increase interest in purchasing such collector's cards.

Collecting special collector's series cards, or collector's cards, has become increasingly popular with the general public. Such collector's cards are used for entertainment purposes in various ways, such as exchanging them with other collectors or saving them as a memento containing special significance to the collector. Collecting these cards has grown to such a great extent that it is reported that certain distributors of collector's cards distribute over one billion cards each year. Therefore, distributors are continuously looking for new and unusual ways to distribute collector's cards and to increase interest in their particular brand of cards.

Most new collector's cards are purchased at retail stores and specialty shops from counter stock or display stock. The customer selects the card or the card package and then pays a clerk or cashier. Promotions are often tied into the sale, such as bubble gum, three-dimensional cards, and stickers, to increase distribution. Therefore, it is advantageous to a distributor to provide a distinguishing promotion in order to encourage customers to purchase their collector's cards. What is needed, however, is a system and method of distributing collector's cards to customers that is efficient and low cost and that adds promotional value to the transaction.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an automated dispenser system and method for distributing collector's cards that includes a promotional device that provides an opportunity to a user to play an instant win game. A novel feature of this system is the unique manner in which both the collector's card and the instant win game piece are dispensed in conjunction so that the buyer will have a promotional opportunity to play an instant win game when the buyer purchases a collector's card. In accordance with one object of the invention, a paper currency acceptor accepts currency from a user and then a computerized card dispenser delivers a collector's card to the user in response thereto. To increase the value to the collector, a computerized promotional game piece dispenser is also provided in the system, wherein the game piece dispenser includes a promotional feature for amusement which confers a game piece or pieces to the user for the user to play an instant win match game simultaneously with the purchase of a collector's card.

The instant win game can be one of many games played on a single game piece, such as a pull-tab game or a rub-off game. If the customer has a pull-tab game piece, then the customer can break open the pull-tab on the game piece to determine if the customer is a winner. If the customer has a

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rub-off game piece, then the customer can rub off a covering on the game piece to view a hidden pattern of symbols that reveals if the customer has won a promotional prize.

The operation of the system is overseen by a licensee who is able to assist in the distribution of the games. The licensee is also needed to provide free game pieces for persons with vouchers from a No Purchase Entry form so that the person can play a promotional game without purchasing a product.

A preferred embodiment of the system combines a pair of interface cards connected to the collector's card dispenser and the game piece dispenser. A collector's card dispenser interface card is connected to the collector's card dispenser to control the collector's card dispenser. Additionally, the game piece dispenser interface card is connected to the game piece dispenser to control the game piece dispenser. These connections will allow the card dispensers to work in conjunction with the distribution of the collector's cards and the instant win game pieces after the insertion of the appropriate amount of money. Additionally, both the collector's card dispenser and the game piece dispenser provide information to the user using an Out of Service light, a Card Jam light, and a Ready light.

When either dispenser is depleted of stock or game pieces, two things occur. An interrupt switch is activated by either the collector's card dispenser interface card or the free game piece dispenser interface card, depending on which dispenser is empty, and the switch disables the system from playing until the licensee of the system places more product in the dispenser. Concurrently, an "Out of Service" light on the cabinet is illuminated with respect to the dispenser that is empty and the licensee of the system is thereby notified to replenish the system either with collector's cards or with promotional game pieces.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of the dispensing system of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the components of the system as viewed from inside of the front system cabinet door.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the system as viewed from inside the left side of the system cabinet.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of the system as viewed from inside the right front of the system cabinet.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of the wiring harness associated with the front door of the system cabinet.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an internal wiring harness of the system.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED
EMBODIMENTS**

Referring now to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows the connection of the main components of the collector's card dispensing system 100 of the present invention: pair of the microprocessor controlled interface cards 19, 21 (FIGS. 2 and 5) using copyrighted control program associated with the interface cards 19, 21; a collector's card dispenser apparatus 16; and a game piece dispenser apparatus 18 mounted inside a system cabinet 8 (FIGS. 3 and 4). These components are integrated together via a wired interface 13, or an interface harness as shown on FIG. 6. The interface 13 will incorporate a power supply bus and a data bus to provide for communication of electrical signals and commands to the various electronic and electromechanical devices shown on FIG. 1. The power supply 32 is shown at the base of the cabinet 8 in FIGS. 3 and 4. The power supply

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32 is connected to all the electronic and electromechanical devices throughout the system 100, including both the collector's card dispenser 16 and the game piece dispenser 18. The power supply 32 receives power from a wall outlet.

The collector's card dispenser 16 is a conventional electro-
 5 tromechnical machine of Asahi-Seiko, USA, model CD-1300 or similar style, that is used to distribute the collector's series cards (such as sports cards) or phone cards upon insertion of money into the paper currency acceptor ("PCA") 30. The PCA 30 is conventionally used in food
 10 vending machines, and sends an electrical signal to the control interface card 21 (FIG. 2) to register the correct amount of currency credits received in relation to the value of the currency inserted. The interface card 21 then directs the collector's card dispenser 16 to dispense the appropriate
 15 number of collector's cards as related to the dip switch settings interpreted by the program on the interface card 21. Simultaneously, the PCA 30 sends a signal to interface card 19 to register the correct amount of currency credits received in relation to the value of the currency inserted. The interface
 20 card 19 then directs the game piece dispenser 18 to dispense the appropriate number of instant win game pieces as related to the dip switch setting interpreted by the program on the interface card 19

The game piece dispenser 18 is a conventional electro-
 25 mechanical machine of Asahi-Seiko, USA, model CD-1100 or similar style, used to distribute various kinds of game pieces whereby a game can be played on a single game piece. Such games include a pull-tab game or a rub-off game. To play the pull-tab game piece, the customer breaks
 30 open the pull-tab on the game piece to determine if the customer is a winner. To play the rub-off game piece, the customer must rub off a covering on the game piece to view a hidden pattern of symbols that reveals if the customer has won a promotional prize.

The operation of the system and the play of the game pieces are overseen by a licensee who is able to assist in the distribution of the games. The licensee is also needed to provide free game pieces for persons with vouchers from
 40 winning game pieces so that the person can play a promotional game.

In the operation of the collector's card dispensing system 100, the user first enters currency (coin or paper) into the PCA 30. The PCA 30 then sends a signal to the collector's
 45 card dispenser 16 (through a collector's card interface control card 21) and the game piece dispenser 18 (through a game piece interface control card 19) to distribute a number of collector's cards and instant win game pieces corresponding to the number of credits associated with the
 50 currency provided the system.

Physically, the system is housed in a system cabinet 8 as shown in FIGS. 2-4. The cabinet 8 has a set of locks 70 (see FIG. 2) that intersect with the lock brackets 72 (see FIG. 4).

Additionally, there are two sets of identifying lights that are located on the game cabinet 8 as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2: a collector's card informational light display 41 (comprising indicator lights 40, 42 and 44 shown on FIGS. 1 and 5) used with the collector's card dispenser 16 and a
 55 game piece information light display 47 (comprising indicator lights 46, 48, and 49 shown on FIGS. 1 and 5) used with the game piece dispenser 18. Therefore, the system is able to notify the licensee in control of the system when there is a problem with either the collector's card dispenser 16 or the game piece dispenser 18. In either case, the licensee will be able to find and correct the problem in one
 60 dispenser without disrupting the other dispenser.

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If either the collector's card dispenser 16 or the instant win game piece dispenser 18 should become empty, an interrupt switch (not shown) located inside both the collector's card dispenser 16 and the instant win game piece
 5 dispenser 18 would prevent operation of the system 100 until the empty dispenser is refilled. During the period while the system 100 is empty of cards, a "Collector's Card Out of Service" light 40 would be illuminated if the collector's card dispenser 16 was empty or a "Game Piece Out of Service" light 46 would be illuminated if the game piece dispenser 18 was empty. Either Out of Service light 40, 46 would thereby
 10 notify the licensee to replenish the empty supply.

Additionally, the system provides for two other indicator lights used with the collector's card information light display 41 of the collector's card dispenser 16 and the game
 15 piece informational light display 47 of the game piece dispenser 18. A "Collector's Card Jam" light 44 notifies the licensee if the collector's card dispenser 16 becomes jammed, or a "Game Piece Jam" light 48 notifies the licensee if the game piece dispenser 18 becomes jammed. The "Collector's Card Dispensed" light 42 notifies the user that the collector's card has been delivered into the collector's card receive slot 54 (FIG. 2), and a "Game Piece
 20 Dispensed" light 48 notifies the user that the instant win game piece has been delivered into the game piece receive slot 52 (FIG. 2).

During operation of the game, the system can generate effects to make the game more exciting. A speaker system 14 may be connected to the system 100 to allow for sound effects or any other type of beneficial sound. Further, a revolving light 50 may be placed on top of the cabinet containing the system to be activated when a user wins, as shown in FIG. 2.

Thus, although there have been described particular embodiments of the present invention of a new and useful Collector Card/Phone Card Dispensing System with Promotional Instant Win Game Piece Feature, it is not intended that such references be construed as limitations upon the scope of this invention except as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for dispensing collector's cards to a user comprising:
 - a system cabinet;
 - a currency acceptor mounted in the system cabinet;
 - a plurality of collector's cards stored in the system cabinet, each of the collector's cards having an intrinsic value that is not dependent on a game of chance;
 - a plurality of promotional game pieces stored in the system cabinet, each of the promotional game pieces having a game piece value determined by a promotional game of chance separate from the system;
 - a collector's card dispensing mechanism operative to dispense the collector's cards, the collector's card dispensing mechanism mounted in the system cabinet;
 - a game piece dispensing mechanism operative to dispense the promotional game pieces separately from the collector's cards, the game piece dispensing mechanism being mounted in the system cabinet but separate from the collector's card dispensing mechanism;
 - a collector's card dispenser interface operatively connected to the currency acceptor and to the collector's card dispensing mechanism,
 - a game piece dispenser interface operatively connected to the currency acceptor and to the game piece dispensing mechanism;

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the game piece dispenser interface and the collector's card dispenser interface each being operable to receive a currency received signal from the currency acceptor; the collector's card dispenser interface being operable to send a collector's card distribution signal to the collector's card dispensing mechanism to dispense the collector's card in response to the currency received signal; the game piece dispenser interface being operable to send a game piece distribution signal to the game piece dispensing mechanism to dispense the game piece in response to the currency received signal so that when a user of the system enters currency into the currency acceptor that is sufficient to purchase the collector's card, the separate game piece is simultaneously dispensed as a free game piece; and

interrupt means to prevent the game piece dispensing mechanism from dispensing the free game piece in response to the currency received signal if no collector's card is available in the system to be dispensed from the collector's card dispensing mechanism

2. The system of claim 1 further comprising a game piece informational light display connected to the game piece dispensing mechanism to provide operating information to the user.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein the game piece informational light display further comprises a game piece jam light, the game piece jam light operating when a game piece cannot be dispensed through the game piece dispensing mechanism.

4. The system of claim 2 wherein the game piece informational light display further comprises a game piece out of service light, the game piece out of service light operating when the game piece dispensing mechanism is empty of game pieces.

5. The system of claim 2 wherein the game piece informational light display further comprises a game piece ready light, the game piece ready light operating when the game piece dispensing mechanism is operating properly.

6. The system of claim 1 further comprising a collector's card informational light display connected to the collector's card dispensing mechanism to provide operating information to the user.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the collector's card informational light display further comprises a collector's card jam light, the collector's card jam light operating when a collector's card cannot be dispensed through the collector's card dispensing mechanism.

8. The system of claim 6 wherein the collector's card informational light display further comprises a collector's card out of service light, the collector's card out of service light operating when the collector's card dispensing mechanism is empty of collector's cards.

9. The system of claim 6 wherein the collector's card informational light display further comprises a collector's card ready light, the collector's card ready light operating when the collector's card dispensing mechanism is operating properly.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the collector's cards include sports cards.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein the collector's cards include phone cards.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the game piece is a pull tab game piece.

13. The system of claim 1 wherein the game piece is a rub-off game piece.

14. A method of distributing collector's cards from a collector's card dispensing system to a user comprising the steps of:

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accepting currency from the user through an electromechanical currency acceptor associated with the system, analyzing the currency received from the user to determine the amount of credits to register;

providing a signal to a collector's card dispenser interface from the currency acceptor, the signal corresponding to a predetermined amount of currency deposited in the currency acceptor, the predetermined amount corresponding to an intrinsic value of at least one of the collector's cards, the intrinsic value being independent of a game of chance;

providing a signal from the collector's card dispenser interface to the collector's card dispensing mechanism; dispensing the collector's card from a collector's card dispensing mechanism according to the signal provided by the microprocessor;

providing a signal to a game piece dispenser interface from the currency acceptor, the signal corresponding to the amount of currency deposited in the currency acceptor;

providing a signal from the game piece dispenser interface to a game piece dispensing mechanism that is separate from the collector's card dispensing mechanism;

dispensing the game piece from the game piece dispensing mechanism according to the signal provided by the microprocessor so that the user simultaneously receives the game piece as a separate free bonus game piece when the user purchases the collector's card, the game piece having a value that is dependent on a game of chance separate from the card dispensing system; and interrupting operation of the game piece dispensing mechanism when no collector's cards are available for dispensing from the collector's card dispensing mechanism.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of promoting the dispensing of the collector's card from the system after the collector's card is dispensed from the collector's card dispensing mechanism using a rotating lamp.

16. The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of promoting the dispensing of the collector's card from the system using a speaker connected to the microprocessor.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising: providing a collector's card selected from a card group, the card group comprising sports cards and phone cards.

18. The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of providing a free game piece to the user in response to receiving a voucher from the user.

19. An apparatus for marketing collector's cards to a user comprising:

a wire interface;

a supply of collector's cards stored in the apparatus, each of the collector's cards having an intrinsic value that is not dependent on a game of chance;

a supply of game pieces stored in the apparatus separately from the collector's cards, each of the game pieces having a value that is dependent on a separate game of chance;

a collector's card dispenser to distribute the collector's cards, the card dispenser connected to the wire interface;

a game piece dispenser to distribute the game pieces, the game piece dispenser connected to the wire interface,

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the game piece dispenser being separate from the collector's card dispenser;

a currency acceptor to receive coins or paper currency, the currency acceptor connected through the wire interface to a microprocessor and operable to provide a signal to the microprocessor corresponding to the amount of currency deposited into the currency acceptor;

the microprocessor operable to provide a signal to the collector's card dispenser and to the game piece dispenser to cause the distribution of the collector's card and the separate game piece in response to entry of sufficient currency to purchase the collector's card; and the microprocessor further operable to interrupt operation of the game piece dispenser if no collector's cards are available in the apparatus for dispensing from the collector's card dispenser.

20. The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising:
a plurality of game piece dispenser status lights connected to the game piece dispenser to inform the user of the status of the game piece dispenser.

21. The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising:
a plurality of collector's card dispenser status lights connected to the collector's card dispenser to inform the user of the status of the collector's card dispenser.

22. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the collector's cards include sports cards.

23. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the collector's cards include phone cards.

24. A method of selling collector cards from a collector card vending machine to a purchaser, the method comprising the steps of:

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- (a) supplying the vending machine with a plurality of collector cards, each of the collector cards having an intrinsic value that is not dependent on a game of chance;
 - (b) supplying the vending machine with a plurality of promotional game pieces, each of the promotional game pieces having a game piece value determined by a promotional game of chance separate from the vending machine;
 - (c) offering to dispense to the card purchaser a promotional game piece, conditioned upon a user purchasing, and the vending machine dispensing at least one of the collector cards;
 - (d) accepting currency into the vending machine;
 - (e) registering in the vending machine a value of the currency accepted;
 - (f) dispensing from a first product dispenser in the vending machine at least one of the collector's cards when the value of the currency accepted is at least equal to a predetermined collector card value corresponding to the intrinsic value of at least one of the collector cards; and
 - (g) conditioned on at least one of the collector cards being dispensed from the first product dispenser, dispensing from a second product dispenser in the vending machine at least one of the promotional game pieces.
25. The method of claim 24 further comprising the step of alternatively providing a free game piece to a user in response to receiving a free game voucher from the user.

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