System And Method For Gift Giving

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates broadly to a system and method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, as well as a computer readable data storage medium having stored thereon computer code means for instructing a computer to execute a method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party.

BACKGROUND

The advent of the Internet age has brought about many changes to the means with which people communicate today. Today, people frequently communicate with each other using an electronic media via instant messaging (IM), voice chatting, email etc. In these instances they may only know the electronic address of the party (email address, instant messaging ID, etc) and not much else e.g. the physical address or names of the other party. In addition to the ease of communicating, electronic media also provides for safety and security as the two parties are able to communicate without knowing other information such as phone numbers, physical addresses or even the real identity. This has fueled the popularity of the electronic media significantly.

However, such communications via an electronic media are limited to exchange of electronic information (messages, pictures, videos, files etc). In real-life, as one gets to know people better it is natural to give gifts and other items that are essentially non-electronic in nature and hence cannot be given over the electronic media. For example, as one person communicates with another person using electronic addresses and gets to know them, (s)he may then want to exchange physical objects (give gifts etc) that cannot be exchanged using electronic means. However, one may not wish to reveal any further information about themselves to the other party.

This is different from a 'secret admirer'-type scenario, where the sender of the gift usually knows the address information of the recipient for the delivery of the gift and the gift is delivered in a way that the recipient has no prior knowledge of the gift and hence (s)he has no opportunity to accept or reject the gift.

In "Blind Gift Method and System" (USPTO patent application, US2002/0095298), a system for gifting where the gift originates at an on-line 'blind gift website' is discussed. However, the gift has to originate from the on-line 'blind gift shop' and there is no sending of a gift from the possession of the Giver to a "Giftee". The gift has to be selected from the on-line gift shop by the Giver and the system then sends it to the Giftee. In another words, the Giver cannot give a particular gift that is in his/her possession to the Giftee.

Therefore, a need exists to provide a system and method for gift giving that seek to address one or more problems mentioned above.

SUMMARY

In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the method comprising the steps of producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

The step of producing the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party may comprise producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider, and producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

The computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider and the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party may be produced by computer systems of the gift giving service provider and the other gift giving service provider respectively.

The delivery address of the second party may comprise a mailing service address, and the method may further comprise receiving the gift at the mailing service address, and forwarding the gift to an actual address of the second party.

The method may further comprise performing electronic communications between the first party, the second party, and a computer system of the gift giving service provider using one or more electronic communication servers.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the second party for producing computer instructions for executing permission instructions from the second party.

The permission instructions may include one or more of a group consisting of one time permission, permission for a specific gift, permission for open-ended or limited time duration, permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts and permission subject to stored information about the first party.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for executing permission requests from the first party.

The permission request may include a gift description.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for enabling the first party to respond to stored information about the first party.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a system for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the system comprising means for producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

The means for producing the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party may comprises means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider, and means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

The computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider and the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party may be produced by computer systems of the gift giving service provider and the other gift giving service provider respectively.

The delivery address of the second party may comprise a mailing service address, and the system may further comprise means for receiving the gift at the mailing service address, and forwarding the gift to an actual address of the second party.

The system may further comprise means for performing electronic communications between the first party, the second party, and a computer system of the gift giving service provider using one or more electronic communication servers.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the second party for producing computer instructions for executing permission instructions from the second party.

The permission instructions may include one or more of a group consisting of one time permission, permission for a specific gift, permission for open-ended or limited

time duration, permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts and permission subject to stored information about the first party.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for executing permission requests from the first party.

The permission request may include a gift description.

The electronic communications may comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for enabling the first party to respond to stored information about the first party.

The means for producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party may comprise computer devices respectively for said gift giving service provider and for said first party.

The means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party may comprise computer devices respectively for said gift giving service provider and for said second party.

In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a computer readable data storage medium having stored thereon computer code means for instructing a computer to execute a method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the method comprising the steps of producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will be better understood and readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from the following written description, by way of example only, and in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows an example embodiment of a gift giving system to facilitate gift-giving between a giver and a giftee sharing the same EC service provider, where the EC service provider is also the gift giving service provider.

Figure 2 shows a variation to the first example embodiment where the giver and the giftee utilises different EC and gift giving service providers.

Figure 3 shows another variation to the first example embodiment where the giftee elects to use a personal mailing service.

Figure 4 shows a second example embodiment of the gift system to facilitate gift-giving between a giver and a giftee.

Figure 5 shows the method and system of the example embodiment implemented on a computer system.

Figure 6 shows the method and system of the example embodiment on a wireless device.

Figure 7 shows a flowchart illustrating the method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Some portions of the description which follows are explicitly or implicitly presented in terms of algorithms and functional or symbolic representations of operations on data within a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions and

functional or symbolic representations are the means used by those skilled in the data processing arts to convey most effectively the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An algorithm is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring physical manipulations of physical quantities, such as electrical, magnetic or optical signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, and as apparent from the following, it will be appreciated that throughout the present specification, discussions utilizing terms such as "authenticating", "forwarding", "determining", "creating", "generating", "communicating", "providing", or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical quantities within the computer system into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system or other information storage, transmission or display devices.

The present specification also discloses apparatus for performing the operations of the methods. Such apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or may comprise a general purpose computer or other device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. Various general purpose machines may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein. Alternatively, the construction of more specialized apparatus to perform the required method steps may be appropriate. The structure of a conventional general purpose computer will appear from the description below.

In addition, the present specification also implicitly discloses a computer program, in that it would be apparent to the person skilled in the art that the individual steps of the method described herein may be put into effect by computer code. The computer program is not intended to be limited to any particular programming language and implementation thereof. It will be appreciated that a variety of programming languages and coding thereof may be used to implement the teachings of the disclosure contained herein. Moreover, the computer program is not intended to be limited to any

particular control flow. There are many other variants of the computer program, which can use different control flows without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention.

Furthermore, one or more of the steps of the computer program may be performed in parallel rather than sequentially. Such a computer program may be stored on any computer readable medium. The computer readable medium may include storage devices such as magnetic or optical disks, memory chips, or other storage devices suitable for interfacing with a general purpose computer. The computer readable medium may also include a hard-wired medium such as exemplified in the Internet system, or wireless medium such as exemplified in the GSM mobile telephone system. The computer program when loaded and executed on such a general-purpose computer effectively results in an apparatus that implements the steps of the preferred method.

Embodiments of the present invention provide a system and method to enable gift giving between individuals who only have electronic details of each other. As an example, suppose Alice and Bob know each other only through IM and only communicate electronically. Therefore, they are only aware of each other's IM electronic address (or other electronic identification). Alice wants to give Bob a gift G that cannot be given via the electronic communications means due to the nature of the gift G or for some other reason. However, Alice and Bob do not wish to reveal any further information about themselves to the other party in the process of gift-giving. This may be achieved through the use of a gift-giving service provider which is aware of both the physical addresses of both Alice and Bob and acts as the proxy for the gift-giving, i.e. Alice sends the gift to the gift-giving service provider who forwards it to Bob without any of them knowing each other's physical address. Embodiments of the present invention seek to facilitate such gift-giving without the further revealing of giver or taker ("giftee") information.

For clarity and consistency in the detailed descriptions, definitions of the terms are provided as follows:

SP	Service Provider for Gift-Giving
MS1	Mailing Service for carrying Gift from Giver to SP
MS2	Mailing Service for carrying Gift from SP to Giftee

	MS1 and MS2 can be the same Mailing Service (MS).
EC	Electronic Communications (e.g. instant messaging (IM), voice chatting, email etc)
SP_EC	Service Provider of electronic communications to Giver & Giftee (e.g. Yahoo, MSN, Skype etc)
SP_EC_Giver	Service Provider of electronic communications to Giver (e.g. Yahoo, MSN, Skype etc)
SP_EC_Giftee	Service Provider of electronic communications to Giftee (e.g. Yahoo, MSN, Skype etc)
Giver_ID	Giver's ID for electronic communication provided by SP_IM_Giver
Giftee_ID	Giftee's ID for electronic communication provided by SP_IM_Giftee
Giver_PA	Physical address of Giver
Giftee_PA	Physical address of Giftee
SP_Giver	Physical address of SP the gift is sent to by Giver
SP_Giftee	Physical address the gift is sent from by SP to Giftee_PA.
ML1	Mailing label placed on the gift when it is sent from Giver_PA to SP_Giver
ML2	Mailing label placed on the gift when it is sent from SP_Giftee to Giftee_PA
ML_EC	inter-EC mailing label
MS_EC	inter-EC mailing service

Table 1

Figure 1 shows a first example embodiment of the gift giving system to facilitate gift-giving between a giver 102 and a giftee 104. The solid lines show the flow of electronic information, while the dotted lines show the physical flow of gifts via the mail delivery systems. In this example embodiment, the giver 102 and giftee 104 share the same EC service provider, SP_EC, and the SP_EC is also (or partner of) the gift giving service provider, SP. Therefore, the example embodiment shows a gift giving system comprising a single service provider 100 for both EC and gift giving. In this example embodiment, giver 102 seeks to give the giftee 104 a gift, but they only know of each other's ID information provided by the Member Communication Module (MCM) 106; that is, giver 102 knows giftee_ID and giftee 104 knows giver_ID and have given permission to each other for EC with this ID information.

Communicating via MCM 106, giver 102 first makes his/her intention known to giftee 104 and they agree to this gift-giving. Giver 102 and Giftee 104 establish a joint session on the Gift Module (GM) 108 and provide pertinent info e.g. physical addresses to GM 108. GM 108 may also provide giftee 104 with certain feedback information about giver 102 based on past gift-giving feedback from previous gift receivers, for enabling the giftee to give permission instructions subject to stored information about the first party. Also, giver 102 may have been provided an opportunity by GM 108 to respond to such feedbacks and such responses may also be included in the feedback information provided to giftee 104. The pertinent information with regard to the joint session is stored in the GM 108 data-base.

GM 108 creates a first mailing label, ML1, for shipping from giver 102 to the Package Management Module (PMM) 110 and sends it to giver 102 (via email EC or downloaded from a web-site). ML1 should contain at least the PMM's physical address and an identification tag. Details on the contents of ML1 will be described in further detail. Giver 102 then prints ML1 and uses ML1 for shipping of gift to PMM 110. The package containing gift is then sent by giver 102 to PMM 110. When PMM 110 receives the package, it checks ML1 & verifies the authenticity of the package. A delivery notification may be provided by GM 108 to giver 102. ML1 is removed from the package by the PMM 110.

GM 108 then creates a second mailing label, ML2, for shipping of package from PMM 110 to giftee 104. ML2 should contain at least the giftee's physical address and an identification tag. Details on the contents of ML2 will be described in further detail. GM 108 may further instruct PMM 110 to repackage or follow some other instructions from giftee 104. GM 108 may provide notification and ML2 information to giftee 104 in advance and may use his preferences and selections in creating ML2. In the event that certain conditions such as "permission by giftee 104" are not met, ML2 is not created and the gift may be returned to giver 102 or destroyed. If ML2 is successfully created, PMM 110 uses ML2 for shipping package from PMM 110 to Giftee using ML2. The package is then sent by PMM 110 to the giftee's personal address from PMM 110.

When the giftee 104 receives the package. Giftee 104 may be requested to sign for its receipt. Giftee 104 may also provide certain feedback to GM 108 about the entire

experience and also on the gift. GM 108 may then also provide delivery information to the giver 102.

Figure 2 shows a variation to the first embodiment of the gift giving system 200 where the giver 202 and the giftee 204 utilise different EC service providers 206 and 208 with each EC service provider 206 and 208 further providing their individual gift giving services. The solid lines show the flow of electronic information, while the dotted lines show the physical flow of gifts via the mail delivery systems. In this embodiment, the package is sent by giver 202 to PMM 210 of service provider 206, using a first mailing label ML1 generated by the Gift Module 212 of service provider 206 over a first Mailing Service, MS1. PMM 210 then sends it to PMM 220 using another inter-EC mailing label ML_EC over an inter-EC mailing service MS_EC. The service providers 206 and 208 may also provide for the gift to be sent from giver 202 to PMM 220 of service provider 208 directly.

The Giver and/or Giftee may also use their own mailing services for the mailing of packages. Figure 3 shows another variation to the first embodiment of the gift giving system 300 where the giver and giftee utilise the same EC service provider who also provides gift giving services with the giftee electing to use his personal mailing service. The solid lines show the flow of electronic information, while the dotted lines show the physical flow of gifts via the mail delivery systems. In this embodiment, the service provider 306 will send the gift to an address designated by the giftee's mailing service 308 which in turn will then send it to giftee 304. This way giftee 304 does not have to provide his or her physical mailing address to the gift giving service provider 306. It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that the example may similarly be applied to a giver 302 using his or her mailing service so that giver 302 does not have to provide her physical address to the gift giving service provider 306.

In another variation to the first embodiment, as with instant messaging communication, the service providers may have a system for the giver to seek permission from the giftee to send gifts. Such permission can have features such as (i) one time permission, (ii) permission for a specific gift, (iii) permission for open-ended or limited time duration, (iv) permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts, etc.

In addition, the giver may contact the service providers to give a gift to giftee without first seeking the giftee's permission. The giver may elect to describe the gift to the service provider, and request the service provider to offer the gift to giftee on behalf of giver when giftee nexts logs into his account with the service provider. In this case, the service provider will describe the gift to giftee and seek the giftee's permission before notifying the giver to further decide on the subsequent course of action. The giver may then decide to send the gift in his possession.

If the giver has given authorization for all gifts to be accepted without further permission, the giver may then directly begin the gift-giving process with the service provider without involving Giftee and send the gift.

Figure 4 shows a second example embodiment of the gift giving system to facilitate gift-giving between a giver 402 and a giftee 404. The solid lines show the flow of electronic information, while the dotted lines show the physical flow of gifts via the mail delivery systems. In this example embodiment, the giver 402 and giftee 404 use different EC service providers 406 and 408. Giver 402 seeks to give the giftee 404 a gift, but they only know of each other's ID information provided by their respective EC service providers 406 and 408. In other words, giver 402 knows giftee_ID and giftee 404 knows giver_ID and have given permission to each other for EC communication electronically with this ID information.

Communicating via their individual EC service providers, giver 402 first makes his/her intention known to giftee 404 and they agree to the gift-giving. Giver 402 and giftee 404 establish a joint session on the Gift giving service Provider 410 and provide it with pertinent info e.g. EC provider, user identities on the EC provider, etc. The Gift giving service Provider 410 may also provide the giftee 404 with certain feedback information about giver 402 based on past gift-giving feedback from previous gift receivers, for enabling the giftee to give permission instructions subject to stored information about the first party. Also, giver 402 may have been provided an opportunity by the service provider 410 to respond to such feedbacks and such responses may also be included in the feedback information provided to giftee 404. The pertinent information with regard to the joint session is stored in a database of the Gift giving service Provider 410.

The Gift giving service Provider 410 then creates a first mailing label, ML1, for shipping from giver 402 to the service provider 410 and sends it to giver 402 (via email, EC or downloaded from a web-site). ML1 should contain at least the physical address and the identification tag of the service provider 410. Details on the contents of ML1 will be described in further detail. Giver 402 then prints ML1 and uses ML1 for shipping of gift to the service provider 410. The package containing the gift is then sent by giver 402 to the service provider 410. When the service provider 410 receives the package, it checks ML1 & verifies the authenticity of the package. A delivery notification may be provided by the service provider 410 to giver 402. ML1 is removed from the package by the service provider 410.

Next, the service provider 410 then creates a second mailing label, ML2, for shipping of package from the service provider 410 giftee 404. ML2 should contain at least the giftee's physical address and an identification tag. Details on the contents of ML2 will be described in further detail. The service provider 410 may even repackage or follow some other instructions from giftee 404. The service provider 410 may provide notification and ML2 information to giftee 404 in advance and may use his preferences and selections in creating ML2. In the event that certain conditions such as "permission by giftee 404" are not met, ML2 is not created and the gift may be returned to giver 402 or destroyed. If ML2 is successfully created, the service provider 410 uses ML2 for shipping package from the service provider 410 to Giftee. The package is then sent by the service provider 410 to the personal address of the giftee 404.

When the giftee 404 receives the package, giftee 404 may be requested to sign for its receipt. Giftee 404 may also provide certain feedback to the service provider 408 about the entire experience and also on the gift. The service provider 408 may then also provide delivery information to the giver 102.

The Giver and/or Giftee may also use their own mailing services for the mailing of packages. In an example embodiment where the giftee uses his or her own personal mailing service, the service provider will send the gift to an address designated by the giftee's mailing service which in turn will then send it to giftee. This way giftee does not have to provide his or her physical mailing address to the gift giving service provider. It

will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that the example may similarly be applied to a giver using his or her mailing service so that giver does not have to provide his or her physical address to the gift giving service provider.

In another variation to the second preferred embodiment, as with instant messaging communication, the service providers may have a system for the giver to seek permission from the giftee to send gifts. Such permission can have features such as (i) one time permission, (ii) permission for a specific gift, (iii) permission for open-ended or limited time duration, (iv) permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts, etc.

In addition, the giver may contact the service providers to give a gift to giftee without first seeking the giftee's permission. The giver may elect to describe the gift to the service provider, and request the service provider to offer the gift to giftee on behalf of giver when giftee nexts logs into his account with the service provider. In this case, the service provider will describe the gift to giftee and seek the giftee's permission before notifying the giver to further decide on the subsequent course of action. The giver may then decide to send the gift in his possession.

If the giver has given authorization for all gifts to be accepted without further permission, the giver may then directly begin the gift-giving process with the service provider without involving Giftee and send the gift.

It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that various combinations of the variations in each of the embodiments may be employed in practical implementations. Further, other improvements or enhancements, such as verification steps for the Giver, Giftee and Service Providers may be implemented throughout the various stages of the gift-giving process.

The Mailing labels in the preferred example embodiments may be created with the assistance of the Gift giving service Provider. The labels can be created by Giver and/or Giftee in co-ordination with the Gift giving service Provider. Alternatively, the labels can be created by the Gift giving service Provider in co-ordination with Giver and/or Giftee. Certain information on the mailing labels may be encrypted by the Gift

giving service Provider and/or bar or image coded in order to ensure that only the Gift giving service Provider or those authorized to know may be able to read such information. It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that the information contained in mailing labels ML1 and ML2 used in the example embodiments may contain, but is not restricted to, all or part of the following type of information:

- Mailing Label Identifier
- Information about content of package (weight, dimension, contents etc)
- Tracking Information
- Giver's Identity
- Giftee's Identity
- Giver's Physical Address
- Giftee's Physical Address
- Giver's Gift giving service Provider
- Giftee's Gift giving service Provider
- Permission by Giftee to accept the gift G
- Verification Information that the package was sent by Giver
- Declaration that the package does not contain certain types of items (for example banned substances etc)
- Type of shipping e.g. express or air-mail etc,
- Payment method e.g. Credit card or account with Service Provider.
- Taxes due and payee information

The method and system of the example embodiment can be implemented on a computer system 500, schematically shown in Figure 5. It may be implemented as software, such as a computer program being executed within the computer system 500, and instructing the computer system 500 to conduct the method of the example embodiment.

The computer system 500 comprises a computer module 502, input modules such as a keyboard 504 and mouse 506 and a plurality of output devices such as a display 508, and printer 510.

The computer module 502 is connected to a computer network 512 via a suitable transceiver device 514, to enable access to e.g. the Internet or other network systems such as Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN).

The computer module 502 in the example includes a processor 518, a Random Access Memory (RAM) 520 and a Read Only Memory (ROM) 522. The computer module 502 also includes a number of Input/Output (I/O) interfaces, for example I/O interface 524 to the display 508, and I/O interface 526 to the keyboard 504.

The components of the computer module 502 typically communicate via an interconnected bus 528 and in a manner known to the person skilled in the relevant art.

The application program is typically supplied to the user of the computer system 500 encoded on a data storage medium such as a CD-ROM or flash memory carrier and read utilising a corresponding data storage medium drive of a data storage device 530. The application program is read and controlled in its execution by the processor 518. Intermediate storage of program data maybe accomplished using RAM 520.

The method of the current arrangement can be implemented on a wireless device 600, schematically shown in Figure 6. It may be implemented as software, such as a computer program being executed within the wireless device 600, and instructing the wireless device 600 to conduct the method.

The wireless device 600 comprises a processor module 602, an input module such as a keypad 604 and an output module such as a display 606.

The processor module 602 is connected to a wireless network 608 via a suitable transceiver device 610, to enable wireless communication and/or access to e.g. the Internet or other network systems such as Local Area Network (LAN), Wireless Personal Area Network (WPAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN).

The processor module 602 in the example includes a processor 612, a Random Access Memory (RAM) 614 and a Read Only Memory (ROM) 616. The processor module 602 also includes a number of Input/Output (I/O) interfaces, for example I/O interface 618 to the display 606, and I/O interface 620 to the keypad 604.

The components of the processor module 602 typically communicate via an interconnected bus 622 and in a manner known to the person skilled in the relevant art.

The application program is typically supplied to the user of the wireless device 600 encoded on a data storage medium such as a flash memory module or memory card/stick and read utilising a corresponding memory reader-writer of a data storage device 624. The application program is read and controlled in its execution by the processor 612. Intermediate storage of program data may be accomplished using RAM 614.

Figure 7 shows a flowchart 700 illustrating the method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party. At step 702, a computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party is produced. At step 704, a computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party is produced.

It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the method comprising the steps of:

producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and

producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of producing the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party comprises:

producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider, and

producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

3. The method as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider and the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party are produced by computer systems of the gift giving service provider and the other gift giving service provider respectively.

4. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the delivery address of the second party comprises a mailing service address, and the method further comprises receiving the gift at the mailing service address, and forwarding the gift to an actual address of the second party.

5. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:

performing electronic communications between the first party, the second party, and a computer system of the gift giving service provider using one or more electronic communication servers.

6. The method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the second party for producing computer instructions for executing permission instructions from the second party.

7. The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the permission instructions include one or more of a group consisting of one time permission, permission for a specific gift, permission for open-ended or limited time duration, permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts and permission subject to stored information about the first party.

8. The method as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for executing permission requests from the first party.

9. The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the permission request includes a gift description.

10. The method as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 9, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for enabling the first party to respond to stored information about the first party.

11. A system for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the system comprising:

means for producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and

means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

12. The system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the means for producing the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party comprises:

means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider, and

means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.

13. The system as claimed in claims 11 or 12, wherein the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to another gift giving service provider and the computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the other gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party are produced by computer systems of the gift giving service provider and the other gift giving service provider respectively.

14. The system as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 13, wherein the delivery address of the second party comprises a mailing service address, and the system further comprises means for receiving the gift at the mailing service address, and forwarding the gift to an actual address of the second party.

15. The system as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 14, further comprising:

means for performing electronic communications between the first party, the second party, and a computer system of the gift giving service provider using one or more electronic communication servers.

16. The system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the second party for producing computer instructions for executing permission instructions from the second party.

17. The system as claimed in claim 16, wherein the permission instructions include one or more of a group consisting of one time permission, permission for a specific gift, permission for open-ended or limited time duration, permission for unlimited/limited number of gifts and permission subject to stored information about the first party.

18. The system as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 17, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for executing permission requests from the first party.

19. The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the permission request includes a gift description.

20. The method as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 19, wherein the electronic communications comprise communications between the computer system of the gift giving service provider and the first party for producing computer instructions for enabling the first party to respond to stored information about the first party.

21. The system as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 20, wherein the means for producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party comprises computer devices respectively for said gift giving service provider and for said first party.

22. The system as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 21, wherein the means for producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party comprises computer devices respectively for said gift giving service provider and for said second party.

23. A computer readable data storage medium having stored thereon computer code means for instructing a computer to execute a method for enabling a first party to send a gift to a second party, the method comprising the steps of:

producing computer output enabling the first party to send the gift to a gift giving service provider without revealing a delivery address of the second party to the first party; and

producing computer output enabling forwarding of the gift from the gift giving service provider to the delivery address of the second party.