CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method of automatically conducting an electronic auction, said method comprising:

monitoring, by an electronic platform over a network, activity in one or more electronic markets, the electronic platform comprising a programmed computer;

determining, by the programmed computer, that a desired level of liquidity has been reached in the one or more electronic markets based on the monitored activity;

automatically initiating an auction, by the programmed computer, when the desired level of liquidity is determined to have been reached, said auction having a minimum fill size;

transmitting, by the programed computer, a notification of the auction to a plurality of market participants;

building, by the programmed computer, an order book for the auction based on firm limit orders received from the plurality of market participants;

determining, by the programmed computer, a reference price for conducting the auction, the reference price calculated as a midpoint of the bid and ask prices in the at least one electronic market; and

filling, by the programmed computer, qualifying orders received from the plurality of market participants based on the determined reference price.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein a firm limit order received from a market participant is a dark order, the dark order not being visible to a broader market.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of market participants receive limited or no information in the notification as to an auction time.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein an actual auction time is randomized and unknown to the plurality of market participants.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein a firm limit sell order is identified as an ineligible order and removed from the order book when its price is higher than the reference price.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein a firm limit buy order is identified as an ineligible order and removed from the order book when its price is lower than the reference price.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising designating a buy-side or a sell-side as a light-side or a heavy-side in the auction, wherein the buy-side or the sell-side with the lowest total number of shares is defined as the light-side, and wherein the buy-side or the sell-side with the highest total number of shares is defined as the heavy-side.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising calculating a maximum execution size, the maximum execution size representative of a number of shares to be distributed to each order on the heavy-side.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the calculation comprises comparing two values, a first value representative of the smallest order size on the heavy-side and a second value representative of a computational value yielded by dividing the total number of shares on the light-side by the number of orders on the heavy-side, the maximum execution size being a minimum of the first value and the second value.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein a first distribution of shares is distributed to each order on the heavy-side, each order on the heavy-side receiving the first distribution of shares equal to the maximum execution size calculated.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein a second distribution of shares is distributed to each order on the heavy-side that has not been completely filled, the second distribution representative of a remaining balance of shares on the light-side after the first distribution of shares to each order on the heavy-side, the remaining balance of shares being distributed proportionally to each order on the heavy-side that has not been completely filled by the first distribution of shares.

12. The method of claim 7, further comprising calculating a number of orders eligible to receive a fill on the heavy-side.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the calculation comprises comparing two values, a first value representative of a number of orders on the heavy-side and a second value representative of a computational value yielded by dividing the total number of shares on the light-side by the minimum fill size, the number of orders eligible to receive a fill on the heavy-side being a minimum of the first value and the second value.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein one or more orders on the heavy-side is eliminated when the minimum of the first value and the second value is less than the number of orders on the heavy-side.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein a first distribution of shares is distributed to each order remaining on the heavy-side after the one or more orders on the heavy-side is eliminated, each order remaining on the heavy-side receiving the first distribution of shares equal to the minimum fill size.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein a second distribution of shares is distributed to each order remaining on the heavy-side that has not been completely filled, the second distribution representative of a remaining balance of shares on the light-side after the first distribution of shares to each order remaining on the heavy-side, the remaining balance of shares being distributed proportionally to each order remaining on die heavy-side that has not been completely filled by the first distribution of shares.

17. A computer system for conducting an auction, comprising:

a memory component;

a processing component coupled to said memory component, wherein the processing component is configured to:

monitor, over a network, activity in one or more electronic markets;

determine that a desired level of liquidity has been reached in at least one of the one or more electronic markets based on the monitored activity;

automatically initiate an auction when the desired level of liquidity is determined to have been reached, said auction having a minimum fill size;

transmit a notification of the auction to a plurality of market participants;

build an order book for the auction based on firm limit orders received from the plurality of market participants;

determine a reference price for conducting the auction, the reference price calculated as a midpoint of the bid and ask prices in the at least one electronic market; and

fill qualifying orders received from the plurality of market participants based on the determined reference price.

18. A non-transitory computer-readable storage medium programmed to include instructions that, when executed by a processing device, cause the processing device to perform a method of conducting an auction, said method comprising:

monitoring, over a network, activity in one or more electronic markets;

determining that a desired level of liquidity has been reached in at least one of the one or more electronic markets based on the monitored activity;

automatically initiating an auction when the desired level of liquidity is determined to have been reached, said auction having a minimum fill size;

transmitting a notification of the auction to a plurality of market participants;

building an order book for the auction based on the firm limit orders received from the plurality of market participants;

determining a reference price for conducting the auction, the reference price calculated as a midpoint of the bid and ask prices in the at least one electronic market; and

filling qualifying orders received from the plurality of market participants based on the determined reference price.