

TITLE: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING A GAME

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an apparatus and method for providing a game.

The invention has been developed primarily for use with a plurality of interlinked
5 gaming machines in a gaming establishment and will be described hereinafter with
reference to this application. However, it will be appreciated that the invention is not
limited to this particular field of use. In particular, the invention also finds application in
the fields of online gaming, gaming machines that are distributed in a plurality of
gaming establishments, and the like. The invention also finds application in the
10 provision of games at the point of sale in retail outlets.

BACKGROUND

Any discussion of the prior art throughout this specification should in no way be
considered as an admission that such prior art is widely known or forms part of common
general knowledge in the field.

15 It is known to link gaming machines to provide a number of additional
functionalities. This includes the ability to control the awarding of a prize, as the pool of
available funds is greater and the amount of funds available is known rather than having
to be estimated. Another known purpose of interlinking gaming machines is to provide
a secondary linked jackpot. In such a system, a central display provides players with a
20 visual indication of a presently available jackpot prize that is increased incrementally as
the players operate the interlinked gaming machines. It is known by the players that the
jackpot will be awarded when it reaches a secret, randomly selected value that is less
than a predetermined limit value. The limit value is often also indicated to the players
by means of the display.

25 The use of such functionality is intended to attract players to play the machines in
the hope of winning the linked jackpot. However, with increased sophistication of
habitual players and their increased exposure to such systems, the systems' ability to
maintain players' interest has diminished.



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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to overcome or ameliorate at least one of the disadvantages of the prior art, or to provide a useful alternative.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus
5 for providing a game, the apparatus including:

memory for storing data indicative of a game credit value;

an input device responsive to an input message from one of a plurality of input
terminals for providing a game credit value adjustment message;

a controller for adjusting the game credit value in response to the game credit
10 value adjustment message; and

a game trigger device selectively operable to generate a game trigger message for
causing the game to be executed using at least a portion of the game credit value as a
stake value.

Preferably, the apparatus further includes a comparator for comparing the game
15 credit value and a predetermined game trigger value stored in the memory, and wherein
the game trigger device generates the game trigger message in response to the
comparison when predetermined comparison criteria are satisfied.

Preferably, the apparatus further includes a prize setting device responsive to the
adjusted game credit value for setting respective possible prize values for each of a
20 plurality of possible outcomes of the game if played with the adjusted game credit value
as a stake.

Preferably, the apparatus further includes a display controller for causing a display
to show the possible outcomes and the respective possible prize values.

The controller preferably increments the game credit value in response to the game
25 credit value adjustment message and the game trigger device generates the game trigger
message when the adjusted game credit value equals or exceeds the game trigger value.

Preferably, the input device is adapted to extract quantum information from the
input message and to include the quantum information in the game credit value
adjustment message.

30 The predetermined game trigger value is preferably predetermined randomly,
preferably between predetermined lower and upper game trigger limits. Alternatively,
the game trigger value may be determined by an operator of the apparatus.

The input terminals preferably include a plurality of gaming machines which are preferably adapted to execute a regular game and a bonus game, the bonus game only being executed in response to the game trigger message.

Preferably the input message is generated by the gaming machine in response to at least one of: a user of the gaming machine adding gaming credit to the machine; a user of the gaming machine playing a game on the gaming machine; and a prize being won on the gaming machine.

In a preferred embodiment the input device is responsive to respective input messages from the plurality of input terminals, each input message identifying the source input terminal, and the game trigger device is adapted to send the game trigger message to the input terminal which caused the comparison to satisfy the criteria for generation of an game trigger message.

The apparatus preferably further includes a terminal polling device for polling the input terminals for input messages. The terminal polling device is preferably adapted to poll each input terminal sequentially during successive polling cycles.

The input device is preferably adapted to extract respective timestamps from the input messages. The input device may then generate game credit value adjustment messages associated with the input messages in order of timestamps.

In an alternative embodiment, the apparatus further includes a randomiser for randomising the order of consideration by the input device of received input messages.

A second aspect of the invention provides a system for providing a game including apparatus as set out above and a plurality of input terminals.

A third aspect of the invention provides a method for providing a game including the steps of:

- storing data indicative of a game credit value;
- receiving an input message from one of a plurality of input terminals and providing a game credit value adjustment message in response thereto;
- adjusting the game credit value in response to the game credit value adjustment message;
- generating a game trigger message for causing a game terminal to execute the game using at least a portion of the game credit value as a stake value.

The method preferably includes the further steps of storing a predetermined game trigger value, and comparing the game credit value with the game trigger value. In this

case, the game trigger message is generated in response to the comparison when predetermined comparison criteria are satisfied.

The method preferably further includes setting respective possible prize values for each of a number of possible outcomes of the game if played with the adjusted game credit value as a stake value.

Preferably, the method further includes displaying the possible outcomes and the respective possible prize values on a display screen.

Preferably, the adjusting of the game credit value includes incrementing the game credit value in response to the game credit value adjustment message and the game trigger message is generated when the adjusted game credit value equals or exceeds the game trigger value.

The method preferably further includes the steps of extracting quantum information from the input message and including the quantum information in the game credit value adjustment message.

The predetermined game trigger value is preferably predetermined between predetermined lower and upper game trigger limits.

The method preferably further includes determining the predetermined game trigger value randomly. Alternative methods preferably include receiving the predetermined game trigger value from operator input.

The input message is preferably generated at a gaming machine in response to at least one of: a user of the gaming machine adding gaming credit to the machine; a user of the gaming machine playing a game on the gaming machine; and a prize being won on the gaming machine.

Preferably, the plurality of input terminals includes a plurality of gaming machines, which are preferably adapted to play a regular game and a bonus game, the bonus game only being executed in response to the game trigger message.

Respective input messages are preferably received from the plurality of input terminals, each input message identifying the source input terminal, and the method preferably further includes sending the game trigger message to the input terminal which caused the comparison to satisfy the criteria for generation of an game trigger message.

The method preferably further includes polling the input terminals for input messages. In such cases, each input terminal is preferably polled sequentially during successive polling cycles.

Preferably, the method includes extracting respective timestamps from the input messages. Alternatively, the method may include randomising the order of consideration by the input device of received input messages.

Further aspects of the invention include a computer program for causing a
5 computer to execute a method as set out above, and such a computer program carried by a data carrier or a signal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- 10 Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a preferred embodiment of the invention;
- Figure 2 shows the apparatus of Figure 1 in use in a typical application;
- Figure 3 is a schematic representation of an input message;
- Figure 4 is a schematic representation of a game credit value adjustment message;
- Figure 5 is a schematic representation of a game trigger message;
- 15 Figure 6 is a table of outcomes and payouts for a bonus game;
- Figure 7 shows the apparatus of Figure 1 in a second typical application; and
- Figure 8 shows the apparatus of Figure 1 in a third typical application.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to Figure 1, there is illustrated an apparatus 1 for providing a game. One
20 embodiment of the apparatus 1 includes memory, in the form of solid-state memory 2, for storing data indicative of a game credit value 3. The memory employed in yet another embodiment is in the form of non-volatile memory. In one embodiment, the apparatus is a venue controller, including an input device 4, forming part of an interface card 5, responsive to respective input messages 6 from a plurality of input terminals, in
25 the form of respective game terminals 7 in the same venue as the apparatus 1, as shown in Figure 2. The input device 4 is responsive to an input message 6, shown in Figure 3, for generating a game credit value adjustment message 8, shown in Figure 4. A controller, in the form of a CPU 9, adjusts the game credit value 3 in response to the game credit value adjustment message 8.

The apparatus 1 further includes a game trigger device 10 for generating a game trigger message 11, shown in Figure 5, for causing the game to be executed with at least a portion of the game credit value 3 as a stake value.

5 The preferred embodiment also includes a comparator 12 which compares the adjusted game credit value 3 and a game trigger value 13 stored in the memory 2. The game trigger device 10 generates the game trigger message 11 in response to the comparison, when predetermined comparison criteria are satisfied.

10 In an embodiment, the game is executed on the CPU 9 of the apparatus 1. In an alternative embodiment, the game trigger message 11 is passed to an interface card 25 of a selected game terminal 7 which responds by executing the game on the gaming terminal itself or, preferably on the interface card 25. The manner in which the game terminal is selected is described in further detail below. In yet a further embodiment, the apparatus 1 is in communication with a central controller 26 which communicated with a plurality of such apparatus in respective venues, to allow gaming to be linked across
15 those venues. In one such embodiment, the game trigger message 11 is passed to the centralised game controller 26 which executes the game.

In the preferred embodiment, the CPU 9 increments the game credit value 3 stored in the memory 2 and the comparison criteria are that the game credit value 3 is equal to or greater than the game trigger value 13. However, in other embodiments other types
20 of adjustment (e.g. decrement) and other comparison criteria may be used.

Additionally, in the preferred embodiment, the game trigger value 13 is predetermined between predetermined lower and upper game trigger limits randomly in a known manner using a random number generator 14. However in an alternative embodiment, the game trigger value 13 may be predetermined by an algorithm or by
25 selection by an operator of the apparatus 1.

Referring to Figure 3, input messages 6 are generated by the game terminals 7 in response to a user of a game terminal 7 adding gaming credit to the terminal 7 in a known way. In an alternative embodiment, the input messages 6 are generated instead in response to the commencement of a game on the game terminal 7. The input messages 6
30 are ordered sequences of data each including:

- Information 15 identifying the game terminal 7 generating the input message 6;

- Quantum information 16 indicative of the value of the gaming credit added to the game terminal 7 or of the credit staked on the game commenced on the game terminal 7; and
- Timestamp information 17 indicating the time at which the gaming credit was added to the game terminal 7.

5 The input device 4 polls the game terminals 7 sequentially for input messages 6. Received input messages 6 are processed in order by reference to the timestamp information 17. In response to each received input message 6, the input device 4 generates a respective game credit value adjustment message 8. Referring to Figure 4, 10 the credit value adjustment messages 8 are ordered sequences of data each including:

- The quantum information 16 from their respective input message 6; and
- The game terminal identification information 15 from their respective input message 6.

15 In an alternative embodiment, the input messages 6 do not include timestamp information. In this case, the input device 4 polls each of the game terminals once during each of successive polling cycles. Input messages 6 received during a polling cycle are processed in a random order determined using the random number generator 14. In other respects, the input messages 6 are processed as set out above.

In the preferred embodiment, the controller 9 increments the game credit value 3 20 by an amount related to the quantum information 16 and therefore related to the value of gaming credit added to the game terminal 7. In the embodiment described in further detail below, the increment is a percentage of the gaming credit added to the game terminal 7 which generated the input message 6. However, in alternative embodiments, the increment could be determined according to a banded scale or as a flat rate or as a 25 combination of a percentage and a flat rate or banded scale. In further alternative embodiments, the quantum information 16 and the increment are determined as a percentage of any one or more of:

- credit staked on games played on the game terminal 7;
- the total amount of money won during one or more games played on the 30 game terminal 7;
- the total amount of cash inserted into the game terminal 7;
- the total value of notes inserted into the game terminal 7;
- the total value of coins inserted into the game terminal 7;

- the total value of non-cash credit added to the game terminal 7 (i.e. the total credit added less the total amount of cash inserted) added instead by smart card for example; or
- the number of games played on the game terminal 7.

5 When the comparator 12 detects that the game credit value 3 is equal to or greater than the game trigger value 13, the game trigger device 10 generates a game trigger message 11. Referring to Figure 5, the game trigger message 11 is an ordered sequence of data including:

- Information 18 indicative of the game credit value 3; and
- 10 • The game terminal identification information 15 from the most recently processed game credit value adjustment message 8.

 In a further alternative embodiment in which the input messages 6 do not include timestamp information, the input messages 6 received in a particular polling cycle are processed in order of receipt by the apparatus 1. When the comparator 12 detects that
15 the comparison criteria are satisfied, a game trigger message 11 is generated including game terminal identification information 15 from an input message 6 selected at random from the messages received during that polling cycle.

 In yet a further alternative embodiment, in which the apparatus 1 does not include a comparator 12, the game trigger device 10 generates a game trigger message 11 after
20 each polling cycle.

 In embodiments in which the game is executed on the game terminal 7, the game trigger message 11 is received by the game terminal 7 identified by the game terminal identification information 15. The game terminals 7 are programmed to play both a regular game, in response to the player adding gaming credit, and a bonus game, in
25 response to receiving a game trigger message 11. Having received a game trigger message 11, the game terminal 7 then executes the bonus game using as the stake for the game the game credit value 3 or the game trigger value 13 included in the game trigger message 11.

 The apparatus 1 further includes a prize setting device, in the form of circuitry 19.
30 After each increment of the game credit value 3, the prize setting device 19 is responsive to the game credit value 3 for updating a table 20, shown in Figure 6, of possible prize values for each of a plurality of possible outcomes of the game if played with the adjusted game credit value 3 as a stake. The prize setting circuitry 19 is controlled by

the CPU 9 to set the possible prizes in accordance with a predetermined scheme. For example, if a game having four possible outcomes $R_1 \dots R_4$ having respective probabilities $1/2, 1/3, 1/8, 1/25$ is played, the prize setting device 19 may calculate the possible prizes as the following respective multiples of the stake: 2, 3, 8, 25.

5 In another embodiment, the prize setting device sets prizes for the possible outcomes of the bonus game which are not dependent upon the stake. For example, in a bonus game having four possible outcomes having respective probabilities of 85%, 10%, 4% and 1%, the prize setting device of an embodiment, sets flat rate prizes of \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000 and \$100,000 respectively. In a further embodiment, the prizes for each
10 outcome is substantially inversely proportional to the probability of that outcome.

The apparatus 1 further includes a display controller, in the form of a video card 21, for controlling a display 22 shown in Figure 2. The display 22 is caused to show the possible outcomes and the associated respective possible prize values from the table 20. In some embodiments in which the prizes are dependent upon the value of the
15 stake, the prize setting device 19 updates the prizes associated with each outcome after each increment of the game credit value, and players viewing the display 22 may at all times see the possible prizes if the bonus game were to be triggered at that moment.

In embodiments in which the game is executed on the CPU 9 of the apparatus 1, the display controller 21 additionally passes video signals to the game terminal 7
20 identified by the game terminal identification information 15, or all game terminals, to enable it or them to display the game on an integral or associated display screen. In a further embodiment in which the apparatus is in communication with a central controller 26, as described above, the apparatus also passes information regarding the game to the central controller to enable the game to be displayed on respective displays 22 at other
25 venues, and/or on display screens integral to or associated with gaming terminals 7 at those venues.

The bonus game may be any game on which a wager may be placed. For example, the bonus game may be another electronic gaming machine game, roulette, blackjack, craps, poker, baccarat, horse racing, etc.

30 Examples of specific applications of the invention will now be described.

Example One

Referring to Figure 2, the apparatus 1 is located in a gaming establishment including ten gaming machines 7 and a plasma display screen 22. The gaming

machines 7 are in communication with the apparatus 1 in a known way, for example, a wired or wireless local area network.

The gaming machines 7 are programmed to play a game with a return to player (RTP) of 87%. However the advertised RTP is 88.85%. The shortfall is made good by
5 each machine passing 1.85% of added gaming credit to the apparatus 1 for use as stake money for the bonus game, which has a return to player of 100%.

When a user adds gaming credit to one of the gaming machines 7, an input message 6 is generated as described above. The quantum information 16 included in the input messages 6 is a percentage, in this case, 1.85%, of the gaming credit added to the
10 machine 7.

The apparatus 1 polls the gaming machines 7 sequentially for input messages 6 which are transmitted, received and processed as described above.

The following table shows, in chronological order of timestamps, turnover values (i.e. inserted credit amounts) for the ten gaming machines 7, respective 1.85%
15 contribution to the game credit value 3 and the cumulative game credit value:

Machine number	Total turnover (\$)	Contribution (\$)	Cumulative game credit value (\$)
5	1.00	0.02	0.02
1	10.00	0.19	0.21
3	5.00	0.09	0.3
2	2.50	0.05	0.35
6	1.00	0.02	0.37
7	1.00	0.02	0.39
4	2.50	0.05	0.44
10	1.00	0.02	0.46
8	5.00	0.09	0.55
9	2.00	0.04	0.59
Total	\$31.00	\$0.59	

Typically, poker machines permit the player to choose the number of lines on which he wishes to bet and the value of the bet he wishes to make per line. The following table 23, stored in the memory 2, shows the available options in the bonus game for the number of lines and the credits per line.

**Total cost (in credits) of bet given
choices of number of lines and credits
per line**

		Lines				
		1	5	10	20	25
Credits per line	1	1	5	10	20	25
	2	2	10	20	40	50
	5	5	25	50	100	125
	10	10	50	100	200	250
	20	20	100	200	400	500

In this bonus game, 1 credit = \$0.01 and it may easily be seen from the table that wagers may be placed having one of the following values:

\$0.01	\$0.02	\$0.05
\$0.10	\$0.20	\$0.25
\$0.50	\$1.00	\$2.00
\$2.50	\$4.00	\$5.00

5

After processing all of the input messages 6 in this polling cycle, the game trigger device 10 then generates a game trigger message 11 including information indicative of the fact that the game credit value 3 is sufficient for a wager of \$0.50, which is one of the possible wager amounts included in the table. The game trigger message 11 also includes game terminal identification information 15 identifying gaming machine no. 8 as the terminal that made the contribution to game credit which enabled the wager to be made.

The bonus game has 12 possible outcomes having respective probabilities as shown in the following table. The table also shows the payout coefficient by which the stake is multiplied for each possible outcome.

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Outcome	Probability	Payout coefficient
1	0.1%	1000
2	0.4%	250
3	1.0%	100
4	1.0%	100
5	2.5%	40
6	5.0%	20
7	5.0%	20
8	10.0%	10
9	10.0%	10
10	20.0%	5
11	20.0%	5
12	25.0%	4
Total	100.0%	

The game trigger message 11 is received by the controller, which executes the bonus game. Outcome 9 is realised, for which the payout is $10 \times \$0.50 = \5.00 . The display controller 21, under control of the controller 9, causes a visual indication of the bonus game to be displayed on the plasma screen 22. The controller 9 sends a payout message to the gaming machine no. 8 in a manner known for example from existing linked jackpot systems.

Example Two

This example is identical to that set out in example one, with the exception that the payout coefficients for outcomes 9 and 10 are zero. Thus, the bonus game has an RTP of 70%.

In this way, adjustments to the overall RTP may be made.

Additionally or alternatively, a portion of or the entire RTP shortfall from the bonus game may be accrued towards a credit value for a further game as described herein or to a linked jackpot of a known type.

In a preferred embodiment, when a bonus game is executed and the controller determines that the outcome is one for which no payout is to be made, the display controller 9 does not cause any visual indication of the bonus game to be given on the plasma screen 22.

Example Three

This example is similar to example one with the exception that a target game trigger value 13 is preselected from the table shown in connection with that example.

The controller 9 selects one of these values at random in a known manner using the random number generator 14 and stores the value in the memory 2 as the game trigger value 13. For the sake of this example, we shall assume that the selected game trigger value is \$2.00.

- 5 In this example, \$0.58 remains from a previous bonus game credit value or from a previous polling cycle. The game terminals 7 are polled for input messages as above. The turnover for each machine, the contribution towards the bonus game credit value and the cumulative credit value are shown in the following table:

Machine number	Total turnover (\$)	Contribution (\$)	Cumulative game credit value (\$)
Carried over		0.58	0.58
5	13.00	0.24	0.82
1	5.00	0.09	0.91
3	8.00	0.15	1.06
2	2.50	0.05	1.11
6	0.00	0.00	1.11
7	7.50	0.14	1.25
4	5.00	0.09	1.34
10	12.00	0.22	1.56
8	25.00	0.46	2.02
9	5.00	0.09	2.11
Total	\$83.00	\$2.11	

- 10 After the input message from gaming machine number 8 has been processed, the comparator 12 finds that the game credit value 3 exceeds the game trigger value 13. The game trigger device 10 responds by generating a game trigger message 11. The game trigger message 11 includes information indicative of the fact that the game credit value 3 exceeds \$2.00 and information identifying gaming machine no. 8. The game trigger message 11 is received by the controller 9, which responds by executing the bonus game with a stake value of \$2.00. In addition, the controller 9 subtracts \$2.00 from the stored game credit value 3. The remaining \$0.11 is retained for the next bonus game.

The bonus game is executed as described above.

- 20 In the three above-described examples, once the bonus game has been completed, any won credit is redeemed in a known manner. For example, winnings may be

collected by way of a cash payout from the terminal or transfer to the credit meter of the terminal, the update of the player's smartcard by the terminal, or the player may seek payment of the winnings from a cashier or other centralised payment point.

Example Four

5 This example is again similar to that described in example one. However, in this example, outcomes 1 and 2 have a payout coefficient of zero. Instead, flat rate standalone jackpot prizes of \$10,000 and \$1,000 respectively are awarded in the event of these outcomes, independently of the stake with which the game was played. This is illustrated in the following table.

Outcome	Probability	Payout coefficient	Jackpot \$
1	0.1%	0	10,000
2	0.4%	0	1000
3	1.0%	100	0
4	1.0%	100	0
5	2.5%	40	0
6	5.0%	20	0
7	5.0%	20	0
8	10.0%	10	0
9	10.0%	10	0
10	20.0%	5	0
11	20.0%	5	0
12	25.0%	4	0
Total	100.0%		

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While this example has been described with two outcomes giving rise to a standalone jackpot being awarded, variants of this example include arrangements in which any or all of the outcomes give rise to the award of a standalone jackpot instead of, or in addition to, a prize dependent upon the stake.

15 Example Five

 In a final example described with reference to Figures 8 and 9, the input terminals 7 are cash registers or other devices located at the point of sale of a retail or food outlet. Each terminal 7 is in communication with the apparatus 1 via a wide area network or the internet 24. The input terminals 7 generate input messages 6 each time a
20 purchase of a particular product is made. The input messages include quantum information 16 indicative of the cost of the product or, in an alternative embodiment, indicative of the total cost of the transaction, for example a percentage of the cost of the transaction. In a further embodiment, the input messages may only be generated in connection with the sale of a particular product, and the quantum information 16 is

indicative of the quantity of that particular product sold in a transaction. This embodiment may be used, for example, in a fast-food outlet and the particular product is hamburgers, as described in connection with a linked jackpot system in our copending Australian patent application no. 2003905792 and PCT application published as
5 WO2005/04123 which are incorporated by reference below.

In any event, the procedure for determining whether or not a bonus game is to be executed is as set out in any of the preceding examples.

In one embodiment shown in Figure 7, the game trigger message 11 is transmitted to the input terminal 7 identified in the message and the bonus game is executed on the
10 input terminal.

In a further embodiment shown in Figure 8, the input message is transmitted to a game terminal 24 associated and collocated with the input terminal 7 and the game terminal executes the bonus game. However, in a variation of this embodiment, the bonus game is executed by the controller 9. In this variation, the display controller 21
15 causes a visual representation of the game to be displayed on the game terminal 24 associated with the input terminal 7 identified in the game trigger message 11.

Any winnings from the game are paid to the customer who made the purchase which triggered the game in one of a number of ways, including: as a cash refund, a discount, a credit voucher or as a free product.

20 In this specification the word "random" is to be taken to include "pseudo-random". References to values being chosen at random are to be taken to mean that those values are selected such that they remain unpredictable to an observer in a reasonable period of time.

Although the invention has been described with reference to specific examples, it
25 will be appreciated by those skilled in that art that it may be embodied in many other forms. In particular, features of any one of the various described examples may be provided in any combination in any of the other described examples.

In addition, the invention may be embodied in, or in combination with, the systems disclosed in our copending Australian patent application numbers 2003903769,
30 2004902460, 2003905792, 2004902465, 2004900978, 2004905518, 2004902469 and 2004902459, and PCT publication WO2005/04123 A1, the entire contents of all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

Furthermore, the functionality of the comparator 12, the prize setting device 19, the random number generator 14, the interface card 5, the game trigger device 10 and the display controller 21 have been described as being performed by distinct devices, such as dedicated integrated circuits. However, in preferred embodiments, all or any
5 combination of their functionality may instead be performed by multi-purpose integrated circuits or implemented in software executed by the controller 9. Particularly in such cases, the invention may additionally be embodied in a computer program or in a computer program in a data signal or stored on a data carrier.

CLAIMS

1. An apparatus for providing a game, the apparatus including:
memory for storing data indicative of a game credit value;
an input device responsive to an input message from one of a plurality of input
5 terminals for providing a game credit value adjustment message;
a controller for adjusting the game credit value in response to the game credit
value adjustment message; and
a game trigger device selectively operable to generate a game trigger message for
causing the game to be executed using at least a portion of the game credit value as a
10 stake value.
2. An apparatus according to claim 1 further including a comparator for
comparing the game credit value and a predetermined game trigger value stored in the
memory, and wherein the game trigger device generates the game trigger message in
response to the comparison when predetermined comparison criteria are satisfied.
- 15 3. An apparatus according to claim 1 or claim 2 including a prize setting
device responsive to the adjusted game credit value for setting respective possible prize
values for each of a plurality of possible outcomes of the game if played with the
adjusted game credit value as a stake.
4. An apparatus according to claim 3 including a display controller for
20 causing a display to show the possible outcomes and the respective possible prize values.
5. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the
controller increments the game credit value in response to the game credit value
adjustment message and the game trigger device generates the game trigger message
when the adjusted game credit value equals or exceeds the game trigger value.
- 25 6. An apparatus according to claim any one of the preceding claims wherein
the input device is adapted to extract quantum information from the input message and
to include the quantum information in the game credit value adjustment message.
7. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the
predetermined game trigger value is between predetermined lower and upper game
30 trigger limits.
8. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the
predetermined game trigger value is determined randomly.

9. An apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 7 wherein the predetermined game trigger value is determined by an operator of the apparatus.

10. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the input terminals include a plurality of gaming machines.

5 11. An apparatus according to claim 10 wherein the input message is generated by the gaming machine in response to at least one of: a user of the gaming machine adding gaming credit to the machine; a user of the gaming machine playing a game on the gaming machine; and a prize being won on the gaming machine.

12. An apparatus according to claim 10 or claim 11 wherein the gaming
10 machine is adapted to play a regular game and a bonus game, the bonus game only being executed in response to the game trigger message.

13. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the input device is responsive to respective input messages from the plurality of input terminals, each input message identifying the source input terminal, and the game trigger
15 device is adapted to send the game trigger message to the input terminal which caused the comparison to satisfy the criteria for generation of an game trigger message.

14. An apparatus according to claim 13 including a terminal polling device for polling the input terminals for input messages.

15. An apparatus according to claim 14 wherein the polling device is adapted
20 to poll each input terminal sequentially during successive polling cycles.

16. An apparatus according to claim 15 wherein the input device is adapted to extract respective timestamps from the input messages.

17. An apparatus according to claim 15 including a randomiser for randomising the order of consideration by the input device of received input messages.

25 18. A system for providing a game including apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims and a plurality of input terminals.

19. A method for providing a game including the steps of:
storing data indicative of a game credit value;
receiving an input message from one of a plurality of input terminals and
30 providing a game credit value adjustment message in response thereto;
adjusting the game credit value in response to the game credit value adjustment message;

generating a game trigger message for causing a game terminal to execute the game using at least a portion of the game credit value as a stake value.

20. A method according to claim 19 including storing a predetermined game trigger value, and comparing the game credit value with the game trigger value, wherein
5 the game trigger message is generated in response to the comparison when predetermined comparison criteria are satisfied.

21. A method according to claim 19 or claim 20 including the step of setting respective possible prize values for each of a number of possible outcomes of the game if played with the adjusted game credit value as a stake value.

10 22. A method according to claim 21 including displaying the possible outcomes and the respective possible prize values on a display screen.

23. A method according to any one claims 19 to 22 wherein the adjusting of the game credit value includes incrementing the game credit value in response to the game credit value adjustment message and wherein the game trigger message is
15 generated when the adjusted game credit value equals or exceeds the game trigger value.

24. A method according to any one claims 19 to 23 including the steps of extracting quantum information from the input message and including the quantum information in the game credit value adjustment message.

25. A method according to any one of claims 19 to 24 wherein the
20 predetermined game trigger value is between predetermined lower and upper game trigger limits.

26. A method according to any one of claims 19 to 25 including determining the predetermined game trigger value randomly.

27. A method according to any one of claims 19 to 25 including receiving the
25 predetermined game trigger value from operator input.

28. A method according to any one of claims 19 to 27 wherein the plurality of input terminal includes a plurality of gaming machines.

29. A method according to claim 28 including generating the input message at a gaming machine in response to at least one of: a user of the gaming machine adding
30 gaming credit to the machine; a user of the gaming machine playing a game on the gaming machine; and a prize being won on the gaming machine.

30. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein the gaming machines are adapted to play a regular game and a bonus game, the bonus game only being executed in response to the game trigger message.

31. A method according to any one of claims 19 to 30 including receiving
5 respective input messages from the plurality of input terminals, each input message identifying the source input terminal, and sending the game trigger message to the input terminal from which the input message was received which caused the comparison to satisfy the criteria for generation of an game trigger message.

32. A method according to claim 31 including polling the input terminals for
10 input messages.

33. A method according to claim 32 including polling each input terminal sequentially during successive polling cycles.

34. A method according to claim 32 including extracting respective timestamps from the input messages.

15 35. A method according to claim 33 including randomising the order of consideration by the input device of received input messages.

36. An apparatus substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the embodiments of the invention illustrated in the accompanying drawings and/or examples.

20 37. A method substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the embodiments of the invention illustrated in the accompanying drawings and/or examples.

38. A computer program for causing a computer to execute a method according to any one of claims 19 to 35 and 37.

25 39. A data carrier carrying data representing a computer program according to claim 38.

40. A signal carrying data representing a computer program according to claim 38.