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[54] **METHOD OF SELLING DATA RECORDS AS WELL AS VENDING APPARATUS, MEMORY DEVICE, CHIP CARD, AND SYSTEM FOR SELLING TELECOMMUNICATIONS SOFTWARE**

[75] Inventor: **Dieter Kopp**, Hemmingen, Germany

[73] Assignee: **Alcatel N.V.**, Rijswijk, Netherlands

[*] Notice: This patent issued on a continued prosecution application filed under 37 CFR 1.53(d), and is subject to the twenty year patent term provisions of 35 U.S.C. 154(a)(2).

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[58] Field of Search 364/900, 479, 364/401; 380/23; 235/380; 379/40

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Primary Examiner—Allen R. MacDonald

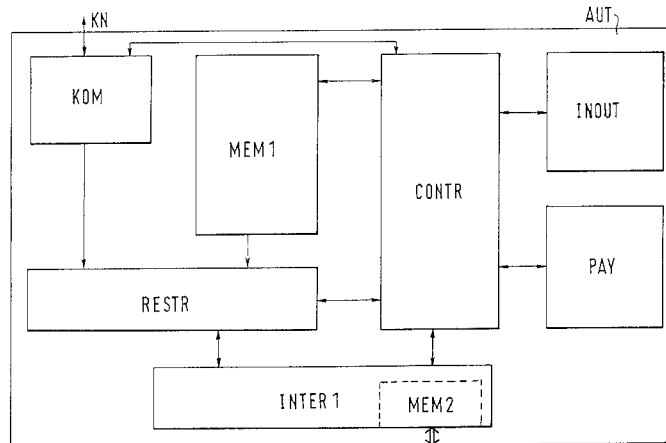
Assistant Examiner—Pedro R. Kanof

Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Ware, Fressola, Van der Sluys & Adolphson LLP

[57] ABSTRACT

A vending apparatus (AUT) is used to sell data records. The vending apparatus comprises a payment device (PAY), a control device (CONTR), a device for limiting the extent of utilization (RESTR), and an interface device (INTER1). The interface device (INTER1) sends a release signal to the control device (CONTR), when a suitable memory device (MEM2) is coupled to it in such a way, that a data transfer becomes possible. The device for limiting the extent of utilization (RESTR) only permits the storage of data records in the memory device (MEM) to a predetermined extent. The control device (CONTR) causes the transmission of at least one to be sold data record to the device for limiting the extent of utilization (RESTR), if it receives a release signal from the payment device (PAY) and the interface device (INTER1).

13 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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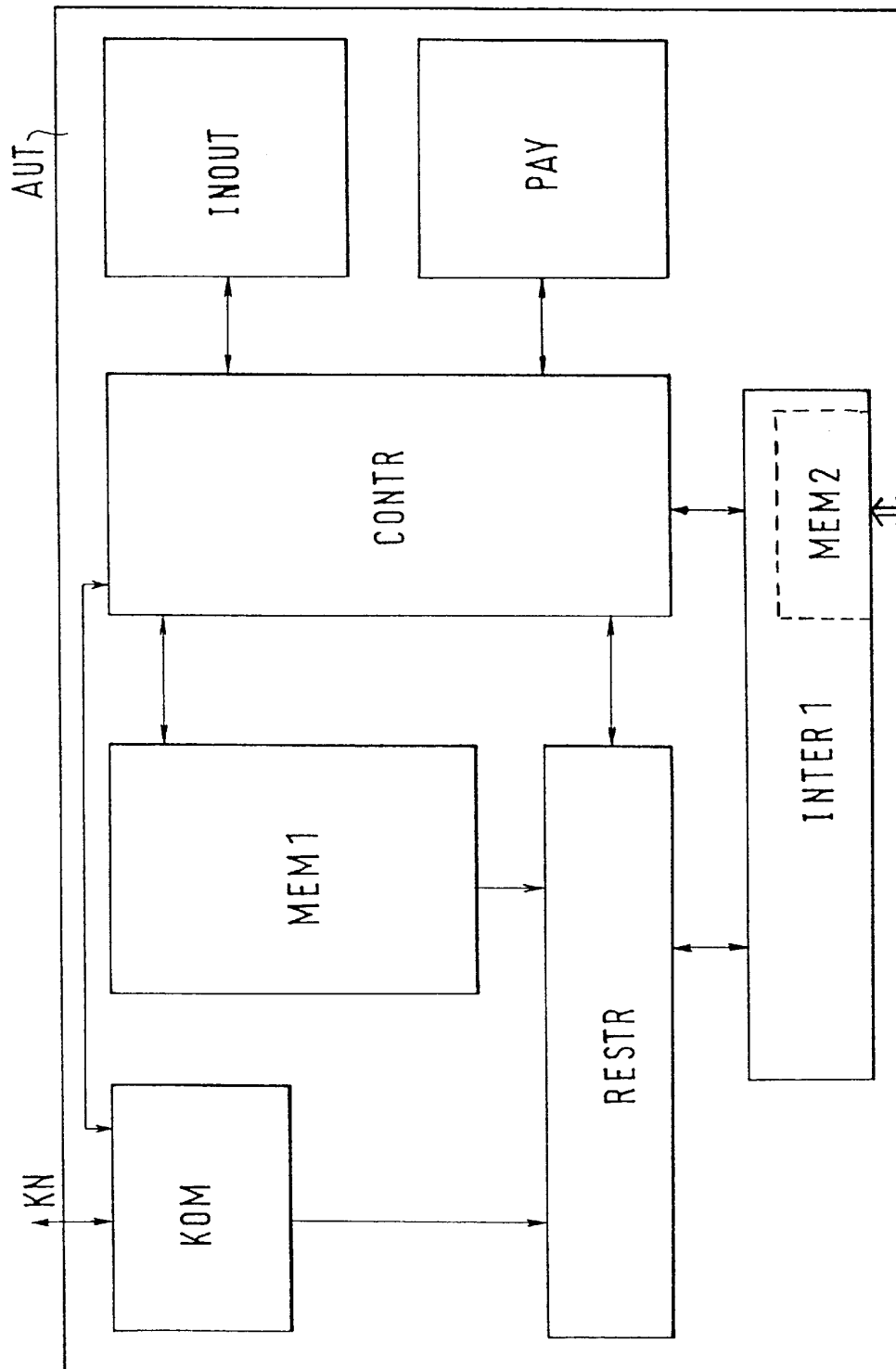


Fig. 1

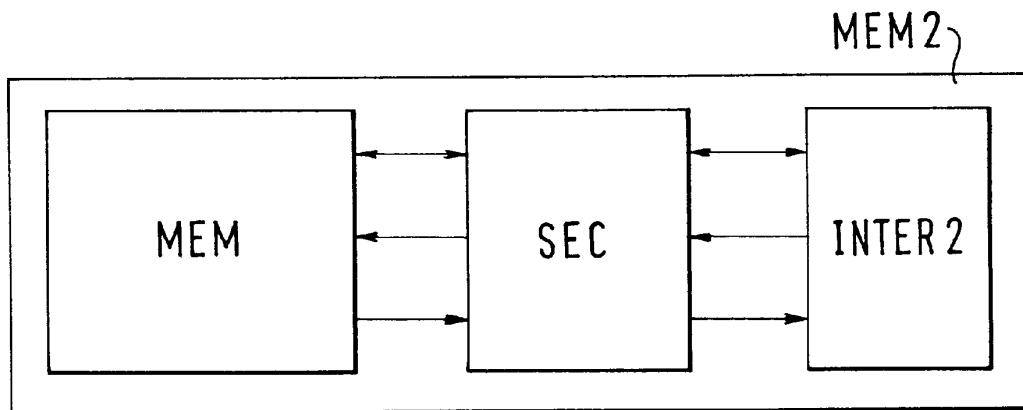


Fig. 2

METHOD OF SELLING DATA RECORDS AS WELL AS VENDING APPARATUS, MEMORY DEVICE, CHIP CARD, AND SYSTEM FOR SELLING TELECOMMUNICATIONS SOFTWARE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention concerns a method for selling data records by means of a vending apparatus, a vending apparatus, a memory device, a chip card and a selling system for telecommunications software.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The invention starts with several known software vending methods. As a rule, software programs are acquired by the user in a store, where he purchases a data carrier (e.g. floppy diskettes(s) and CDROM(s)) with the software program stored thereon.

This method has the disadvantage that the buyer must purchase a data carrier in addition to the software program, and could possibly spend much time for the transaction.

Furthermore, software selling systems are known, whereby software programs are electronically sent to the buyers. Such a selling system is described for example in the article "How Much is That Object In The Window?", on page 54 of the Aug. 22, 1994 issue of "Business Week". This selling system offers the buyers software programs from different manufacturers via an electronic communications system, which can be purchased by them through this system. One disadvantage of such a system is that the buyer must have a suitable terminal available for this electronic communications system.

The invention further starts with a vending apparatus for software as described in the German Patent G 94 01 027. This vending apparatus is used to sell public domain or shareware software programs. It contains a hard disk or a CD-ROM drive, a disk drive, a simplified keyboard and a coin checking device. A software program is selected with the keyboard and copied by means of the hard disk or CD-ROM drive to a disk which the buyer has inserted into the disk drive, after the coin checker has verified the insertion of a specified amount of money.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention has the task of making data records available for a fee. The task is fulfilled by a method of selling data records for consumer facilities by means of a vending apparatus, comprising the steps of checking whether a suitable memory device has been coupled to an interface device of the vending apparatus in such a way that a data transfer is possible; checking whether a pay device is providing a release signal; and, if these two conditions are fulfilled, storing at least one data record to be sold on the memory device such that the stored data record is released for use only to a predetermined extent.

It also has the task of vending apparatus for selling data records, comprising a pay device for receipt of a payment from a user and for generating a release signal if a payment is made; a control device in cooperative engagement with the pay device; a use-restricting device in cooperative engagement with the control device; and an interface device for coupling memory devices to the vending apparatus, the interface device in cooperative engagement with the use-restricting device, the control device and the pay device so as to send a release signal to the control device when a

suitable memory device has been coupled to the interface device in such a way that a data transfer is possible, the use-restricting device for causing data records to be stored on the memory device so that a stored data record will be released only to a predetermined extent, and the control device initiating the transfer of at least one data record to be sold to the use-restricting device when receiving a release signal from the pay device and the interface device.

It further has the task of a memory device for buying data records, comprising an interface device for coupling the memory device to a vending apparatus; a memory within the memory device for storing data records received via the interface device; and a security device in cooperative engagement with the interface device and the memory and which releases the data records stored in the memory for use only to a predetermined extent.

A further task of the device is a chip card for use in consumer facilities, said chip card having a memory device comprising an interface device for coupling the chip card to vending apparatuses and consumer facilities; a memory within the memory device for storing data records received via the interface device; and a security device in cooperative engagement with the interface device and the memory and which releases the data records stored in the memory for use only to a predetermined extent.

A still further task of the invention is a system for selling telecommunications software, comprising a plurality of chip cards each provided with a memory device; a plurality of vending apparatuses for transferring programs onto the chip cards; and a plurality of telecommunication devices each provided with an interface device for coupling chip cards thereto and designed to be controlled in accordance with programs stored on a chip card coupled to the telecommunication device, each of the vending apparatuses comprising a pay device for receipt of a payment from a user and for generating a release signal if a payment is made, a control device in cooperative engagement with the pay device, a use-restricting device in cooperative engagement with the control device, and an interface device for coupling chip cards to the vending apparatus, the interface device in cooperative engagement with the use-restricting device, the control device and the pay device so as to send a release signal to the control device when a suitable chip card has been coupled to the interface device in such a way that a data transfer is possible, the use-restricting device for causing data records to be stored on the chip card so that a stored data record is released only to a predetermined extent, and the control device initiating the transfer of at least one data record to be sold to the use-restricting device when receiving a release signal from the pay device and the interface device.

The basic idea of the invention is to store in this manner a data record on a suitable memory device through a vending apparatus, so that the data record is only released for utilization to a predetermined extent. In this way the buyer no longer acquires a data carrier with a physical copy of the data record, but rather a data record with a specified, limited possibility of utilization.

In this sense a data record comprises software programs or data for software programs, such as for example encyclopedias, but also video and audio recordings, etc.

The invention has the advantage that the data records sold in this manner become a consumable commodity. This makes it possible for a buyer to specify the extent of utilization he wants, to pay only for that and to receive a data record which is only released to this extent of utilization.

It is also an advantage here that by using a vending apparatus, the extent of utilization can be individually speci-

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