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(54) **PUSHBUTTON RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION TAG FOR MEDIA CONTENT DELIVERY**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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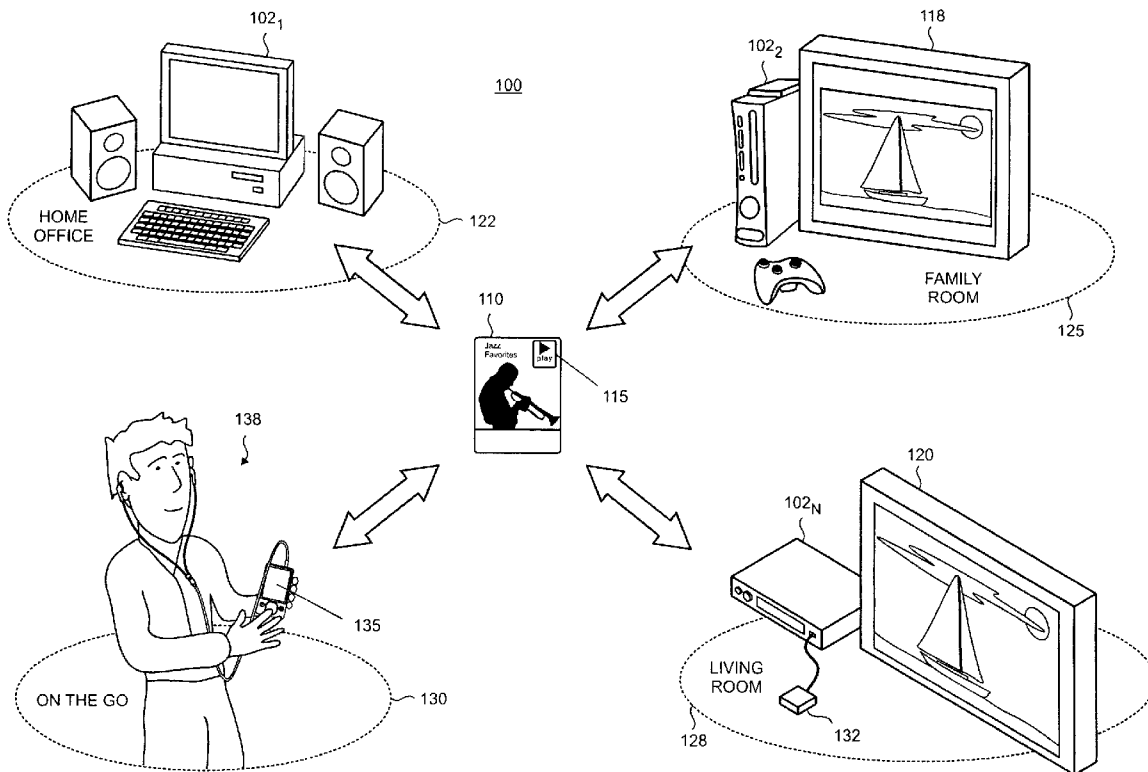
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A media token with a pushbutton RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tag which, when activated by a button press, enables a globally unique identifier (“GUID”) encoded in the tag to be read by an RFID reader that is operatively coupled to a client device. The GUID is resolved by an on-line media content service which identifies media content that is associated with the media token. The service streams the content to the client device, or delivers it for local storage which is rendered by the client device. Since the press of the button causes the content to begin playing, an association is created between the media token and the rendered content. However, the media token itself does not function as a content container, but instead provides a convenient way to control content playback while functioning as a physical vehicle that can be packaged, touched, and shared much like traditional media.



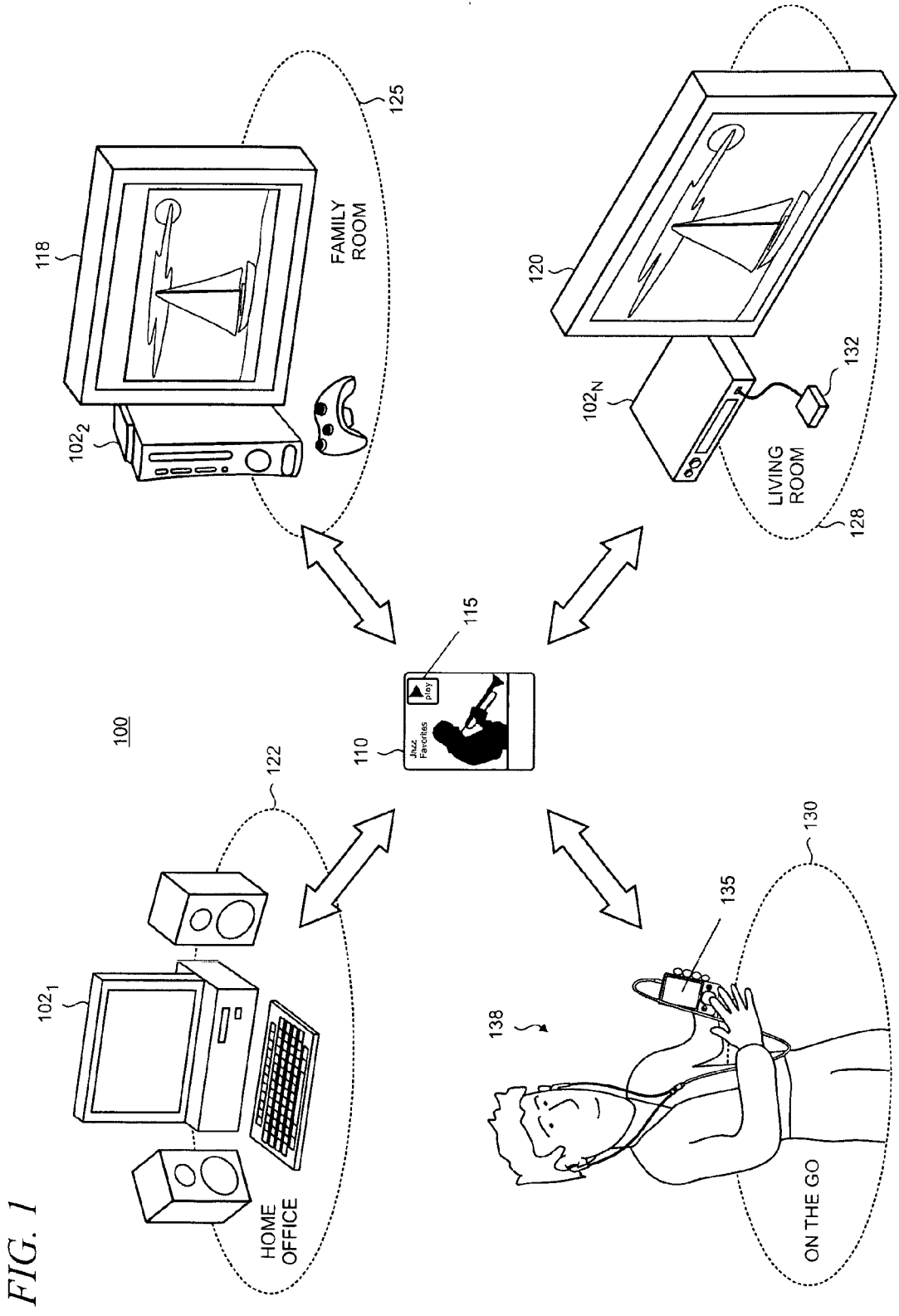


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

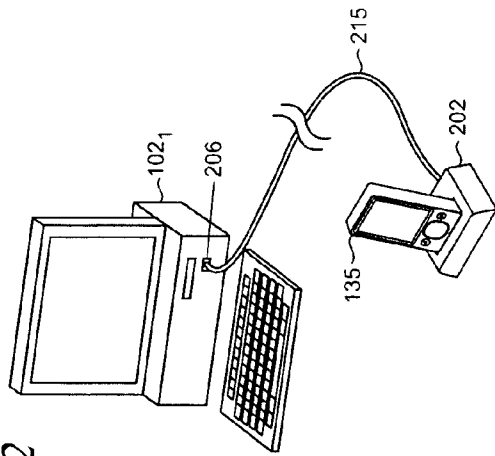


FIG. 5

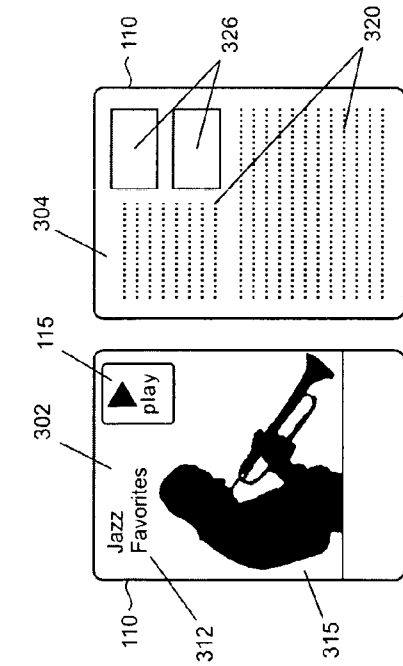
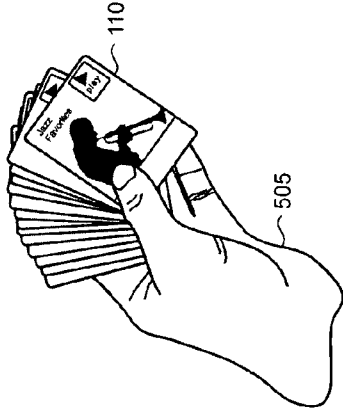


FIG. 3

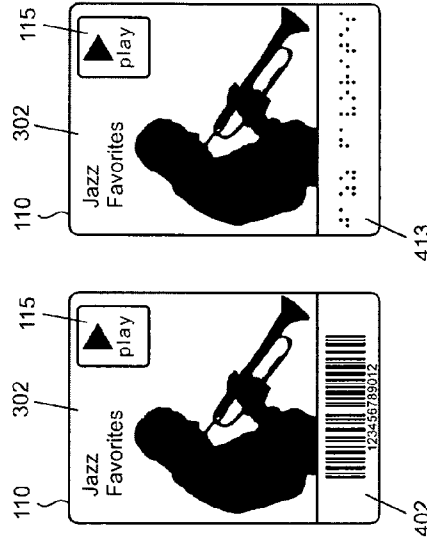


FIG. 4

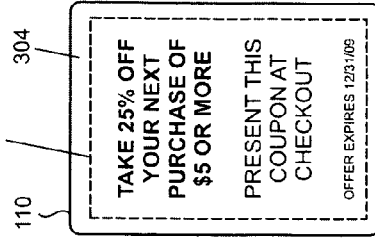


FIG. 4B

FIG. 6

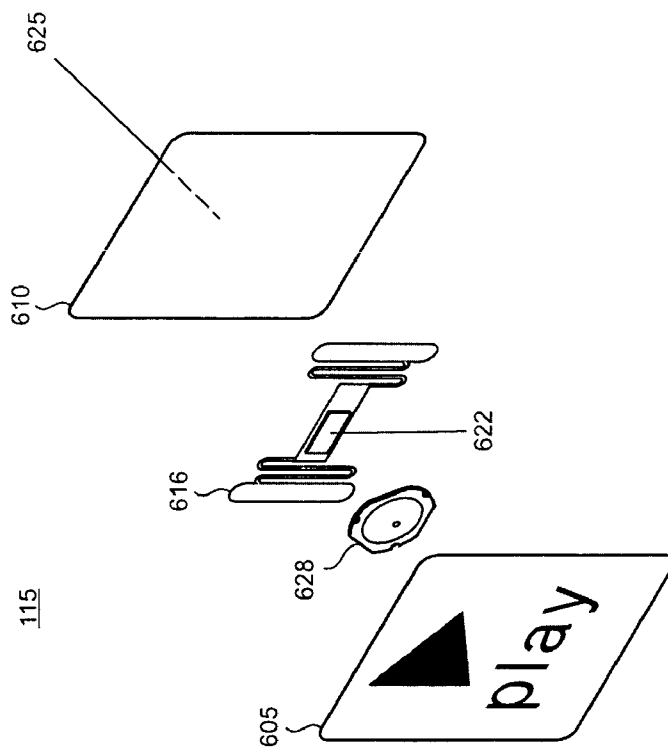


FIG. 7

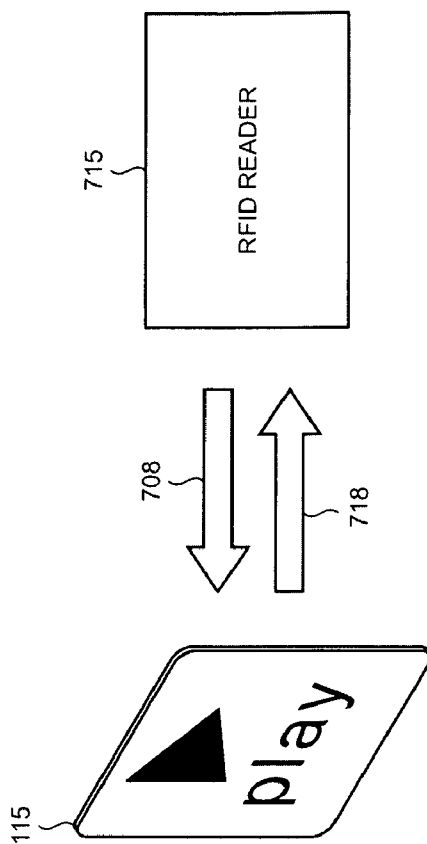


FIG. 8

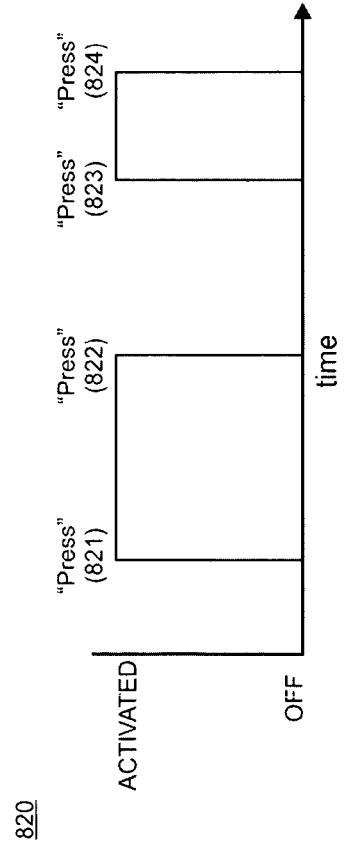
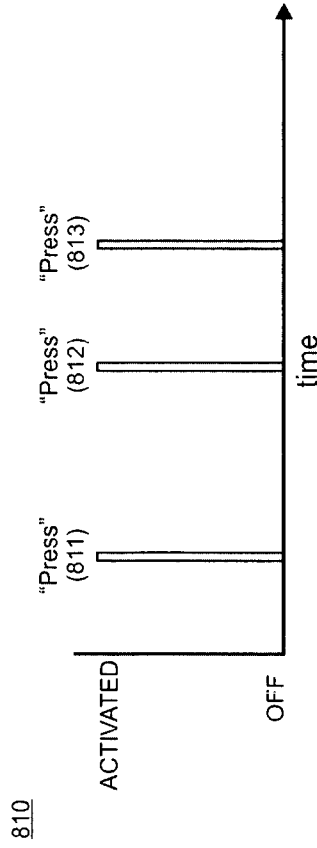
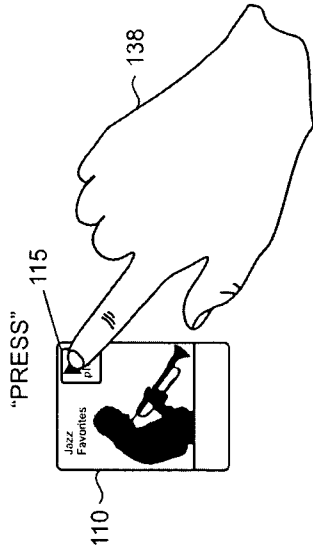


FIG. 9

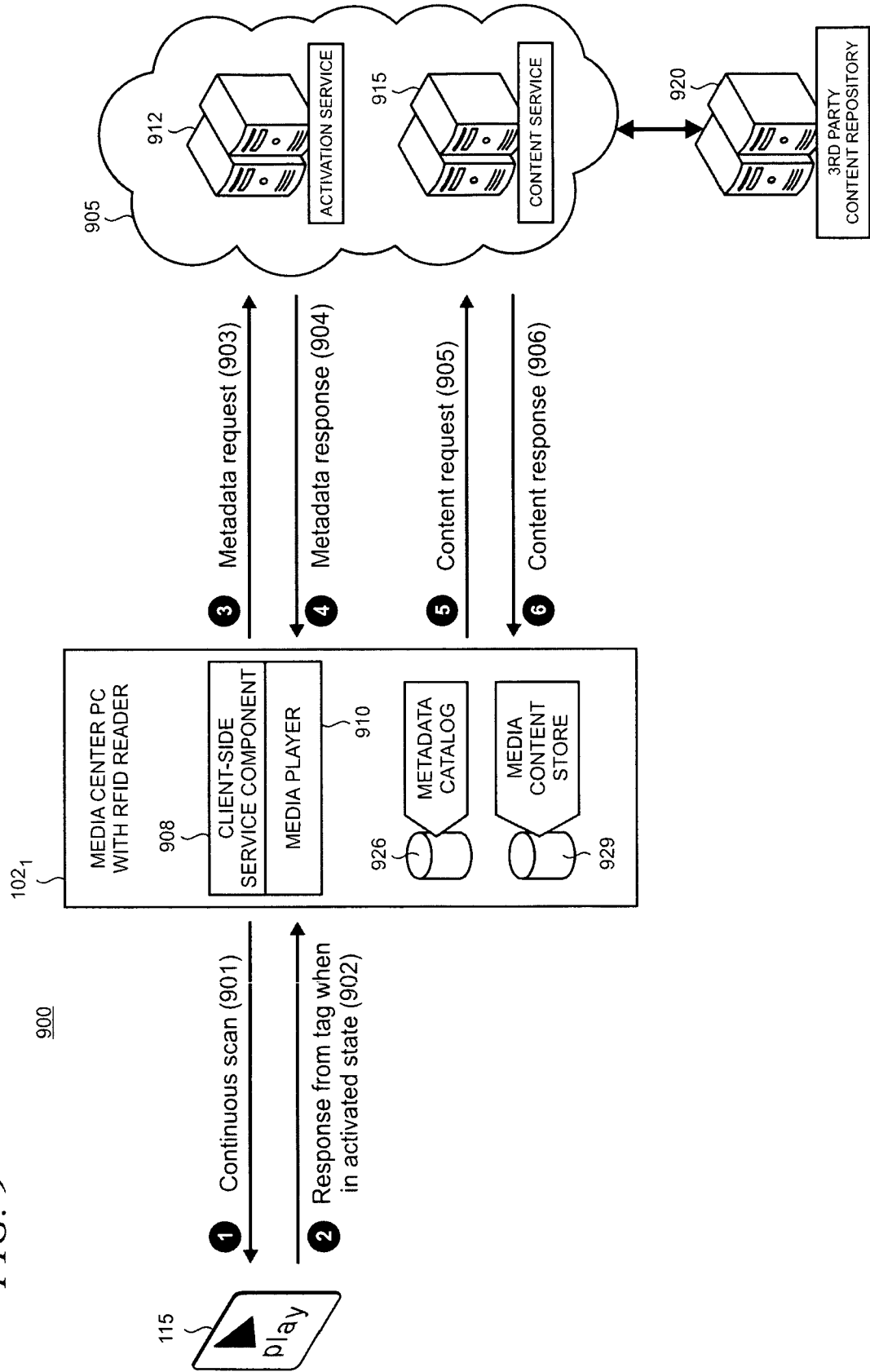


FIG. 10

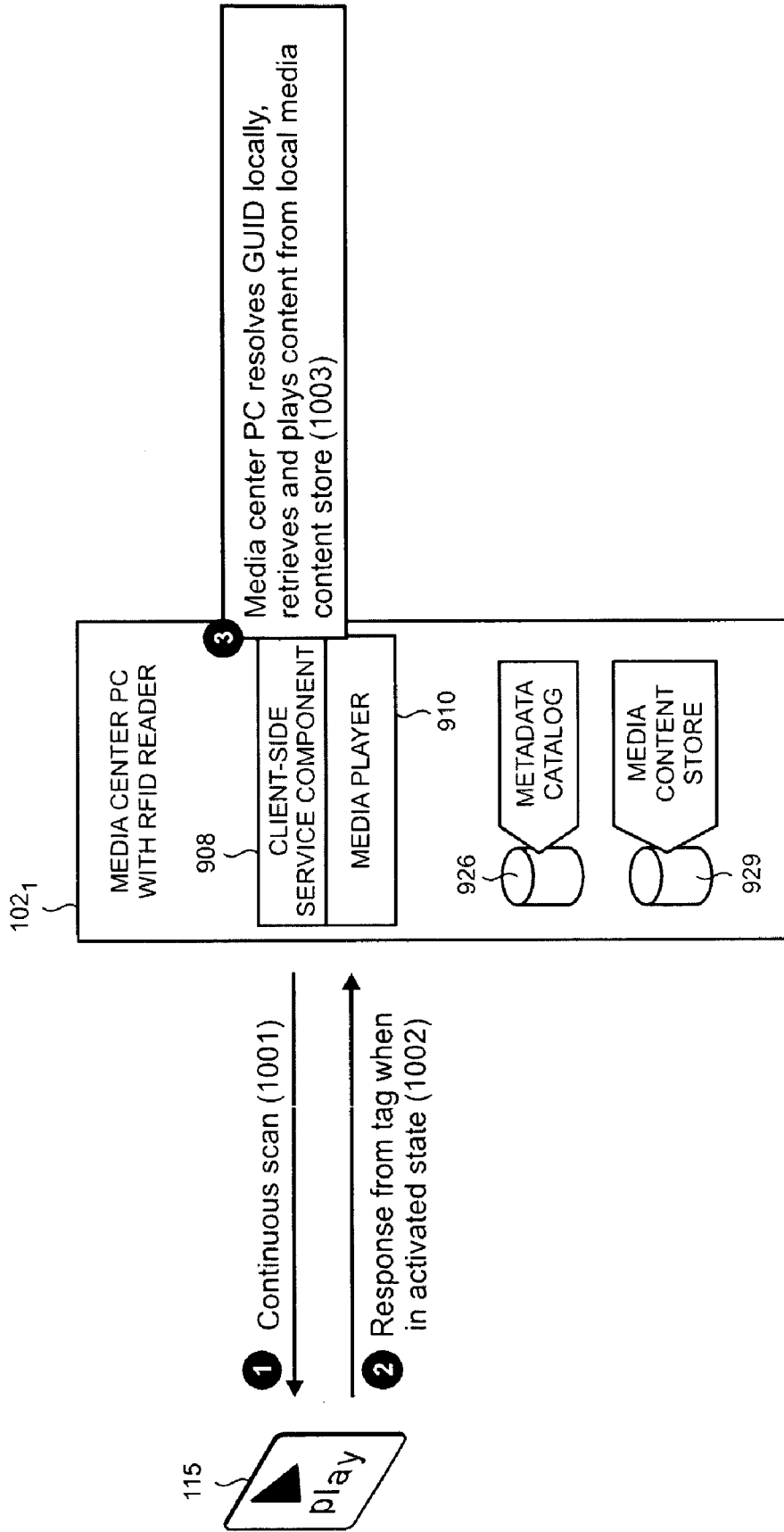
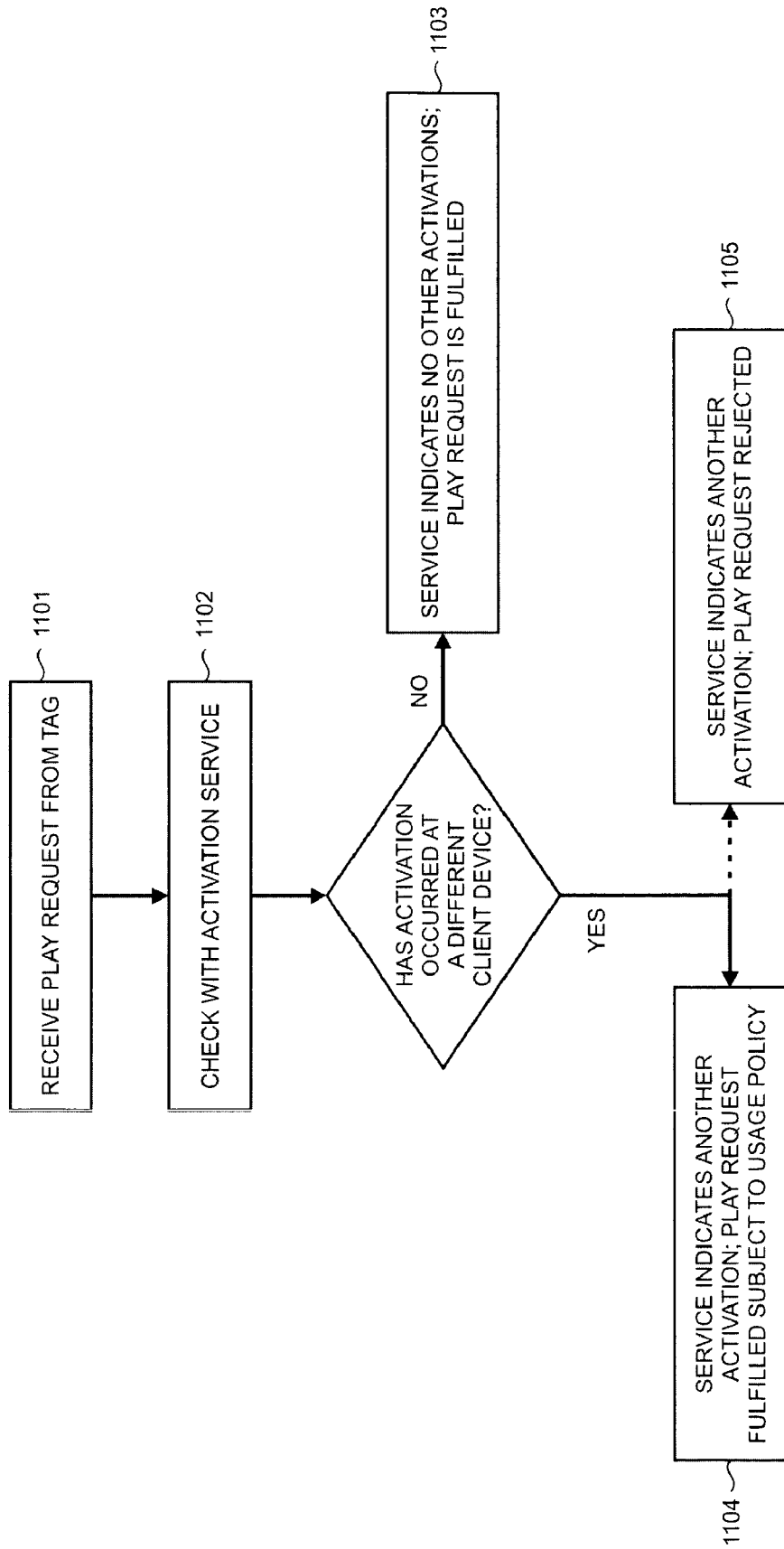


FIG. 11



PUSHBUTTON RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION TAG FOR MEDIA CONTENT DELIVERY

BACKGROUND

[0001] The development of media content in digital form has created new ways for consumers to access and experience video and audio content. With more than one billion people on-line, and broadband Internet access becoming more widely available in United States and international markets, enjoying digital media content is becoming much faster and easier. Consumers can now stream media content, or download and play content on a large number of electronic devices with a level of quality that increasingly matches traditional high-quality home theatre and audio systems.

[0002] A variety of different business models may be used for delivering media content, and consumers can typically choose from among large catalogs and get the content delivered quickly and conveniently from the on-line source whenever they want it. Consumers like the quality, choice, and flexibility that digital delivery provides, and continued growth and demand is anticipated. Some analysts point to such growth as partly contributing to the decline of sales of music that is physically delivered on CD (Compact Disc). And while DVDs (Digital Versatile Discs) currently continue to be a preferred way for consumers to access and consume video such as feature films and movies, on-line video delivery is expected to experience very significant growth in the future, particularly as bandwidth availability improves and effective Internet acceleration and traffic management techniques continue to be developed and deployed.

[0003] While digital media content delivery is very popular and proving to be commercially successful, some consumers continue to prefer physically embodied media content and its traditional packaging. For these consumers, digital media content does not provide the kind of close and personal interaction that results when one has a physical object to look at, touch, and hold and which can further reinforce a sense of ownership.

[0004] This Background is provided to introduce a brief context for the Summary and Detailed Description that follow. This Background is not intended to be an aid in determining the scope of the claimed subject matter nor be viewed as limiting the claimed subject matter to implementations that solve any or all of the disadvantages or problems presented above.

SUMMARY

[0005] A media token with a pushbutton RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tag is arranged so that, when activated by a consumer pressing the button, a globally unique identifier (“GUID”) encoded in the RFID tag may be read by an RFID reader that is operatively coupled to a client device such as a media center PC (personal computer), game console, home entertainment system, or set-top box. The GUID is resolved by an on-line media content service which identifies media content such as music or video that is associated with the media token. For a first time activation of the pushbutton RFID tag, the service streams the media content to the client device, or delivers it for local storage along with metadata that describes the usage rights for the content. The client device then renders the media content from the stream or local store. On subsequent activations, the client device will perform a

look-up in a local database to identify applicable usage policy and locate the media content in the local store, and then render the content from the store without having to contact the on-line media service again.

[0006] Since the press of the button on the media token causes the media content to begin playing on the client device, an association for the consumer is created between the physically embodied media token and the rendered content. However, the media token itself does not function as a container for the media content (which instead comes from the service), but instead provides a convenient way to control playback of media content while also functioning as a physical vehicle that can be packaged, touched, and shared much like traditional media.

[0007] In various illustrative examples, the media token is embodied as a card having the approximate size and shape of a playing card. The pushbutton RFID tag is configured as a low cost passive tag that contains no internal power supply but instead relies on power emitted by the RFID reader coupled to the client device. The media card may include text, graphics, images, and other information that describes the media content that is associated with it, and/or may also convey other information such as promotional and marketing messages or offers. A variety of distribution models for media cards are supported including sale at retail outlets and promotional distribution through direct mail, viral marketing using existing social networks, or via hand-outs at events such as concerts and movies. Media content associated with the media card can also be protected under various digital rights management (“DRM”) methodologies to guide how content may be transferred, for example, to other devices like portable media players, and/or to limit play count in some cases. However, the DRM rules do not have to be embedded in the media card itself, but instead may be determined through resolution of the GUID alone, or in combination with other identifying data such as a customer account ID or login, and then enforced at the local client device.

[0008] This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used as an aid in determining the scope of the claimed subject matter.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 shows an illustrative environment including a variety of media content rendering client devices with which an illustrative media card with a pushbutton RFID tag may be operated;

[0010] FIG. 2 shows an illustrative arrangement where a portable media player is synchronized with a PC (personal computer);

[0011] FIG. 3 shows the front and reverse sides of an illustrative media card in which a pushbutton RFID tag is incorporated;

[0012] FIGS. 4, 4A, and 4B show illustrative alternative configurations for the media card in which a bar code, raised Braille markings, and promotional offers, respectively, are included;

[0013] FIG. 5 shows an illustrative arrangement in which a plurality of media cards are held;

[0014] FIG. 6 shows an exploded isometric view of an illustrative present pushbutton RFID tag;

[0015] FIG. 7 highlights the interaction between the pushbutton RFID tag and a passive RFID reader;

[0016] FIG. 8 shows two alternative activation behaviors of the pushbutton RFID tag;

[0017] FIG. 9 shows an illustrative media content delivery service architecture that works with a media card having a pushbutton RFID tag;

[0018] FIG. 10 shows an illustrative scenario in which media content is played locally in response to interaction with a media card with a pushbutton RFID tag; and

[0019] FIG. 11 shows a flowchart of an illustrative process that addresses RFID tag duplication.

[0020] Like reference numerals indicate like elements in the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] A significant challenge presented by digital delivery of media content is that some consumers have bemoaned the loss of something tangible to look at or hold after, for example, buying and downloading a song from an on-line source, and may also express a diminished sense of ownership. That is, CDs and DVDs and their associated cases or packaging give physicality to media content that is otherwise intangible, and can provide both a visual and tactile sense to the consumer that the media content exists beyond merely being a collection of digital ones and zeroes. Without a physically manifested form, the digitally delivered media content is listened to, or watched, but then is gone. The consumer is thus limited in pursuing the kinds of interaction with the digital media content that may be traditionally performed with their physically embodied counterparts.

[0022] For example, consumers often enjoy browsing through their CD or DVD collections by pulling a case from the shelf and perhaps viewing the artwork or images on the cover, looking at the content list and description, artist/actor information, etc. CDs and DVDs are also frequently packaged with additional printed collateral such as liner notes, booklets, lyrics, and biographies. Special editions and “boxed sets” can take this a step further and may include more extensive amounts of collateral materials that are designed to be of interest to the consumer.

[0023] On-line media content delivery services can replicate many aspects of an interaction with physical media content, and in some cases enhance it by providing, for example, interactive features, and/or more comprehensive information. However, while often satisfactory, such on-line experiences are very different from interaction with traditional physical media content and are not always well-suited to social settings involving a group of people. For example, a consumer and a few friends might be looking at the consumer’s collection of CDs to decide which songs are going to be played on a home stereo. Each member of the group is pulling CDs off the shelf, looking at the song lists, reading the collateral materials, sharing materials with the others, and making suggestions as to the playlist. This kind of group social interaction, which consumers often highly value, is not typically achievable with user interfaces supported by PCs or other media rendering devices which tend to be configured for individual use.

[0024] In contrast to existing on-line content delivery, the present media token with pushbutton RFID tag enables a service to bridge the benefits of digitally delivered media content with the characteristics provided by traditional physical media that consumers often desire. The media token pro-

vides a way to control playback of associated media content using an inexpensive physical vehicle that consumers may hold in their hands, look at, and share with others.

[0025] Turning now to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows an illustrative environment 100 including a variety of media content rendering devices 102_{1,2,...N} with which an illustrative media token with a pushbutton RFID tag may be operated. In this particular example, the media token is embodied as a media card 110 which is approximately sized as a conventional playing card and includes a pushbutton RFID tag 115 that is configured as a passive tag. Details of the pushbutton RFID tag 115 are shown in FIGS. 3-8 and described in the accompanying text.

[0026] Media tokens may also be formed using other objects to which a pushbutton RFID tag is affixed or incorporated. Examples include greeting cards, instruction manuals, books, notebooks, pamphlets, magazines and other printed matter. Media tokens may also include traditional promotional giveaways or gift items such as pens, mugs, toys, mouse pads, flashlights, keychains and fobs, small USB (Universal Serial Bus) thumb drives, etc. Articles of clothing and other apparel can also be utilized as media tokens in some applications, as can trophies and awards, for example.

[0027] The media content rendering devices 102 are representative of a variety of electronic devices that can be connected to the Internet and can render media content such as audio and video. Such media content commonly includes, for example, music, audio books, podcasts, images like photographs, video in the form of television programs, movies, music videos and the like. The devices include a media center-type PC 102₁, a game console 102₂ which is operatively coupled to a television 118, and a set-top box 102_N which is operatively coupled to a television 120. Each device 102 operates as a client device for a media content service that is accessed over a network such as the Internet, as described in more detail below in the text accompanying FIG. 9.

[0028] In many typical scenarios, the client devices 102 will be located in different rooms of a home. Thus, for example, the PC 102₁ is located in a home office 122, the game console 102₂ is in the family room 125, and the set top box 102_N is set up in the living room 128.

[0029] In this example, the PC 102₁ and game console 102₂ are each further configured to include RFID reader functionality that is internally integrated. The set-top box 102_N utilizes an external RFID reader 132 that is coupled, for example using a USB connection.

[0030] A portable media player 135 is used by a consumer 138 in the illustrative environment 100. As indicated by reference numeral 130, the consumer 138 may use the portable media player 135 while on the go and in various locations. The portable media player 135 is representative of the variety of portable electronic devices that are available that can play audio, video, or both including MP3 players (Moving Pictures Expert Group, MPEG-1, audio layer 3), portable multimedia players, pocket PCs, smart phones, mobile phones, handheld game devices, personal digital assistants (“PDAs”), or other types of electronic devices that can store and render media content. In this example, the portable media player 135 is further configured to include an internally integrated RFID reader.

[0031] As indicated by the arrows in FIG. 1, the media card 110 may wirelessly communicate with the client devices 102 and portable media player 135 using RF signals that are exchanged between the pushbutton RFID tag 115 and the

respective RFID readers used with the client devices **102**. More details about the wireless RF communication are provided in the text accompanying FIG. 7.

[0032] In this example, the portable media player **135** is arranged to be operatively coupleable with the PC **102**, using a synchronization process by which data may be exchanged or shared between the devices. The synchronization process implemented between the PC **102**, and portable media player **135** typically enables media content to be downloaded from an on-line source to the PC **102**, and then transferred to the portable media player **135**.

[0033] FIG. 2 shows the portable media player **135** as typically inserted into a dock **202** for synchronization with the PC **102**. Dock **202** is coupled to an input port **206** such as USB port (Universal Serial Bus) with a synchronization (“sync”) cable **215**, in this example. In alternative arrangements, the portable media player **135** may be coupled directly to the sync cable **215** without using the dock **202**. In addition, other arrangements may also be used to implement communications between the portable media player **135** and PC **102**, including, for example, those employing wireless protocols such as Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi (i.e., the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, IEEE 802.11 standards family).

[0034] FIG. 3 shows the front side **302** and reverse side **304** of the illustrative media card **110** in which a pushbutton RFID tag **115** is incorporated. The front side **302** of the media card **110** typically includes an area that may be used to highlight or describe the media content that is associated with the card **110** such as a title **312** and/or artwork **315**. In this example, the media content associated with the media card **110** is a jazz album that includes multiple tracks of music. However, it is emphasized that the associated media content is not limited to music, nor does it need to include multiple pieces of content such as music tracks. For example the associated media content could be a video of a feature film, a collection of music videos, or comprise one track of music (e.g., a “single”). In other arrangements, the media content associated with the media card **110** may be used for promotional purposes and could include a short trailer of a feature film.

[0035] As shown in FIG. 3, the pushbutton RFID tag **115** is located in the upper right-hand corner of the media card **110**. However, this location is merely illustrative, and the tag **115** may be located in various other positions on the card **110** to meet the requirements of a particular implementation.

[0036] The reverse side **304** of the media card **110** typically includes an area that may be used to provide additional information that may be of interest to a consumer. For example, text **320** and/or graphics **326** can be included to list tracks, provide information about the artist and band, and the like. The elements provided on the reverse side **304**, their layout, and specific content included can be expected to be selected as a matter of design choice and will typically vary.

[0037] The media card **110** may also be alternatively configured to convey a variety of other kinds of information. For example, as shown in FIG. 4 a UPC (Universal Product Code) barcode **402** is printed on the front side **302** of the media card **110**. In FIG. 4A, raised Braille markings **413** which spell out “Jazz Favorites” are included. Promotional and marketing messages, advertising, and offers such as coupon **425** which is provided on the reverse side **304** may also be provided by the media card **110**.

[0038] In many applications, the media card **110** will be arranged using low-cost materials such as thermoplastics, or plastic-coated card stock. The media card **110** will also typi-

cally be sized so that multiple cards can be comfortably held and sorted through as easily as a deck of playing cards. For example, as shown in FIG. 5, a group of media cards, including the representative media card **110**, can be fanned out in the hand **505** of a consumer like playing cards. Media cards can also be conveniently placed in a shirt pocket for travel or compactly stored in a collection.

[0039] A media token such as the media card **110** supports a variety of different physical distribution models and channels compared with on-line-only media delivery. These include retail sale where media tokens can be sold in a similar manner as conventional physical media such as CD and DVD. However, as the media token is not a container for media content, there are more ways to produce it for retail distribution. For example, a media card can be produced at the time of sale where the GUID is locally associated with the particular media content and then the card is printed with the appropriately matched text and/or graphics. Such on-demand production may be supported by retail personnel, or using self-service kiosks, for example.

[0040] The present media token also presents new options for promotional distribution of media content which would previously have been uneconomical or difficult to target. For example media tokens may be used in direct mail campaigns, or handed out at live concerts where a consumer may be given access to a sample recording from the concert soundboard. In this case perhaps the media token includes information or a coupon that may be redeemed to purchase a complete recording, video, or related merchandise at a special price.

[0041] Media tokens also provide a new way to support viral marketing. Here, influencers’ physical social networks are a natural nexus for distribution of limited-use or special promotional materials which include or incorporate a media token. By comparison to traditional promotional materials, media tokens are less expensive and as a result are more disposable and more easily shareable than traditional “white label” or other existing preview or sample media types.

[0042] The pushbutton RFID tag **115** is shown in exploded isometric view in FIG. 6. As noted above, the pushbutton RFID tag **115** is arranged as a passive RFID tag. The pushbutton RFID tag **115** can be arranged in compliance with the UHF (Ultra High Frequency) Class 1 Generation 2 protocol (commonly known as the “Gen 2” standard) published by EPCglobal which covers passive-backscatter RFID systems operating in the 860 MHz-960 MHz frequency range.

[0043] As shown in FIG. 6, the pushbutton RFID tag **115** comprises a front substrate **605** and back substrate **610** which sandwich a layer that includes an antenna **616** having a folded dipole, and RFID integrated circuit (i.e., “chip”) **622**. The substrates will typically be formed from a thin and flexible material such as thermoplastic (e.g., polyurethane, polyethylene terephthalate, polypropylene, or polyester) or paper. The front substrate **605** includes markings (e.g., an icon and the word “Play”) to indicate to the consumer that the tag **115** may be pressed to start playback of the media content that is associated with the tag.

[0044] The reverse side **625** of the back substrate may include a layer of pressure-sensitive or other type of adhesive to enable the pushbutton RFID tag **115** to be affixed to the media card **110**. Alternatively, the tag **115** may be laminated to the media card **110**.

[0045] A pushbutton actuator **628** is positioned in front of the antenna **616** and chip **622**. In this example, the actuator **628** is a momentary contact, dome-type tactile switch (i.e., a

“tact” switch) which is typically encapsulated within layers of polyester and acrylic-based adhesives in what is termed a membrane switch configuration.

[0046] The RFID chip **622** is arranged to store data, and in particular, a globally unique identifier (“GUID”) to identify the pushbutton RFID tag **115** and the media card **110** with which it is incorporated. In many applications, the RFID chip **622** will be arranged with 32 and 128 bits of memory, but other memory values may also be used.

[0047] The pushbutton RFID tag **115** does not include an internal power supply, and consequently must rely on power emitted by an RFID reader in order to transmit data. As indicated in FIG. 7, the antenna **616** in the pushbutton RFID tag **115** absorbs an RF signal (as shown by arrow **708**) which is emitted by an RFID reader **715** (i.e., as used by the client devices **102** and the portable media player **135** as shown in FIG. 1 and described in the accompanying text). The RF reader **715** is normally arranged to continuously scan for RFID tags by continuously emitting the RF signal.

[0048] The RF signal includes a modulated portion along with periods of an unmodulated carrier. An RF voltage that is developed across the antenna’s terminals during the unmodulated period is converted to DC (direct current) which is used to power the RFID chip **622**. The RFID chip **622** modulates the RF signal (typically by varying the RF input impedance) that is sent back to the RFID reader **715** (as shown by arrow **718**). The RFID reader **715** converts the modulated RF signal into digital data to resolve the GUID.

[0049] The read range for the pushbutton RFID tag **115** can be expected to vary depending on the implementation conditions including the size and configuration of the antenna **616**, the power of the RFID reader **715**, and interference from other RF devices, and so on. However, read range generally increases with the frequency of operation so that the effective range may be around three meters for the RFID readers that are used with the client devices **102** in FIG. 1. By comparison, the RFID reader that is incorporated in the portable media player **135** will typically be configured to support a shorter read range, for example up to around several centimeters.

[0050] In accordance with the principles of the present arrangement, the RFID chip **622** is normally disconnected from the antenna **616**. In this unactivated (i.e., “off”) state, the pushbutton RFID tag **115** is transparent to the RFID reader **715** and its GUID will not be read when scanned. When a consumer presses the button on the RFID tag **115**, the actuator **628** couples the antenna **616** to the RFID chip **622** so that the tag gets powered up and becomes activated. The RFID chip **622** can return the modulated RF signal back to reader **715** so that the GUID may be read.

[0051] Several different activation behaviors may be alternatively implemented, as shown in FIG. 8. In the first graph **810**, each press by the consumer **138** on the pushbutton RFID tag **115** causes the tag to be momentarily activated. So, for example, as the consumer **138** moves from room to room in the environment **100** (FIG. 1) with the media card **110** in hand, each press on the pushbutton RFID tag **115** will cause each respective RFID reader in the client devices **102** to read the GUID. Thus, for example, the consumer **138** can play the media content associated with the media card **110** (i.e., “Jazz Favorites”) on the PC **102₁** with a first press (**811**), move to another room and play the content on the game console **102₂** over the television **118** with a second press (**812**). The consumer might then place the media card **110** near the portable

media player **135** to play the content on the player with a third press of the pushbutton RFID tag **115** (**813**).

[0052] In the second graph **820** shown in FIG. 8, a press by the consumer **138** on the pushbutton RFID tag **115** causes the tag to be activated and stay activated until another press of the button turns it off. With this activation behavior, which termed is “code switching,” for example, the consumer **138** with a press (**821**) of the pushbutton RFID tag **115** can activate it within RFID reader range of the PC **102₁** and begin playback of the jazz content in the home office **122**. As the RFID tag **115** stays activated, when the consumer **138** moves to the family room **125** with the media card **110** in his pocket, the jazz music will appear to follow the consumer because the RFID reader in the game console **102₂** will scan the tag and resolve the GUID to begin playback once the tag comes within range. This activation behavior will be discontinued with a second press (**822**) on the pushbutton RFID tag **115**. Code switching may be typically implemented by configuring the actuator **628**, or employing logic in the chip **622**, or using a combination of both switch configuration and logic.

[0053] The consumer **128** can implement the “music-follows-me” feature again with another press (**823**), for example, to begin playback on the set-top box **102_N** in the living room **128** and have it continue on the portable media player **135** when the consumer goes out for a walk. Another press (**824**) of the pushbutton RFID tag **115** deactivates the feature so that the music will not begin playing on the PC **102₁** when the consumer gets back from his walk and goes into the home office to check his e-mail.

[0054] The “music-follows-me” example also highlights a feature that the present arrangement provides where a single media token may enable the dynamic delivery of media content having variable resolution, sampling rates, or other characteristics. An illustrative example is where the media content is a video such as a music video or movie. In this case, it may be anticipated that the consumer will have client devices that have varying display capabilities. For example, the PC **102₁** may use a comparatively low resolution monitor, while the game console **102₂** is connected to a high-resolution wide-screen monitor, and the portable media player **135** has a small built-in display. As the consumer moves from room to room, or switches to using the portable media player **135**, the media content delivered to the device can be dynamically tailored to the appropriate resolution.

[0055] As noted above, a media content delivery service provides the actual content to the client devices **102** that is associated with the media card **110**. FIG. 9 shows an illustrative architecture **900** for such a media content delivery service. While FIG. 9 shows the PC **102₁** as a representative client device, it is noted that the architecture **900** is operative with other client devices shown in FIG. 1 and described in the accompanying text.

[0056] In this example, the media content delivery service **905** is configured to be accessed by the client devices **102** shown in FIG. 1 over public networks such as the Internet as a “cloud-based” service. The media content delivery service **905** includes an activation service **912** and a content service **915**. It is noted that the activation service **912** does not necessarily need to be associated with a specific content service. For example, third-party content repositories, as indicated by reference **920**, may be optionally utilized as shown in FIG. 9.

[0057] As shown, PC **102₁** is configured with a local client-side service component **908** which supports interaction with the service **905**, as well as with a media player **910**. In some

applications, the client-side service component is responsible for enforcement of applicable usage policy or DRM protection for the media content.

[0058] In an illustrative usage scenario, architecture **900** is configured to implement a method for controlling delivery of the media content from the service **905** to the PC **102₁**.

[0059] The first step in the method (indicated by reference numeral **901** in FIG. **9**) involves the PC **102₁** implementing a continuous scan for media cards having a pushbutton RFID tag that is within range of its RFID reader. The second step (**902**) includes the PC **102₁** receiving the modulated RF signal which includes the GUID from the RFID tag **115** when it is activated by a consumer pressing the button.

[0060] At step three (**903**), the PC **102₁** makes an activation request to the activation service **912**. An illustrative form of the request is:

```
[0061] <PlayRequest deviceid="my_media_center"
tagid="GUID"/>
```

[0062] At step four (**904**), the activation service **912** responds to the request with information such as metadata about the media content that is associated with the GUID. An illustrative form of the response is:

```
[0063] <PlayResponse><Location href="uri"/><UsagePolicy . . ./></PlayResponse>
```

Metadata may include a variety of information that describes or is related to the media content such as track name, track number, album name, artist, genre, release year, and audio format in the case of music. For video, the metadata may include title, creator, release date, and video format. In some implementations, the metadata may include URLs (Uniform Resource Locators), or links, for accessing related content such as lyrics, cover artwork, artist information, concert information, reviews, interviews with the artists, actors, and directors, commentary, bloopers, behind the scenes footage, outtakes, remixes, and similar kinds of content. For both audio and video, the metadata may also include a description of the applicable usage policies or a URL to such policies. Consumers may view metadata, or interact with related content through user interfaces that are typically hosted by the client devices **102**. For example, the client-side service component **908** will typically include a user interface, or the consumer may utilize a web browser in some cases.

[0064] At step five (**905**), the PC **102₁** requests content from the content service component **915**. An illustrative form of the request is:

```
[0065] <ContentRequest><Location href="uri"/><UsagePolicy . . ./></ContentRequest>
```

[0066] At step six (**906**), the content service **915** delivers the media content that is associated with the media card **110** (as identified by the GUID read from the RFID tag **115**) which in this example is the album "Jazz Favorites." The delivered media content, and in some cases the associated metadata, may be subject to a particular usage policy which may specify, for example, that DRM protection is applicable. The usage policy will typically be stored as metadata in the metadata catalog **926**.

[0067] The usage policy applied to the delivered media content can vary by implementation. Illustrative examples include:

[0068] 1) Unlimited plays on any device (e.g., client devices **102** and portable media player **135**) with unlimited retention of the media content;

[0069] 2) Unlimited plays and retention on a first client device, but limited plays with no retention on a second client device, and limited retention on portable devices;

[0070] 3) Limited plays on any device;

[0071] 4) Limited plays on a first device only;

[0072] 5) Single play (i.e., one-time-only);

[0073] 6) "Golden Ticket" (i.e., rights which may be redeemed to access and/or use other media content or other services).

[0074] Formulation of a usage policy that is implemented at a local client device **102** may take solely the GUID read from the pushbutton RFID tag **115**, or use the GUID in combination with other identifying data such as a customer account ID or login. For example, a media content delivery service may be arranged using a registration or subscription-based business model where levels or tiered subscriptions are utilized. In those cases, a usage policy may include fewer limitations for a consumer who subscribes to a higher level of service.

[0075] In some implementations, a "proof-of-purchase" model may be utilized in which possession of a media card **110** is taken to represent ownership by the consumer **138** of the associated media content (e.g., the album of "Jazz Favorites"). In this situation, the physical presence of the media card **110**, as evidenced by the scan of the GUID from the pushbutton RFID tag **115**, may confer the same unlimited rights to playback and retain the media content that is enabled by owning a traditional CD that contains the content. Under this model, media content and related metadata is delivered to respective local metadata catalog and content stores **926** and **929** which may be implemented for example, on the hard disk of PC **102₁** where the content and metadata is cached for subsequent use. In other implementations where rights of playback and retention are more limited under the applicable usage policies or DRM protection, media content may only be streamed to a client device **102**, but not stored locally.

[0076] An extension of the proof-of-purchase model would be to limit playback and retention when the media card **110** is absent. For example, the consumer **138** may have purchased a media card **110** which enables the associated media content to be downloaded and stored locally at a client device **102**. As noted above, when the media card **110** is present, normally the consumer **138** would be able to play and transfer the media content between devices without restriction. However, should the consumer **138** lend the media card **110** to a friend, then the client device **102** could, for example, be restricted from playing the media content from the local store altogether, or may have a limit on the play count. When the friend returns the media card **110**, then the unlimited rights are restored.

[0077] In this regard, the media card **110** supports a usage model that is very similar to traditional media where its physical possession enables playback and lack of possession limits playback. As such a model can meet consumer's expectations as to what is reasonable and fair for purchased media content, the usage policies and DRM that are applicable to the media content become more transparent. In addition, using the media card **110** makes it easy for the consumer **138** to access and enjoy media content without necessarily needing to understand the mechanics behind its digital delivery. Indeed, some consumers will not even care or make the distinction that the media card **110** is not itself a media content container. Instead, aside from the media content that is rendered with a simple press of a button, these consumers will simply enjoy

the traditional physical interaction with content that is enabled by the media card **110**.

[0078] In cases where the media content is locally cached in the media content store **929**, subsequent requests for playback of the content may typically be handled locally at the client device. As shown in FIG. **10**, a first step (**1001**) in an illustrative method involves the PC **102₁** implementing a continuous scan for media cards having a pushbutton RFID tag that is within range of its RFID reader. The second step (**1002**) involves the PC **102₁** receiving the modulated RF signal which includes the GUID from the RFID tag **115** when it is activated by a consumer pressing the button. At step three (**1003**), the PC **102₁** resolves the GUID locally and plays the media content associated with the media card **110** (again the "Jazz Favorites" album) from the local media content store **929**. Resolution of the GUID typically involves checking a local database associated with the metadata catalog **926** to identify applicable usage policy and locate the media content in the store **929**.

[0079] To mitigate the possibility that a media card may be duplicated without authorization, the PC **102₁** may be arranged to check with the activation service **912** (FIG. **9**) for each subsequent play request. This activity is shown in the flowchart of FIG. **11**. PC **102₁** receives a play request from a pushbutton RFID tag (**1101**) and checks with the activation service **912** before granting the request (**1102**). If the activation service **912** determines that no other activation of an RFID tag with the same GUID has occurred on another client device, then it informs the PC **102₁** which can then fulfill the play request (**1103**).

[0080] If the activation service **912** determines that an activation of an RFID tag with the same GUID has occurred on another client device, then it informs the PC **102₁**. PC **102₁** can employ alternative techniques in response. It may fulfill the play request but subject it to a usage policy that, for example, restricts play count or other rights (transfer, retain, etc.) (**1104**). Alternatively, as indicated by the dashed line in FIG. **11**, the PC **102₁** may reject the play request outright (**1105**). Because the usage policy can be provided by the service **905** and enforced by the local client device **102**, there is more flexibility to tune the policy and its effects on the consumer to best deter unauthorized use and piracy. This flexibility is an example of an additional benefit provided by the present arrangement which contrasts with the rigid application of DRM that might be embedded in traditional physical media.

[0081] Although the subject matter has been described in language specific to structural features and/or methodological acts, it is to be understood that the subject matter defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific features or acts described above. Rather, the specific features and acts described above are disclosed as example forms of implementing the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for enabling playback of digital media content at a client device, the method comprising the steps of:

- selecting a media token that is arranged for representing media content that is renderable by the client device;
- associating a GUID with the digital media content, the digital media content being deliverable to a client device from an on-line service responsively to i) the GUID being read by an RFID reader that is operatively coupled to the client device and, ii) the GUID being sent to the on-line service; and

programming the GUID into an RFID tag, the RFID tag being configurable for distribution with the media token, and including an activation switch arranged for enabling the GUID to be read by the RFID reader when the switch is actuated.

2. The method of claim **1** including a further step of distributing the media token through one of retail channel, self-service kiosk, promotional channel, direct mail, or physical distribution means.

3. The method of claim **1** in which the media token is a card which includes information relating to the media content, the information being expressed using one of text or graphics.

4. The method of claim **1** in which the media token is an object selected from one of printed material, promotional gift item, or article of clothing.

5. The method of claim **1** in which the activation switch is one of membrane switch or tactile switch.

6. The method of claim **1** in which the activation switch is arranged for momentary contact behavior or code switched behavior.

7. The method of claim **1** in which the RFID tag is a passive tag.

8. The method of claim **7** in which the RFID tag is arranged in accordance with EPCglobal Class 1, Generation 2.

9. The method of claim **1** in which the RFID tag is configured for distribution through one of being fixedly attached to the media token, being laminated to the media token, or being adhesively attached to the media token.

10. An automated method for receiving media content from a service, the method comprising the steps of:

- using an RFID reader to scan an area in which an RFID tag having an encoded GUID may be located;
- reading the GUID from the RFID tag with the RFID reader when the RFID tag is in the area and activated;
- sending the GUID to an on-line activation service so that media content associated with the GUID may be identified;
- receiving the media content associated with the GUID from an on-line media content service; and
- rendering the media content associated with GUID that is received from the on-line media content service.

11. The automated method of claim **10** in which the method includes a further step of receiving descriptive metadata or usage policy metadata that is associated with the GUID.

12. The automated method of claim **10** including a further step of transferring the media content to a device.

13. The automated method of claim **10** including a further step of caching the media content in a local store.

14. The automated method of claim **10** in which the method includes a further step of enforcing a usage policy when performing one of rendering the media content, storing the media content, or transferring the media content to a device.

15. The automated method of claim **14** including a further step of performing one or more look-ups in a local database to locate the media content in the local store and identify usage policy that is applicable to the media content.

16. The automated method of claim **10** in which the RFID tag is activated by manual actuation of a switch.

17. A method of providing media content from an on-line service to a client device, the method comprising the steps of: receiving a GUID scanned by an RFID reader operatively coupled to the client device, the GUID being encoded in a passive RFID tag that is incorporated in a media token;

resolving the GUID to identify one of media content or descriptive metadata that is related to the media content; and

delivering the media content or descriptive metadata over a network to the client device.

18. The method of claim **17** including a further step of providing a link to related content that is accessible by the client device from an on-line source.

19. The method of claim **17** including a further step of providing a usage policy that controls how the media content delivered to the client device is to be used.

20. The method of claim **17** in which the client device is one of PC, media center, game console, set-top box, PDA, portable media player, handheld game device, mobile phone, or smart phone.

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