

5. A display control method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the step of automatically adjusting the position of a first and/or second display element comprises moving the first and/or second display element within their respective display layers, so that there will be no overlap or reduced overlap between the first and second display elements.

6. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of determining whether the first or second display element is currently active and the step of adjusting is carried out dependent upon this determination.

7. A display control method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the first display layer is nearer to the front of the multi-layer display system than the second display layer and

if the first display element is active and the second display element is not active, then at least one visual property of at least the overlapping or potentially overlapping portion of the second display element is adjusted, or

if the second display element is active and the first display element is not active, then at least one visual property of at least the overlapping or potentially overlapping portion of the first display element is adjusted.

8. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of adjusting comprises adjusting at least one of colour, saturation, brightness or transparency of at least the overlapping or potentially overlapping portion of the first and/or second display element or the contrast between overlapping or potentially overlapping portions of the first and second display elements.

9. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of adjusting comprises combining at least one visual property of the overlapping or potentially overlapping portions of the first and second display elements and the resultant combined visual property is applied to the overlapping portion of the active display element while at least one visual property of the other display element is adjusted to minimise its effect on the image provided by the active display element.

10. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of adjusting comprises adjusting at least one visual property of at least the overlapping portion of both the first and second display elements.

11. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of allocating the first and/or second display element to a selected display layer or layers based upon at least one determined visual property or upon an associated pre-set display layer preference.

12. A display control method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the step of allocating is based upon stored preferences associated either with a user of the multi-layer display system or with particular software application programs run on a computer system to which the multi-layer display system is connected.

13. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein when a particular display layer includes a plurality of display elements, the display elements are arranged within that display layer to thereby control the way in which overlapping portions of display elements in a single display layer are displayed.

14. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein when a plurality of display elements are dispersed across at least two display layers, the display elements are arranged over the at least two display layers thereby con-

trolling the way in which overlapping portions of display elements on different display layers are displayed.

15. A display control method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the colours of at least the overlapping portion of the first and second display elements are adjusted on a pixel-by-pixel basis.

16. A display controller for a multi-layer display system including at least two overlapping display layers, the display controller comprising:

- i) means for detecting that the position of a first display element to be displayed on a first display layer overlaps or will potentially overlap with the position of a second display element on a different display layer;
- ii) means for adjusting either the position of the first and/or second display element and/or at least one visual property of at least the overlapping or potentially overlapping portion of the first and/or second display element; and
- iii) means for displaying the first and second display elements on their respective display layers in their adjusted position or positions or with their adjusted visual property or properties in order to improve the ability of a user of the display apparatus to view the overlapping or potentially overlapping portion of the first and/or second display element.

17-30. (canceled)

31. A method of user manipulation of display elements in a multi-layer display system including at least two overlapping display layers comprising the steps of:

- i) providing a user interface having a visual representation of all of the display layers and symbols representing the display elements on each display layer;
- ii) allowing a user to select a symbol in the interface representing a display element on a particular display layer;
- iii) allowing the user to manipulate at least one property of the selected symbol; and
- iv) adjusting at least one property of the display element represented by the selected and manipulated symbol in accordance with the result of the manipulation of the at least one property carried out on the selected symbol.

32-40. (canceled)

41. A multi-layer display system comprising:

at least two overlapping display layers each of which are adapted to depict display elements thereon;

a user interface having a visual representation of all of the display layers and symbols representing the display elements on each display layer;

means to allow a user to select a symbol in the interface representing a display element on a particular display layer;

means to allow the user to manipulate at least one property of the selected symbol; and

means for adjusting at least one property of the display element represented by the selected and manipulated symbol in accordance with the result of the manipulation of the at least one property carried out on the selected symbol.