

[0035] The slot machine **100** further comprises a middle portion **120** that includes one or more reels. The reels, as illustrated in the **FIG. 1**, may be of a circular shape such that a curve of each of the reels protrudes toward a player of the slot machine. In one or more embodiments of the present invention each of the reels comprises one or more display devices on which indicia defining an outcome are displayed. The one or more reels may be located behind a transparent glass partition.

[0036] The slot machine further comprises a handle **125** that a player may pull to initiate a game at the slot machine **100**. For example, pulling on the handle **125** may initiate a rotation of the reels.

[0037] The slot machine **100** further comprises a panel **130** that includes various buttons and devices operable to facilitate game play at the slot machine **100**. For example, the panel **130** may include a device into which a player may insert a player tracking card, a device into which a player may insert coins or tokens as payment for a game, a start button, a plurality of buttons via which a player may indicate selections relevant to playing a game (e.g., which game the player desires to play, a wager amount, etc.), and a display that indicates a player's current balance of credits available for wagering on games at the slot machine.

[0038] Slot machine **100** further comprises a lower portion **135**. The lower portion **135** may include various components, such as a coin tray for dispensing coins to a player as a result of a payout won for a game of the slot machine **100** and an access door which casino personnel can use to access the interior of the slot machine **100**.

[0039] Referring now to **FIG. 2**, illustrated therein is a block diagram of an embodiment **200** of a slot machine. The slot machine may be implemented as a dedicated hardware circuit, an appropriately programmed general-purpose computer, or any other appropriate device including without limitation electronic, mechanical or electromechanical devices. Accordingly, the slot machine need not include the various components depicted in **FIG. 2**.

[0040] The slot machine of the illustrated embodiment comprises a processor **205**, such as one or more Intel® Pentium® microprocessors. The processor **205** is in communication with a communications port **210** and a data storage device **215**. The communications port **210** allows the slot machine to output data to another device and to receive data from another device. The data storage device **215** comprises magnetic memory, optical memory, semiconductor memory or any combination thereof. The data storage device **215** may include, for example, Random Access Memory (RAM), Read-Only Memory (ROM), a compact disc and/or a hard disk. The processor **205** and the data storage device **215** may each be, for example: (i) located entirely within a single computer or computing device; or (ii) connected to each other by a remote communication medium, including without limitation a serial port cable, a telephone line, a network connection or a radio frequency transceiver. In some embodiments, the slot machine may comprise one or more computers that are connected to a remote server computer for maintaining databases.

[0041] The data storage device **215** stores a program **220** for controlling the processor **205**. The processor **205** performs instructions of the program **220**, and thereby operates

in accordance with the present invention, and particularly in accordance with the methods described in detail herein. The program **220** may be stored in a compressed, uncompiled and/or encrypted format, as well as in a variety of other forms known in the art. The program **220** furthermore includes program elements that may be necessary, including without limitation an operating system, a database management system and "device drivers" for allowing the processor **205** to interface with peripheral devices. Appropriate program elements are well known to those skilled in the art, and need not be described in detail herein.

[0042] According to an embodiment of the present invention, the instructions of the program **220** may be read into a main memory from another computer-readable medium, such as into RAM from a hard drive or ROM. Execution of sequences of the instructions in program **220** causes processor **205** to perform process steps described herein. In alternative embodiments, hard-wired circuitry may be used in place of, or in combination with, software instructions for implementation of the processes of the present invention, as would be understood by those of skill in the art. Thus, embodiments of the present invention are not limited to hardware, software or any specific combination of hardware and software.

[0043] The program **220** may also store instructions on conducting one or more games on the slot machine **200**. For example, the program **220** may include various subroutines executed during a particular game. Alternatively, the instructions for conducting the game may be separate from the program **220** for controlling the processor **205** in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0044] The term "computer-readable medium" as used herein refers to any medium that participates in providing instructions to processor **205** (or any other processor of a device described herein) for execution. Such a medium may take many forms, including but not limited to, non-volatile media, volatile media, and transmission media. Non-volatile media include, for example, optical or magnetic disks, such as data storage device **215**. Volatile media include dynamic random access memory (DRAM), which typically constitutes the main memory. Transmission media include coaxial cables, copper wire and fiber optics, including the wires that comprise a system bus coupled to the processor **205**. Transmission media can also take the form of acoustic or light waves, such as those generated during radio frequency (RF) and infrared (IR) data communications. Common forms of computer-readable media include, for example, a floppy disk, a flexible disk, hard disk, magnetic tape, any other magnetic medium, a CD-ROM, DVD, any other optical medium, punch cards, paper tape, any other physical medium with patterns of holes, a RAM, a PROM, an EPROM, a FLASH-EEPROM, any other memory chip or cartridge, a carrier wave as described hereinafter, or any other medium from which a computer can read.

[0045] Various forms of computer readable media may be involved in carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions to processor **205** (or any other processor of a device described herein) for execution. For example, the instructions may initially be borne on a magnetic disk of a remote computer. The remote computer can load the instructions into its dynamic memory and send the instructions over a telephone line using a modem. A modem local to a slot