

wants to purchase. This could, for instance, be a game, a game character, a game level or a book. The precise nature of the content could be specified visibly at the point of sale, or the card could just indicate a general type of content data, and the user could discover the precise content only on revealing a part of the card that is obscured at the point of sale (e.g. by an envelope, and preferably by obscuring means distinct from that which obscures the code) or on downloading and activating the content. The user buys the card and renders the unique code number visible. Using the download application on the user's phone he contacts the content server **3** over the network **2**. He inputs the code number using the keypad **28** of the mobile phone and the download application transmits it to the content server. The content server verifies that the code number has not previously been used. Provided it has not been used, the content server determines the content data on to which the code number is mapped, and transmits it to the users terminal. It also marks the code number as having been used. The user's terminal receives the content data and determines its type. This may be done from a header in the content data, or from the file name of the content data. Based on the determined type of the data the terminal stores the content data in an appropriate place, for instance in non-volatile memory **22a**. The content data is then available for use by the appropriate application in the phone.

**[0032]** The cards may have other functions than serving as a vehicle for the unique code number. For instance, it may serve as a gaming card. Many cards are sold for use in children's games, for example collecting, trading or swapping games. The card may be printed with material making it suitable for use in such a game. This may include an indication of a real or imaginary character or other collectable entity (e.g. a vehicle), and/or information on the attributes of that character or entity and/or authentication information to prove that the card is genuine. Then the card can serve for use in such a game in addition to making the content data available to the owner of the card. The content data made available by the number on the card may be linked to the character or entity depicted on the card.

**[0033]** In one preferred embodiment, the application that interprets the content data may be an application for wireless gaming, which makes use of the wireless communication capabilities of the mobile phone. For instance, the cards could depict characters or entities, as described above, and the content data could represent supposed attributes of the character or entity depicted on the card or attributes of a player in the game. The application could exchange one or more of the attributes with those stored similarly on another terminal, and the applications on each terminals could then determine which of the users of the terminals is the winner based on an analysis of the exchanged attributes according to a predetermined algorithm.

**[0034]** The code number may be replaced by other forms of unique identity. For instance, it could include letters and/or symbols, or it could be in a machine readable form (for instance a bar code or a magnetic stripe) if that could be read by the phone. The code could be non-unique, and the server could permit numerous downloads to multiple users using the same code. However, this is less preferred as it is likely to result in users copying codes instead of buying the cards to obtain them.

**[0035]** The system described above is not limited to use with a mobile phone as the terminal. For example, the

terminal could instead be a personal computer or a personal digital assistant (PDA). The terminal is preferably, but not necessarily, capable of wireless communication with a communication network.

**[0036]** The applicant hereby discloses in isolation each individual feature described herein and any combination of two or more such features, to the extent that such features or combinations are capable of being carried out based on the present specification as a whole in the light of the common general knowledge of a person skilled in the art, irrespective of whether such features or combinations of features solve any problems disclosed herein, and without limitation to the scope of the claims. The applicant indicates that aspects of the present invention may consist of any such individual feature or combination of features. In view of the foregoing description it will be evident to a person skilled in the art that various modifications may be made within the scope of the invention.

**1.** A system for distributing various content data to user terminals having at least one application for interpreting the content data and presenting it to a user, the system comprising:

- a multiplicity of individual tokens, each token bearing an identity code, and having a user-removable obscuring means obscuring reading of the identity code;
  - a content server connected to a communication network whereby it may communicate with the terminals, and comprising data storage means storing the content data, and for each of the identity codes an indication of an item of the content data with which that code is associated, and indicated on the or each token bearing that code, and arranged to, on receiving from a terminal an identity code of a token, retrieve from the data storage means the item of content data associated with that code and transmit it to that terminal.
- 2.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein each token is in the form of a card.
- 3.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein the user-removable obscuring means is such as to be irreversibly removable.
- 4.** A system as claimed in claim **3**, wherein the user-removable obscuring means is a scratch-off coating.
- 5.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein the content data includes software defining a game and/or attributes of a gaming entity.
- 6.** A system as claimed in any preceding claim **1**, wherein the content data includes Java software.
- 7.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein each identity code is different from all the other identity codes, the content server stores for each identity code an indication of whether content associated with that code has been transmitted to a terminal, and the content server is arranged to on receiving from a terminal an identity code of a token, transmit to that terminal the item of content data associated with that code only if the indication stored for that code indicates that content associated with that code has not been transmitted to a terminal.
- 8.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein each token is an individual vending item.
- 9.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein at least some of the terminals are wireless communication terminals.
- 10.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein each token bears an indication of the content data associated with the code borne by the token.
- 11.** A system as claimed in claim **1**, wherein each token bears an indication of the retail price of the token.