

herein may be employed in practicing the invention. It is intended that the following claims define the scope of the invention and that structures within the scope of these claims and their equivalents are covered thereby.

Claims

1. An information processing apparatus for presenting a 3-dimensional virtual space allowing an avatar of a plurality of avatars in said 3-dimensional virtual space being operated to communicate with one or more other avatars of said plurality of avatars, said information processing apparatus comprising:

a storage means for storing an indicator set to show whether information owned by said avatar can be communicated with said other avatars;

a judgment means for determining whether said information owned by said avatar can be communicated with said other avatars, based on said indicator stored in said storage means; and

a processing means for processing said information to be communicated with said other avatars, as determined by said judgment means.

2. An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said indicator is represented by a transparency flag.

3. An information processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

said processing means communicates said information owned by said avatar to said other avatars when said transparency flag is true; and

said processing means does not communicate said information owned by said avatar to said other avatars when said transparency flag is false.

4. An information processing apparatus of claim 2 or 3, wherein said transparency flag is changeable between true and false.

5. An information processing apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims wherein:

said storage means is further for storing a plurality of information management tables each indicating whether a corresponding one of said plurality of avatars has an aura containing each other of said plurality of avatars; and
said judgment means is further for determining whether said information owned by said avatar

can be communicated with said other avatars, based on said plurality of information management tables.

- 5 6. An information processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising:

a departure detection control means for controlling said storage means, said judgment means, and said processing means during departure detection processing for said plurality of avatars; and

an inclusion detection control means for controlling said storage means, said judgment means, and said processing means during inclusion detection processing for said plurality of avatars.

7. An information processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said departure detection control means comprises:

a first selection means for selecting a first subset of said other avatars from said information management table of said avatar based on said aura of said avatar;

a first determination means for determining whether said first subset is no longer contained in said aura of said avatar and whether said indicator for said avatar is set;

a first update means for updating one or more of said plurality of information management tables corresponding to said avatar and said first subset, in accordance with said first determination means;

a second selection means for selecting a second subset of said other avatars from said information management table of said avatar based on said auras of said second subset;

a second determination means for determining whether said avatar is no longer contained in said auras of said second subset and whether said indicators for said second subset are set; and

a second update means for updating at least one of said plurality of information tables corresponding to said avatar and said second subset, in accordance with said second determination means.

8. An information processing apparatus according to claim 6 or 7, wherein said inclusion detection control means comprises

a selection means for selecting said other avatars;

a first determination means for determining whether said indicator for each said other ava-