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Load control system having audio output devices

Abstract

A control system may comprise a plurality of audio output devices (e.g., controllable speakers), and a remote control device having at least one button for selecting a preset, where the preset defines different commands for at least two of the audio output devices. The at least two audio output devices may be configured to be controlled according to the different commands (e.g., starting, pausing, or stopping playback, adjusting volume, etc.) in response to an actuation of the button of the remote control device. The control system may also comprise a load control device, such as a dimmer configured to control an intensity of a lighting load to a predetermined intensity in response to the actuation of the button of the remote control device to select the preset. The audio output device may be configured to play a feedback signal indicating an operational characteristic of the dimmer.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/744,906, filed May 16, 2022; which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/665,724, filed Oct. 28, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,336,477 issued May 17, 2022; which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/688,179, filed Aug. 28, 2017 now U.S. Pat. No. 10,461,953 issued Oct. 29, 2019; which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/380,815, filed Aug. 29, 2016, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

(1) Home automation systems, which have become increasingly popular, may be used by homeowners to integrate and control multiple electrical and/or electronic devices in their house. For example, a homeowner may connect appliances, lights, window treatments, thermostats, audio systems, speakers, cable or satellite boxes, security systems, telecommunication systems, and the like to each other via a wireless network. The homeowner may control these devices using a controller or user interface provided via a smart phone, a tablet, a computer, and the like directly connected to the network or remotely connected via the Internet. These devices may communicate with each other and the controller to, for example, improve their efficiency, their convenience, and/or their usability.

SUMMARY

(2) As described herein, a control system may comprise a plurality of audio output devices (e.g., controllable speakers), and a remote control device having at least one button for selecting a preset, where the preset defines different commands for at least two of the audio output devices. The at least two audio output devices may be configured to be controlled according to the different

commands in response to an actuation of the button of the remote control device. The command of the preset may comprise commands for starting playback, pausing playback, stopping playback, muting playback, unmuting playback, adjusting volume, changing channels, changing equalizer settings, enabling audio output devices, and disabling audio output devices. The remote control device may be configured to wirelessly transmit a message in response to the actuation of the button.

(3) The control system may also comprise a system bridge configured to receive the message transmitted by the remote control device and to transmit commands according to the preset to the at least two of the audio output devices. The system bridge may be configured to dynamically group the at least two audio remote control devices together and subsequently transmit at least one command for controlling the grouped remote control devices. The system bridge may be configured to transmit a different command to each of the at least two of the audio output devices. The system bridge may be configured to cause at least one audio output device to play an alert sound, for example, when a limit of a streaming service has been reached or when the end of an album, a playlist, and/or a podcast has been reached.

(4) The control system may also comprise one or more load control devices, such as a dimmer configured to control an intensity of a lighting load. The dimmer may also be responsive to the preset selected in response to the actuation of the button of the remote control device. The dimmer may be configured to adjust the intensity of the lighting load to a predetermined intensity in response to the actuation of the button of the remote control device to select the preset. The system bridge may be configured to cause at least one audio output device to play a feedback signal indicating an operational characteristic of the dimmer.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) FIG. 1 is a simple diagram of an example load control system for controlling one or more electrical loads.

(2) FIG. 2 is an example perspective view of an audio remote control device of the load control system of FIG. 1.

(3) FIG. 3 is an example floorplan of a building (e.g., a home) in which the load control system of FIG. 1 may be installed.

(4) FIG. 4 is a simplified flowchart of an example control procedure that may be executed by a control device of a control system having audio output devices.

(5) FIG. 5 is a simplified block diagram of an example control device, for example, a system bridge of the load control system of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(6) FIG. 1 is a simple diagram of an example control system, such as, a load control system **100** (e.g., a lighting control system) for controlling the amount of power delivered from an alternating-current (AC) power source to one or more electrical loads. The load control system **100** may comprise a first load control device, e.g., a wall-mounted dimmer **110**, coupled in series electrical connection between the AC power source **102** and a first lighting load, e.g., a first light bulb **112** installed in a ceiling mounted downlight fixture **114**. Alternatively, the first light bulb **112** could be installed in a wall-mounted lighting fixture or other lighting fixture mounted to another surface. The dimmer **110** may be adapted to be wall-mounted in a standard electrical wallbox. The load control system **100** may also comprise a second load control device, e.g., a plug-in load control device **120**, coupled in series electrical connection between the AC power source **102** and a second lighting load, e.g., a second light bulb **122** installed in a lamp (e.g., a table lamp **124**). Specifically, the plug-in load control device **120** may be plugged into an electrical receptacle **126** that is

powered by the AC power source **102** and the table lamp **124** may be plugged into the plug-in load control device. Alternatively, the second light bulb **122** could be installed in a table lamp or other lamp that may be plugged into the plug-in load control device **120**. The plug-in load control device **120** could alternatively be implemented as a table-top load control device or a remotely-mounted load control device. The load control system **100** may also comprise electronic switches configured to only turn on and off controlled lighting loads.

(7) The dimmer **110** may comprise a plurality of actuators **116** (e.g., buttons) for controlling the light bulb **112**. In response to actuation of the actuators **116**, the dimmer **110** may be configured to turn the light bulb **112** on and off, and to increase or decrease the amount of power delivered to the light bulb and thus increase or decrease the intensity of the light bulb from a minimum intensity (e.g., approximately 1%) to a maximum intensity (e.g., approximately 100%). The dimmer **110** may further comprise a plurality of visual indicators **118**, e.g., light-emitting diodes (LEDs), which are arranged in a linear array and illuminated to provide feedback of the intensity of the light bulb **112**. The dimmer **110** may be configured to receive messages (e.g., digital messages) via wireless signals, e.g., radio-frequency (RF) signals **104**, and to control the lighting load **112** in response to the received messages. Examples of wall-mounted dimmers are described in greater detail in U.S. Pat. No. 5,248,919, issued Sep. 29, 1993, entitled LIGHTING CONTROL DEVICE, and U.S. Pat. No. 9,679,696, issued Jun. 13, 2017, entitled WIRELESS LOAD CONTROL DEVICE, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(8) The load control system **100** may also comprise a daylight control device, e.g., a motorized window treatment **130**, mounted in front of a window for controlling the amount of daylight entering the space in which the load control system **100** is installed. The motorized window treatment **130** may comprise, for example, a cellular shade, a roller shade, a drapery, a Roman shade, a Venetian blind, a Persian blind, a pleated blind, a tensioned roller shade system, or other suitable motorized window covering. The motorized window treatment **130** may comprise a motor drive unit **132** for adjusting the position of a covering material **134** of the motorized window treatment (e.g., a cellular shade fabric as shown in FIG. 1) in order to control the amount of daylight entering the space. The motor drive unit **132** of the motorized window treatment **130** may be battery-powered or may receive power from an external direct-current (DC) power supply. Examples of battery-powered motorized window treatments are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 8,950,461, issued Feb. 10, 2015, entitled MOTORIZED WINDOW TREATMENT, and U.S. Pat. No. 9,488,000, issued Nov. 8, 2016, entitled INTEGRATED ACCESSIBLE BATTERY COMPARTMENT FOR MOTORIZED WINDOW TREATMENT, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(9) The load control system **100** may further comprise one or more input devices (e.g., RF transmitters) configured to transmit messages via the RF signals **104**. For example, the input device may comprise a lighting remote control device **140** (e.g., battery-powered handheld remote control device), a keypad device **144** (e.g., a wall-mounted remote control device), an occupancy sensor **150**, or a daylight sensor **152**. The dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** may be configured to receive messages via the RF signals **104** transmitted by the lighting remote control device **140**, the occupancy sensor **150**, or the daylight sensor **152**. In response to the received messages, the dimmer **110** and the plug-in load control device **120** may each be configured to turn the respective light bulb **112**, **122** on and off, and/or to increase or decrease the intensity of the respective light bulb. In addition, the motor drive unit **132** of the motorized window treatment **130** may be configured to adjust the position of the covering material **134** to control the amount of daylight entering the space in response to the messages received via the RF signals **104**.

(10) The lighting remote control device **140** may comprise one or more buttons **142** (e.g., one or more of an on button, an off button, a raise button, a lower button, and a preset button). The lighting remote control device **140** may be a handheld remote control. Alternatively, the lighting

remote control device **140** could be mounted vertically to a wall or supported on a pedestal to be mounted on a tabletop. Examples of battery-powered remote control devices are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 8,330,638, issued Dec. 11, 2012, entitled WIRELESS BATTERY-POWERED REMOTE CONTROL HAVING MULTIPLE MOUNTING MEANS, and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2012/0286940, published Nov. 12, 2012, entitled CONTROL DEVICE HAVING A NIGHTLIGHT, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference. The keypad device **144** may comprise one or more buttons **146**, which may allow for the selection of one or more presets.

(11) The lighting remote control device **140** and the keypad device **144** may transmit RF signals **104** in response to actuations of one or more of the respective buttons **142**, **146**. For example, the RF signals **104** may be transmitted using a proprietary RF protocol, such as the ClearConnect® protocol, or a standard protocol, such as ZIGBEE, Z-WAVE, and KNX-RF protocols. In addition, the RF signals **104** may be transmitted, for example, using a standard wireless technology, for example, one of Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and Near Field Communication (NFC) technologies. All messages transmitted by the lighting remote control device **140** and/or the keypad device **144** may include a command and identifying information, for example, a serial number (e.g., a unique identifier) associated with the remote control device. For example, the lighting remote control device **140** may be assigned to the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** during a configuration procedure of the load control system **100**, such that the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** are responsive to messages transmitted by the lighting remote control device **140** via the RF signals **104**. Examples of methods of associating wireless control devices are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2008/0111491, published May 15, 2008, entitled RADIO-FREQUENCY LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEM, and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2013/0214609, published Aug. 22, 2013, entitled TWO-PART LOAD CONTROL SYSTEM MOUNTABLE TO A SINGLE ELECTRICAL WALLBOX, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(12) The occupancy sensor **150** may be configured to detect occupancy and vacancy conditions in the space in which the load control system **100** is installed. The occupancy sensor **150** may transmit messages to the dimmer **110** and/or the plug-in load control device **120** via the RF signals **104** in response to detecting the occupancy or vacancy conditions. For example, the dimmer **110** and/or the plug-in load control device **120** may each be configured to turn on the respective light bulb **112**, **122** in response to receiving an occupied command, and to turn off the respective light bulb in response to receiving a vacant command. Alternatively, the occupancy sensor **150** may operate as a vacancy sensor to only turn off the lighting loads in response to detecting a vacancy condition (e.g., to not turn on the light bulbs **112**, **122** in response to detecting an occupancy condition). Examples of RF load control systems having occupancy and vacancy sensors are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 8,009,042, issued Aug. 30, 2011 Sep. 3, 2008, entitled RADIO-FREQUENCY LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEM WITH OCCUPANCY SENSING; U.S. Pat. No. 8,199,010, issued Jun. 12, 2012, entitled METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONFIGURING A WIRELESS SENSOR; and U.S. Pat. No. 8,228,184, issued Jul. 24, 2012, entitled BATTERY-POWERED OCCUPANCY SENSOR, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(13) The daylight sensor **152** may be configured to measure a total light intensity in the space in which the load control system is installed. The daylight sensor **152** may transmit messages including the measured light intensity to the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** via the RF signals **104** for controlling the intensities of the respective light bulbs **112**, **122** and/or the position of the covering material **134** in response to the measured light intensity. Examples of RF load control systems having daylight sensors are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 8,410,706, issued Apr. 2, 2013,

entitled METHOD OF CALIBRATING A DAYLIGHT SENSOR; and U.S. Pat. No. 8,451,116, issued May 28, 2013, entitled WIRELESS BATTERY-POWERED DAYLIGHT SENSOR, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

(14) The load control system **100** may further comprise a system bridge **160** (e.g., a gateway device) configured to enable communication with a network **162**, e.g., a wireless or wired local area network (LAN). The system bridge **160** may be connected to a router (not shown) via a wired digital communication link **164** (e.g., an Ethernet communication link). The router may allow for communication with the network **162**, e.g., for access to the Internet. Alternatively, the system bridge **160** may be wirelessly connected to the network **162**, e.g., using Wi-Fi technology.

(15) The system bridge **160** may be configured to transmit the RF signals **104** to the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** (e.g., using the proprietary protocol) for controlling the respective light bulbs **112**, **122** and/or the position of the covering material **130** in response to messages received from external devices via the network **162**. The system bridge **160** may be configured to receive the RF signals **104** from the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, the motorized window treatment **130**, the lighting remote control device **140**, the occupancy sensor **150**, and/or the daylight sensor **152**, and to transmit messages via the network **162** for providing data (e.g., status information) to external devices. The system bridge **160** may operate as a central controller for the load control system **100**, or may simply relay messages between the control devices of the load control system and the network **162**.

(16) The dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** may be controlled according to presets (e.g., predetermined presets) in response to actuations of the buttons **146** of the keypad device **144**. For example, the light bulbs **112**, **122** may be controlled to the predetermined intensities (e.g., the same or different intensities) and the covering material **134** of the motorized window treatment **130** may be controlled to a predetermined position in response to the actuation of a single one of the buttons **146** of the keypad device **144**. For example, the keypad device **144** may transmit a message including a preset command, and the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** may be responsive to the preset command received from the keypad device (e.g., the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130** may have the predetermined intensities and/or positions of the preset stored locally). In addition, the system bridge **160** may receive the preset command from the keypad device **144** and may transmit messages including commands according to the predetermined intensities and/or positions of the preset to the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130**.

(17) The load control system **100** may further comprise a network device, such as, a smart phone **170** (e.g., an iPhone® smart phone, an Android® smart phone, or a Blackberry® smart phone). The smart phone **170** may be operable to transmit messages in one or more Internet Protocol packets to the system bridge **160** via RF signals **106** either directly or via the network **162**. For example, the smart phone **170** may transmit the RF signals **106** to the system bridge **160** via a Wi-Fi communication link, a Wi-MAX communications link, a Bluetooth® communications link, a near field communication (NFC) link, a cellular communications link, a television white space (TVWS) communication link, or any combination thereof. The load control system **100** may comprise other types of network devices configured to communicate via the network **162**, such as, a personal computer, a laptop, a wireless-capable media device (e.g., MP3 player, gaming device, or television), a tablet device (for example, an iPad® hand-held computing device), a Wi-Fi or wireless-communication-capable television, or any other suitable Internet-Protocol-enabled device. Examples of load control systems operable to communicate with network devices on a network are described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2013/0030589, published Jan. 31, 2013, entitled LOAD CONTROL DEVICE HAVING INTERNET CONNECTIVITY, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

(18) The smart phone **170** may have a visual display **172**, which may comprise a touch screen having, for example, a capacitive touch pad displaced overtop the visual display, such that the visual display may display soft buttons that may be actuated by a user. The smart phone **170** may comprise a plurality of hard buttons, e.g., physical buttons (not shown), in addition to the visual display **172**. The smart phone **170** may execute a product control application for allowing a user of the smart phone to monitor and control the lighting control system **100**. In response to actuations of the displayed soft buttons or hard buttons, the smart phone **170** may transmit messages to the system bridge **160** through the wireless communications described herein. The smart phone **170** may transmit messages to the system bridge **160** via the RF signals **106** for controlling the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130**. The system bridge **160** may be configured to transmit RF signals **106** to the smart phone **170** in response to messages received from the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, the motorized window treatment **130**, the lighting remote control device **140**, the occupancy sensor **150**, and/or the daylight sensor **152** (e.g., using the proprietary protocol) for displaying data (e.g., status information) on the visual display **172** of the smart phone.

(19) The operation of the load control system **100** may be programmed and configured using the smart phone **170**. An example of a configuration procedure for a wireless load control system is described in greater detail in commonly-assigned U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2014/0265568, published Sep. 18, 2014, entitled COMMISSIONING LOAD CONTROL SYSTEMS, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

(20) The load control system **100** may comprise one or more other types of load control devices, such as, for example, a dimming ballast for driving a gas-discharge lamp; a light-emitting diode (LED) driver for driving an LED light source; a dimming circuit for controlling the intensity of a lighting load; a screw-in luminaire including a dimmer circuit and an incandescent or halogen lamp; a screw-in luminaire including a ballast and a compact fluorescent lamp; a screw-in luminaire including an LED driver and an LED light source; an electronic switch, controllable circuit breaker, or other switching device for turning an appliance on and off; a controllable electrical receptacle or controllable power strip for controlling one or more plug-in loads; a motor control unit for controlling a motor load, such as a ceiling fan or an exhaust fan; a drive unit for controlling a motorized window treatment or a projection screen; motorized interior or exterior shutters; a thermostat for a heating and/or cooling system; a temperature control device for controlling a setpoint temperature of an HVAC system; an air conditioner; a compressor; an electric baseboard heater controller; a controllable damper; a variable air volume controller; a fresh air intake controller; a ventilation controller; a hydraulic valves for use radiators and radiant heating system; a humidity control unit; a humidifier; a dehumidifier; a water heater; a boiler controller; a pool pump; a refrigerator; a freezer; a television or computer monitor; a video camera; an amplifier; an elevator; a power supply; a generator; an electric charger, such as an electric vehicle charger; and an alternative energy controller.

(21) In addition, the load control system **100** may comprise other types of input devices, such as, for example, temperature sensors, humidity sensors, radiometers, cloudy-day sensors, pressure sensors, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, air-quality sensors, motion sensors, security sensors, proximity sensors, fixture sensors, partition sensors, keypads, kinetic or solar-powered remote controls, key fobs, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, personal digital assistants, personal computers, laptops, timeclocks, audio-visual controls, safety devices, power monitoring devices (such as power meters, energy meters, utility submeters, utility rate meters), central control transmitters, residential, commercial, or industrial controllers, or any combination of these input devices.

(22) The load control system **100** may further comprise one or more audio control devices, such as a controllable audio output device **180** (e.g., a controllable speaker). The audio output device **180** may comprise a speaker **182** for emitting audible sounds (e.g., music, voice, etc.). The audio output

device **180** may be a stand-alone unit that may be placed on a floor or a table as shown in FIG. **1**. In addition, the audio output device **180** may be wall-mounted or ceiling-mounted, and/or may be integrated into the building structure. Further, one or more of the control devices of the load control system **100** (e.g., the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, the motorized window treatment **130**, the keypad device **144**, the system bridge **160**, etc.) may include speakers and may be configured to operate as audio output devices. The audio output device **180** may be configured to transmit and receive RF signals **108**, for example, from the system bridge **160**, the network **162**, and/or from an audio playback device (not shown). The RF signals may be transmitted using a proprietary or standard protocol. The audio output device **180** may be configured to receive via the RF signals **108** audio signals for playback. The audio output device **180** may be configured to stream and play audio recordings from a free or subscription streaming service. The audio output device **180** may also be configured to receive commands, e.g., for starting, pausing, or stopping playback of audio recordings, skipping tracks, and/or adjusting volume.

(23) The load control system **100** may further comprise an audio remote control device **190** for controlling the controllable audio output device **180**. FIG. **2** is an example perspective view of the audio remote control device **190**. The audio remote control device **190** may comprise a plurality of actuators, e.g., a play/pause button **192**, a skip button **194**, a raise volume button **195**, a lower volume button **196**, and a channel selection button **198**. The audio remote control device **190** may be configured to transmit RF signals (e.g., RF signals **104** or RF signals **108**) in response to actuations of the buttons **192-198**. For example, the audio remote control device **190** may be configured to transmit a message to the system bridge **160** via the RF signals **104** in response to an actuation of one of the buttons **192-198** and the system bridge may be configured to subsequently transmit a message including a command to the audio output device **180** via the RF signals **108**. In addition, the audio remote control device **190** could comprise a visual display (not shown), such as, for example, a light bar and/or one or more LEDs, for providing feedback to a user (e.g., feedback of the present volume of one or more of the audio output devices **180**).

(24) The audio output device **180** may be configured to play and pause the playback of an audio recording in response to successive actuations of the play/pause button **192** of the audio remote control device **190**. In addition, the audio output device **180** may be configured to mute and unmute the playback of an audio stream (e.g., a live audio stream) in response to successive actuations of the play/pause button **192** of the audio remote control device **190**. The audio output device **180** may be configured to skip to the next track of the audio recording in response to actuations of the skip button **194**. The audio output device **180** may be configured to increase and decrease the volume of the playback of the audio recording in response to actuations of the raise volume button **195** and the lower volume button **196**, respectively. The audio output device **180** may be configured to change a channel or playlist in response to actuations of the channel selection button **198**. For example, the audio output device **180** may be configured to change to the next channel or playlist from a list of favorite channels or playlists in response to an actuation of the channel selection button **198**. In addition, the audio output device **180** may be configured to change to a favorite channel or playlist in response to an actuation of the channel selection button **198**. The audio remote control device **190** could also include a rotary knob for adjusting the volume of the audio output devices **180**.

(25) The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play secondary audio signals (e.g., feedback or alert sounds or messages) in addition to the primary audio signals (e.g., music). The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play an alert sound at the same time that the primary audio signals are playing. For example, some free streaming services limit the operation of the playback options, e.g., by limiting the number of times that a user can skip a track and/or change a channel within a period of time. The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to generate an alert sound when a limit of a streaming service is reached. In addition, the system bridge **160** may be

configured to cause the audio output device **180** to generate an alert sound when the end of an album, a playlist, and/or a podcast is reached. The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to generate an alert sound if a received command (e.g., selected in response to an actuation of one of the buttons **190-198** of the audio remote control device **190**) is incompatible with the type of audio recording or audio stream being played by the audio output device **180**, for example, if the skip button **194** is actuated while the audio output device **180** is playing a live audio stream. Further, the system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to generate an alert sound if an error occurs (e.g., playback of an audio recording or an audio stream has failed).

(26) The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a message instead of playing the primary audio signal. For example, when a user connects to the system bridge **160** to configure and program the load control system **100** (e.g., during a configuration procedure), the system bridge **160** may be configured to stop playback of an audio recording and play an instruction messages for instructing the user how to configure the load control system, install a load control device (e.g., the dimmer **110**), resolve an error or fault condition, or other instruction message.

(27) The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a feedback signal regarding the status of the control devices of the load control system **100**. For example, the system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a speech signal that indicates an operational characteristic of one or more of the control devices of the load control system **100**, such as, for example, the state (e.g., on or off) and/or the intensity or power level of the first light bulb **112** and/or the second light bulb **122**. In addition, the system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a speech signal that announces the execution and/or completion of a command (e.g., to announce a selected scene). The system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a speech signal that reports a detected state and/or measurement determined by an input device, such as the occupancy sensor **150** and/or the daylight sensor **152**. Further, the system bridge **160** may be configured to cause the audio output device **180** to play a speech signal that reports information regarding the performance of the load control system (e.g., energy savings information) to the user.

(28) The system bridge **160** may be configured to receive messages from the audio remote control device **190** in response to actuations of the raise and lower volume buttons **195, 196** and to transmit messages to the audio output device **180** to appropriately adjust the volume of the playback of the audio recording of the audio output device **180**. The system bridge **160** may be configured to transmit “go-to volume level” commands to the audio output device **180** to cause the audio output device to adjust the volume to a specific level. The system bridge **160** may continue to adjust the volume of the audio output device **180** as long as the raise and/or lower volume buttons **195, 196** are pressed and held. For example, the audio remote control device **190** may transmit a “raise volume” command when the raise volume button **195** is first depressed and may transmit a “stop volume adjustment” command when the raise volume button **195** is released. In response to receiving a “raise volume” command from the audio remote control device **190**, the system bridge **160** may be configured to begin periodically transmitting “go-to volume level” commands (e.g., every 0.25 seconds) until the system bridge **160** receives a “stop volume adjustment” command from the audio remote control device **190**. The system bridge **160** may stop periodically transmitting the “go-to volume level” commands in response to receiving a “stop volume adjustment” command from the audio remote control device **190**. The system bridge **160** and the audio output device **180** may operate in a similar manner when the lower volume button **196** is depressed. The system bridge **160** may increase or decrease the volume by a predetermined amount (e.g., approximately 5% of the entire volume range) each time that the system bridge transmits a “go-to volume level” commands while the raise and/or lower volume button **195, 196** is depressed. The system bridge **160** may limit the volume of each audio output device **180** between a maximum

volume and/or a minimum volume.

(29) The load control system **100** may comprise a plurality of audio output devices **180** located at a plurality of locations (e.g., in a number of different rooms) of a building. FIG. **3** is an example floorplan of a building **200** (e.g., a home) in which the load control system **100** of FIG. **1** may be installed. The system bridge **160** may be located near the center of the building **200**. The load control system **100** may include a number of audio output devices **180A-180K**, which may be located in the various rooms of the building **200**.

(30) Two or more of the audio output devices **180** may be linked together as a bonded set. All of the audio output devices **180** of a bonded set may play the same audio recordings at the same volume, and may respond in the same way to messages received in response to actuations of the buttons of the audio remote control device **190**. For example, the audio output devices **180e**, **180f** in the kitchen may be linked together in a bonded set and may always operate in unison.

(31) The audio output devices **180** may also be controlled according to presets (e.g., in response to actuations of the buttons **146** of the keypad device **144**). The keypad device **144** may transmit a message including a preset command to the system bridge **160**, which may transmit messages including commands for controlling the audio output devices **180** according to the preset. For example, playback of audio recordings may be started, paused, and/or stopped, volume may be adjusted, and/or channels may be changed in response to the selection of a preset. In addition, one or more of the audio output device **180** may be enabled or disabled in response to the selection of a preset. For example, playback on the audio output devices **180a**, **180b**, **180e-180k** in the dining room, foyer, kitchen, and family room may be started (e.g., at a specific volume level and channel) and playback on the audio output devices **180c**, **180d** in the bedrooms may be stopped and/or the audio output devices **180c**, **180d** may be disabled in response to the selection of an “entertain” preset. The audio output devices **180A-180K** in the building **200** may be controlled to different volumes in response to the selection of a preset. The volume of the audio output devices **180e-180k** in the kitchen and family room may be controlled to a greater level than the volume of the audio output devices **180a**, **180b** in the dining room and foyer in response to the selection of the “entertain” preset. The volume of the audio output devices **180g-180k** in the family room may be controlled to different levels to adjust the right/left balance and/or front/rear balance. In addition, equalizer settings of the audio output devices **180A-180K** may be adjusted to different levels in response to the selection of a preset. Further, the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, the motorized window treatment **130**, and/or the audio output devices **180** may all be controlled together in response to the selection of a preset. For example, the presets may be programmed using the smart phone **170**.

(32) The audio output devices **180** may be dynamically grouped together in order to be controlled according to the selected presets. FIG. **4** is a simplified flowchart of an example control procedure **400** that may be executed by a control device of a control system, for example, the system bridge **160** of the load control system **100** shown in FIG. **1**. For example, the control device may execute the control procedure **400** when the control device receives a message including an indication of a selected preset from an external device (e.g., in a message transmitted by the keypad device **144** in response to the actuation of one of the buttons **146**) at **410**. The control device may have stored in memory programming data for each preset. For example, the programming data for each preset may comprise the unique identifiers of the devices that are included in the preset (e.g., the audio output devices **180** and/or other control devices) and corresponding commands that are part of the preset (e.g., commands for starting, pausing, and/or stopping playback, adjusting volume, changing channels, changing equalizer settings, enabling and/or disabling audio output devices, and/or other audio commands).

(33) At **412**, the control device may recall from memory the devices that are included in the preset as well as the commands that are part of the preset. If all of the devices that are included in the preset have the same command (e.g., a command to adjust volume) at **414**, the control device may

choose one of the devices that have the same command (e.g., one of the audio output devices **180**) to be a master device for the group of devices of the preset (e.g., the dynamic group) at **416**. The control device may transmit a message to the selected device to direct the selected device to operate as the master device of the dynamic group at **418**, and may then transmit a message to each of the other devices included in the preset to add those devices to the dynamic group of the master device (e.g., to point the other devices to the master device) at **420**. The control device may then transmit one or more messages including the command of the preset to the master at **422**, which may allow all of the devices of the dynamic group may respond to the command transmitted by the control device (e.g., in unison). At **424**, the control device may cause at least one of the audio output devices to play a feedback signal (e.g., a speed signal that announces the selected scene), before the control procedure **400** exits at **428**. If all of the devices that are included in the preset do not have the same command at **414**, the control device may transmit separate messages to each of the devices (e.g., to set the audio output devices to different volume levels) at **426**, before the control device causes the feedback signal to be generated at **424** and the control procedure **400** exits at **428**.

(34) FIG. 5 is a simplified block diagram of an example control device **500**, which may be deployed as, for example, the system bridge **160** of the load control system **100** shown in FIG. 1. The control device **500** may comprise a control circuit **510**, which may include one or more of a processor (e.g., a microprocessor), a microcontroller, a programmable logic device (PLD), a field programmable gate array (FPGA), an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), or any suitable processing device. The control circuit **510** may be coupled to a memory **512** for storage of operational parameters of the control device **500**. The memory **512** may be implemented as an external integrated circuit (IC) or as an internal circuit of the control circuit **510**.

(35) The control device **500** may comprise a wireless communication circuit **514**, for example, including an RF transceiver coupled to an antenna for transmitting and receiving RF signals (e.g., the RF signals **104** shown in FIG. 1) using a proprietary protocol (e.g., the ClearConnect® protocol). The control circuit **510** may be coupled to the wireless communication circuit **514** for transmitting messages via the RF signals **104**, for example, to control the dimmer **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, and/or the motorized window treatment **130**. The control circuit **510** may also be configured to receive messages from, for example, the dimmer switch **110**, the plug-in load control device **120**, the motorized window treatment **130**, the remote control device **140**, the occupancy sensor **150**, and/or the daylight sensor **152** via the wireless communication circuit **514**. For example, the control circuit **510** may be operable to receive a message including the intensity of a lighting load (e.g., one of the light bulbs **112**, **122** of the load control system **100** shown in FIG. 1), and to transmit a message including the intensity of the lighting load to the audio output device **180**, e.g., for causing the audio output device to play a feedback signal indicating the intensity of the lighting load.

(36) The control device **500** may further comprise a network communication circuit **516** coupled to a network connector **518** (e.g., an Ethernet jack), which may be adapted to be connected to a wired digital communication link (e.g., an Ethernet communication link) for allowing the control circuit **510** to communicate with network devices on a network (e.g., a local area network, such as the network **162** shown in FIG. 1). Alternatively, the network communication circuit **516** may be configured to be wirelessly connected to the network, e.g., using Wi-Fi technology to transmit and receive RF signals (e.g., the RF signals **106**, **108** shown in FIG. 1). The control circuit **510** may be configured to transmit messages to audio output devices (e.g., the audio output devices **180**) via the network communication circuit **516** in response to receiving a message from, for example, a remote control device (e.g., a message transmitted by the remote control device **140** in response to an actuation of one of the buttons **142**).

(37) The control circuit **510** may be responsive to an actuator **520** for receiving a user input. For example, the control circuit **510** may be operable to associate the control device **500** with one or more control devices of the load control system in response to actuations of the actuator **520** during

a configuration procedure of the load control system. The control circuit **510** may store the unique identifiers (e.g., the serial numbers) of the control devices to which the control device **500** is associated in the memory **512**. The control device **500** may comprise additional actuators to which the control circuit **510** is responsive.

(38) The control circuit **510** may illuminate a visual indicator **522** to provide feedback to a user of the load control system. For example, the control circuit **510** may blink or strobe the visual indicator **522** to indicate a fault condition. In addition, the control circuit **510** may be operable to illuminate the visual indicator **522** different colors to indicate different conditions or states of the control device **500**. The visual indicator **522** may be illuminated by, for example, one or more light-emitting diodes (LEDs). Alternatively, the control device **500** may comprise more than one visual indicator.

(39) The control device **500** may further comprise a power supply **524** for generating a DC supply voltage V_{subCC} for powering the control circuit **510**, the memory **512**, the wireless communication circuit **514**, the network communication circuit **516**, and other circuitry of the control device. The power supply **524** may be coupled to a power supply connector **526** (e.g., a micro-USB port) for receiving a supply voltage (e.g., a DC voltage) and for drawing current from an external power source.

Claims

1. An electrical load control system controller, comprising: communications interface circuitry; system bridge control circuitry coupled to the communications interface circuitry, the system bridge control circuitry to: communicate a primary audio output signal to each of a plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices; receive, from a communicatively coupled input device via the communications interface circuitry, a first signal that includes information indicative of an occurrence of a defined event; generate a secondary audio output signal responsive to receipt of the first signal; and cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal instead of the primary audio output signal at one or more of the plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices.
2. The system controller of claim 1 wherein to receive the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event, the system bridge control circuitry to further: receive the first signal, wherein the first signal includes information indicative of an operational characteristic of a communicatively coupled dimmer.
3. The system controller of claim 2 wherein to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry to further: cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, wherein the secondary audio output signal includes the received information indicative of the operational characteristic of a communicatively coupled dimmer.
4. The system controller of claim 1; wherein to receive the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event, the system bridge control circuitry to further: receive, via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the primary audio output signal; and wherein to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry further: cause the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an alert message indicative of the occurrence of the event that affects the primary audio output signal.
5. The system controller of claim 1: wherein to receive the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event the system bridge control circuitry to further: receive, via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the configuration of an electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge; and wherein to cause the controllable audio output device to output the

secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry to further: cause the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an instructional message responsive to the occurrence of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge.

6. The system controller of claim 5 wherein to receive the signal that includes the information indicative of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge, the system bridge control circuitry to further: receive, via the communication interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of at least one of: an addition of a new control device to the electrical load control system; an occurrence of a fault in the electrical load control system; or an occurrence of an error in the electrical load control system.

7. The system controller of claim 1 wherein to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry to further: cause a controllable audio output device disposed in a control device communicatively coupled to the electrical load control system to output the secondary audio output signal.

8. An electrical load control method, comprising: communicating, by system bridge control circuitry, a primary audio output signal to each of a plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices; receiving, by system bridge control circuitry via communications interface circuitry, a first signal from a communicatively coupled input device, wherein the first signal includes information indicative of an occurrence of a defined event; generating, by the system bridge control circuitry, a secondary audio output signal responsive to receipt of the first signal; and causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal instead of the primary audio output signal at one or more of the plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices.

9. The electrical load control method of claim 8 wherein receiving the first signal indicative of the occurrence of the defined event, the system bridge control circuitry to further: receiving, by the system bridge control circuitry, a first signal that includes information indicative of an operational characteristic of a communicatively coupled dimmer.

10. The electrical load control method of claim 9 wherein causing the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, further comprises: causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, wherein the secondary audio output signal includes the information indicative of the operational characteristic of a communicatively coupled dimmer.

11. The electrical load control method of claim 8: wherein receiving the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event further comprises: receiving, by the system bridge control circuitry via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the primary audio output signal; and wherein causing the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal further comprises: causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an alert message indicative of the occurrence of the event that affects the primary audio output signal.

12. The electrical load control method of claim 8: wherein receiving the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event further comprises: receiving, by the system bridge control circuitry via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the configuration of an electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge; and wherein causing the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal further comprises: causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an instructional message responsive to the occurrence of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge.

13. The electrical load control method of claim 12 wherein receiving the signal that includes the information indicative of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge, further comprises: receiving, by the system bridge control circuitry via the communication interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of at least one of: an addition of a new control device to the electrical load control system; an occurrence of a fault in the electrical load control system; or an occurrence of an error in the electrical load control system.

14. The electrical load control method of claim 8 wherein causing the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry to further: causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, a controllable audio output device disposed in a control device communicatively coupled to the electrical load control system to output the secondary audio output signal.

15. A non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device that includes instructions that, when executed by system bridge control circuitry disposed in an electrical load controller, cause the system bridge control circuitry to: communicate a primary audio output signal to each of a plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices; receive, via communications interface circuitry, a first signal from a communicatively coupled input device, wherein the first signal includes information indicative of an occurrence of a defined event; generate a secondary audio output signal responsive to receipt of the first signal; and cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal interrupts instead of the primary audio output signal at one or more of the plurality of communicatively coupled controllable audio output devices.

16. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 15 wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to receive the first signal, further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: receive a first signal that includes information indicative of an operational characteristic of a communicatively coupled dimmer.

17. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 16 wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to receive the first signal indicative of the occurrence of the defined event, further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: receive a signal that includes information indicative of an operational characteristic of a dimmer communicatively coupled to the system bridge control circuitry.

18. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 15: wherein the instructions, that cause the system bridge control circuitry to receive the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of the defined event, further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: receive, via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the primary audio output signal; and wherein the instructions, that cause the system bridge control circuitry to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: cause the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an alert message indicative of the occurrence of the event that affects the primary audio output signal.

19. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 15: wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to receive the first signal that includes the information indicative of the occurrence of a defined event, further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: receive, via the communications interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of an event that affects the configuration of an electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge; and wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal further cause the system bridge control circuitry to: cause the controllable audio output device to output a signal that includes an instructional message responsive to the occurrence of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge.

20. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 19 wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to receive the signal that includes the information indicative of the event that affects the configuration of the electrical load control system operatively coupled to the system bridge, further cause the system bridge circuitry to: receive, via the communication interface circuitry, a signal that includes information indicative of at least one of: an addition of a new control device to the electrical load control system; an occurrence of a fault in the electrical load control system; or an occurrence of an error in the electrical load control system.

21. The non-transitory, machine-readable, storage device of claim 15 wherein the instructions that cause the system bridge control circuitry to cause the controllable audio output device to output the secondary audio output signal, the system bridge control circuitry to further: causing, by the system bridge control circuitry, a controllable audio output device disposed in a control device communicatively coupled to the electrical load control system to output the secondary audio output signal.
