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(54) **DEVICE CONTROL APPARATUS AND CONTROL METHOD**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

According to one embodiment, a device control apparatus includes a communication interface connectable to several client terminals via a network and a local device interface connectable to several peripheral devices. The device control apparatus functions as registration unit configured to receive an occupation request for a peripheral device from a client terminal and then register the peripheral device for which the occupation request has been received as occupied by the client terminal if the peripheral device is not registered as occupied by another client terminal. A setting unit sets a release time for releasing the occupation of the registered peripheral device, and an update unit updates the release time whenever communication occurs between the registered peripheral device and the client terminal. A release unit releases the registered occupation of the peripheral device once the release time elapses.