



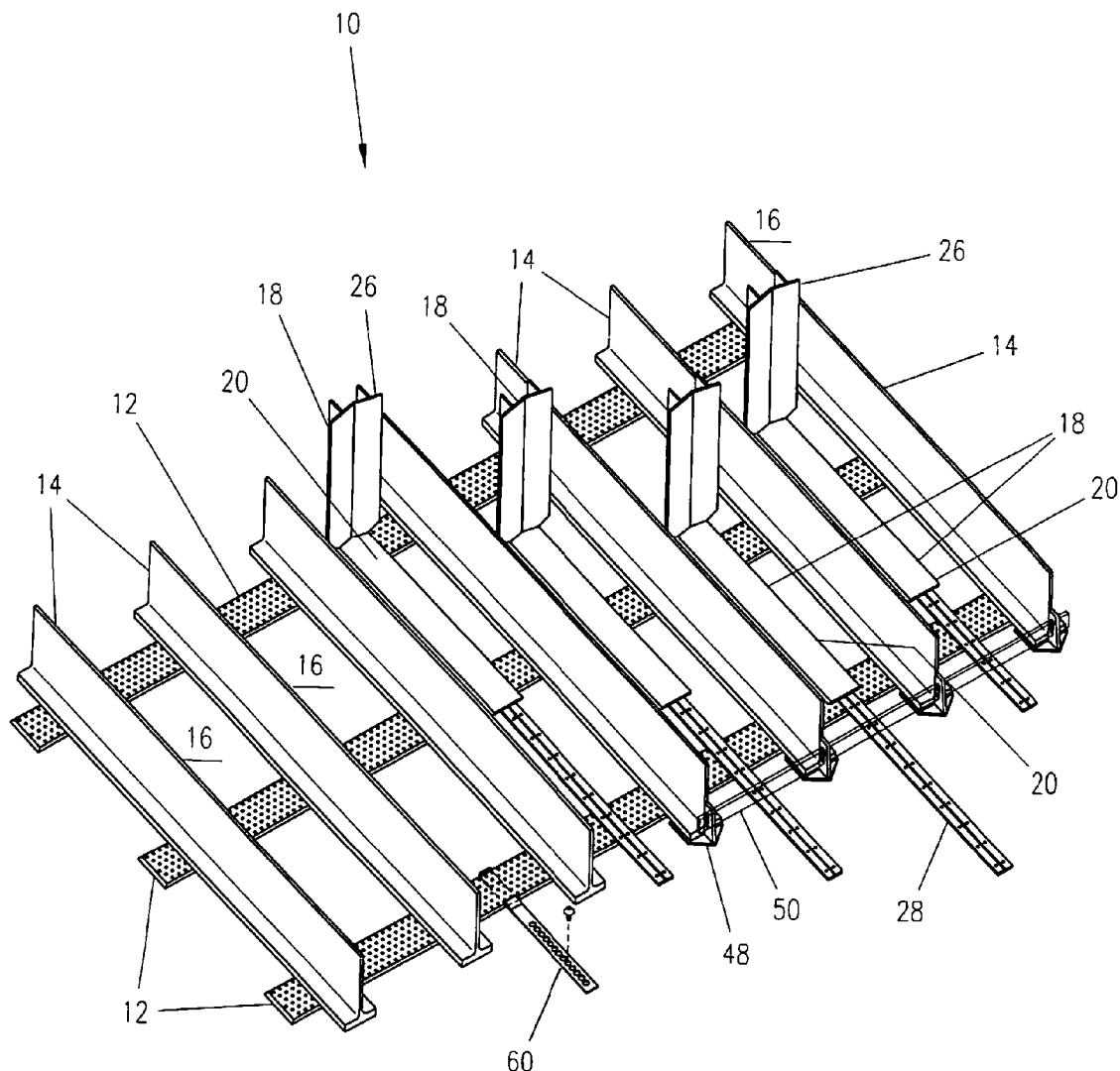
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Olson**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0256992 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Nov. 8, 2007**(54) **SHELF DIVIDER SYSTEM**(76) Inventor: **Carl Olson**, College Station, TX (US)

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Carl Olson**9893 Runaway Road****College Station, TX 77845 (US)**(21) Appl. No.: **11/381,587**(22) Filed: **May 4, 2006****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.****A47F 1/04** (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **211/59.3**(57) **ABSTRACT**

There is provided a shelf divider system for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items on a store shelf. A plurality of dividers attach perpendicularly to a plurality of base strips by inserting knobs on the dividers into mating holes in the base strips. Each adjacent pair of dividers forms a channel for the merchandize. Merchandize carriers slide over the base strips between each adjacent pair of dividers. A pull strap is attached to the front end of each carrier for pulling it forward for moving the merchandize items forward on the shelf. The pull straps have longitudinal grooves therein for dividing the pull straps longitudinally into two narrower pull straps. The merchandize items are prevented from falling from the front of the shelf by transparent guards attached to guard holders. The shelf divider system may be attached to the shelf by clips, which attach a base strip to the shelf.



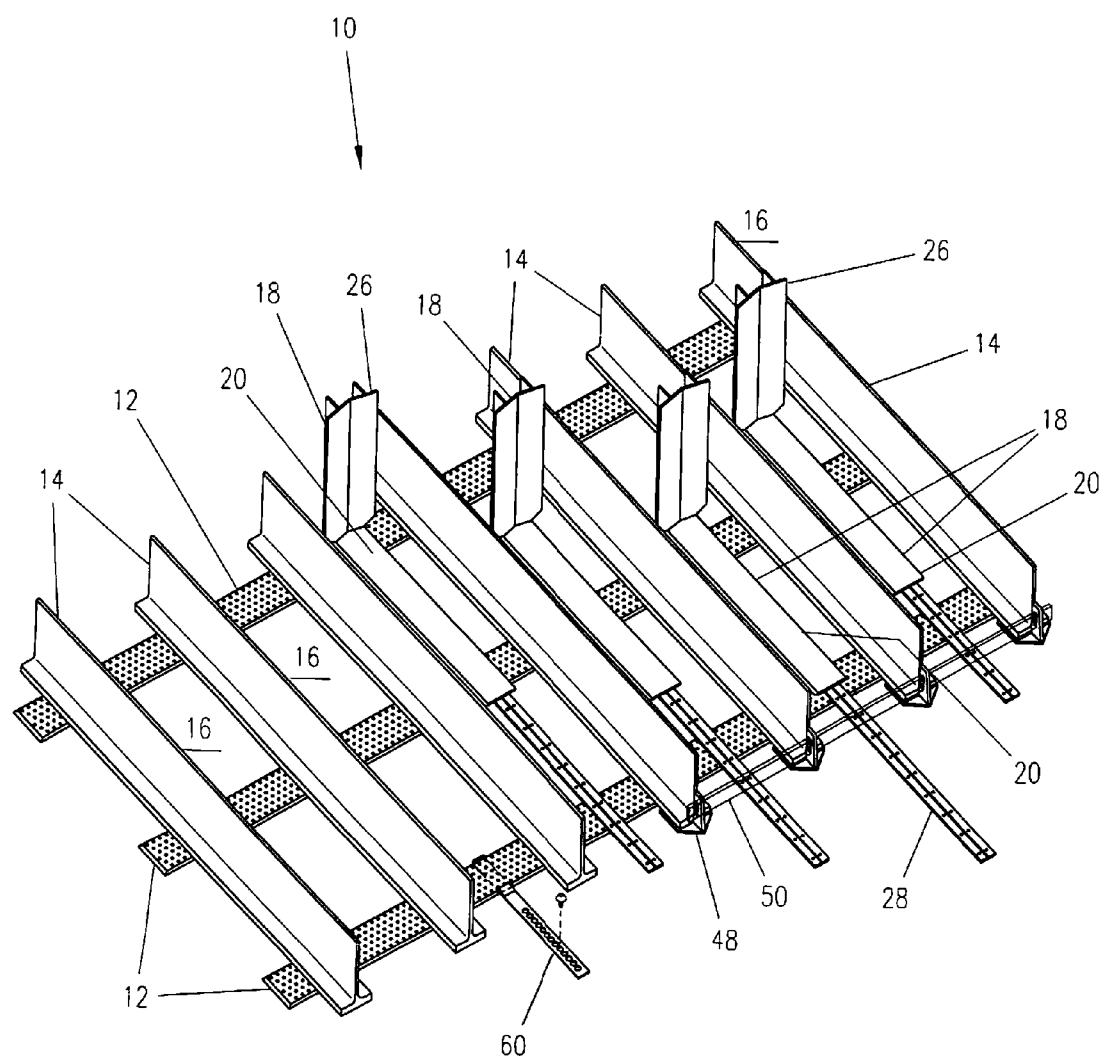


FIG. 1

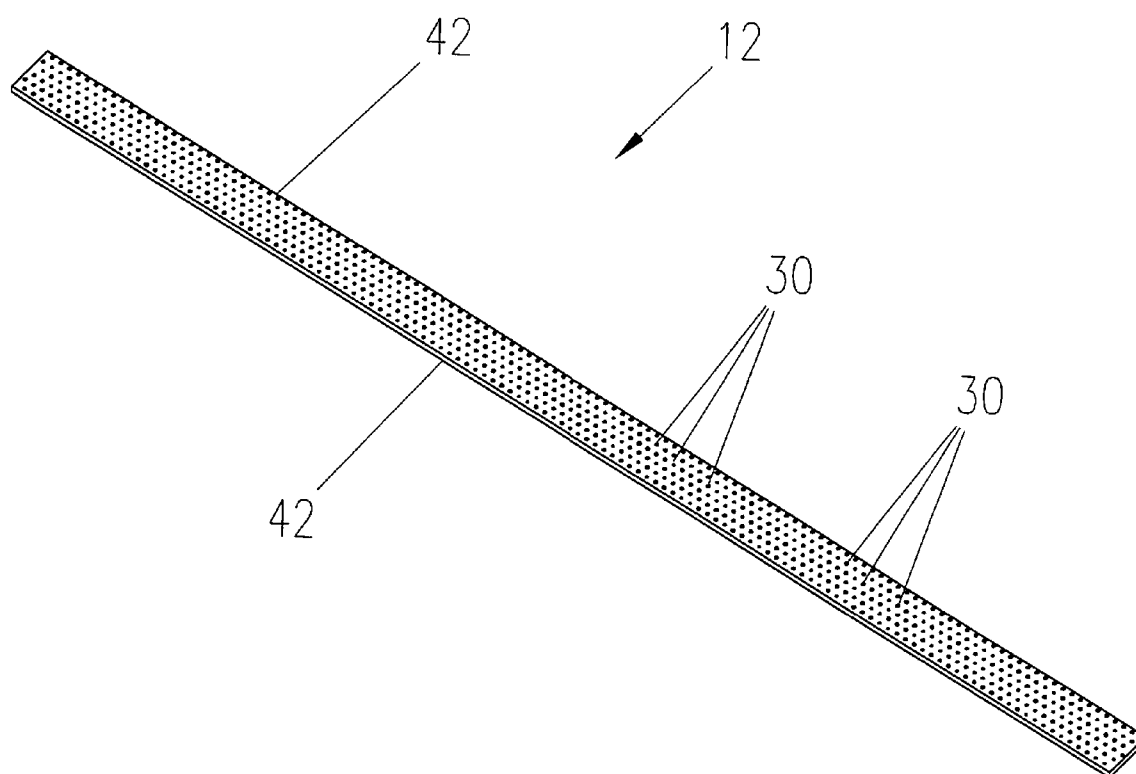


FIG. 2A

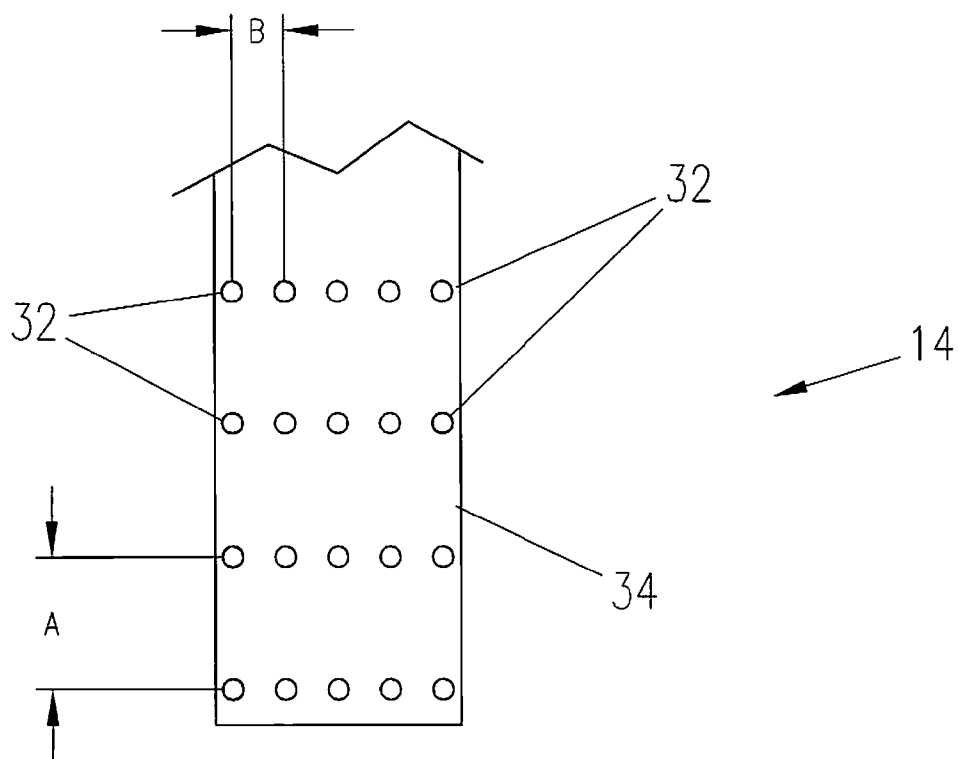


FIG. 3B

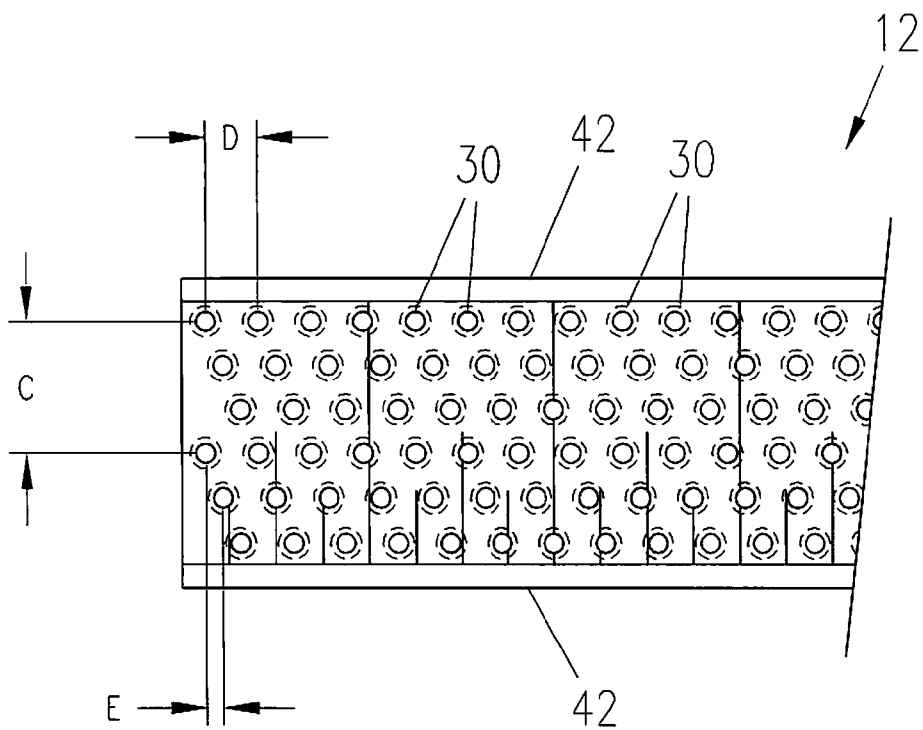


FIG. 2B

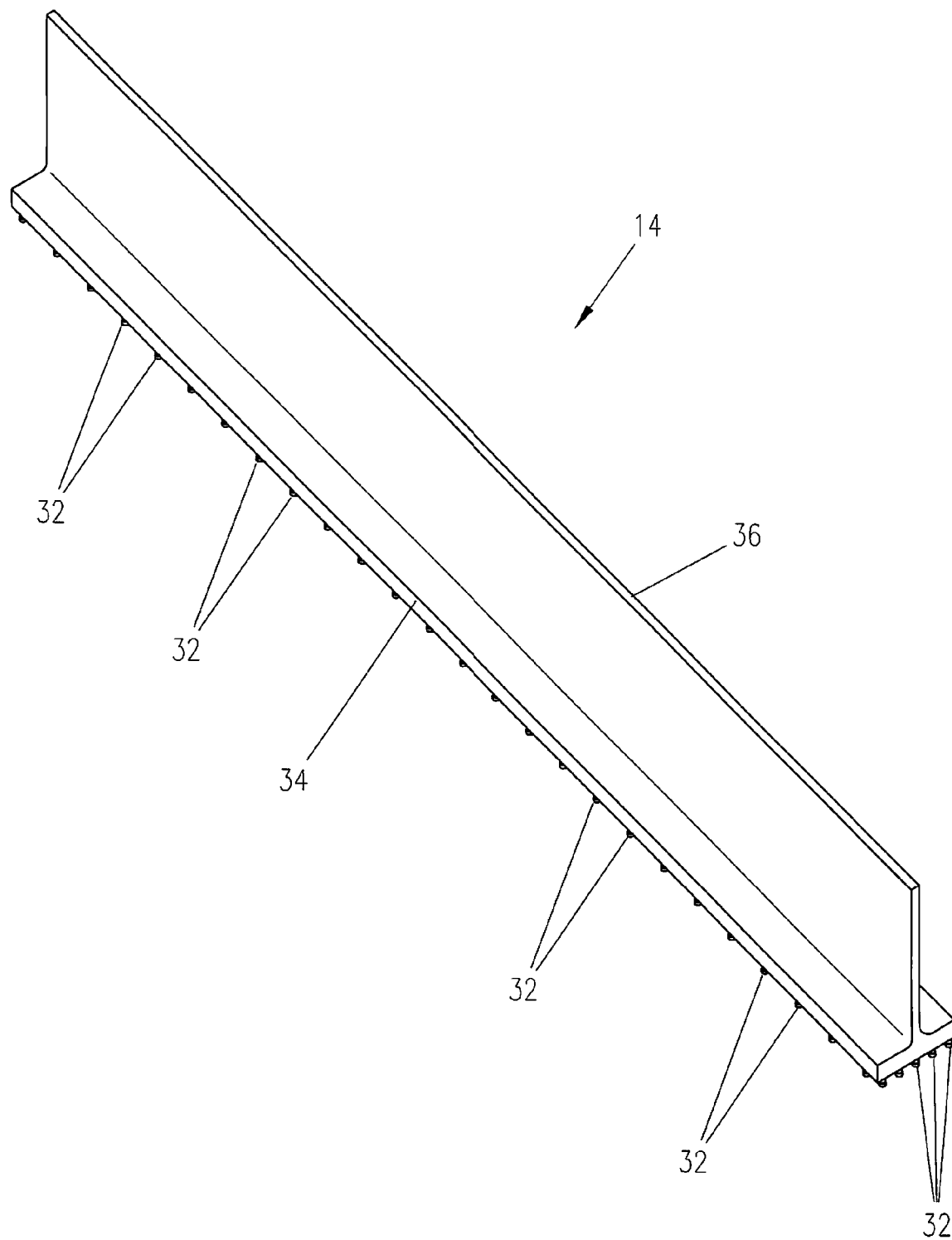
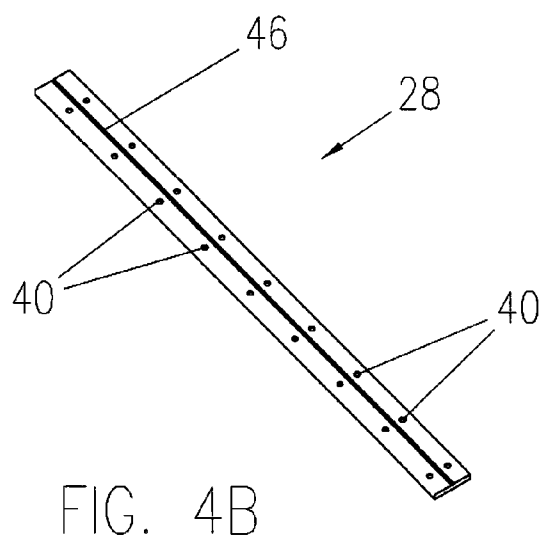
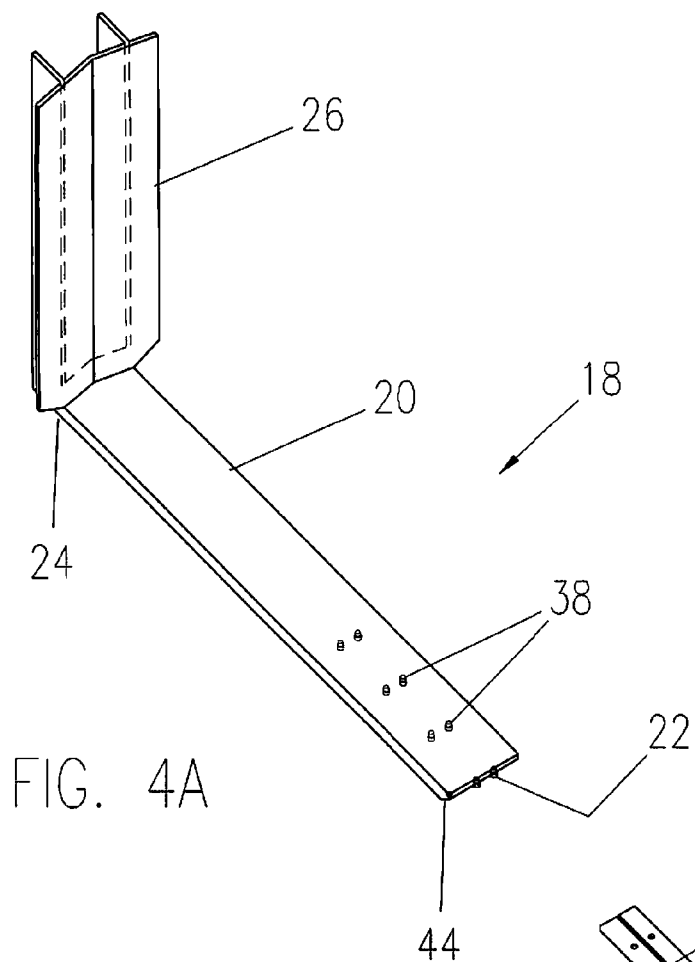


FIG. 3A



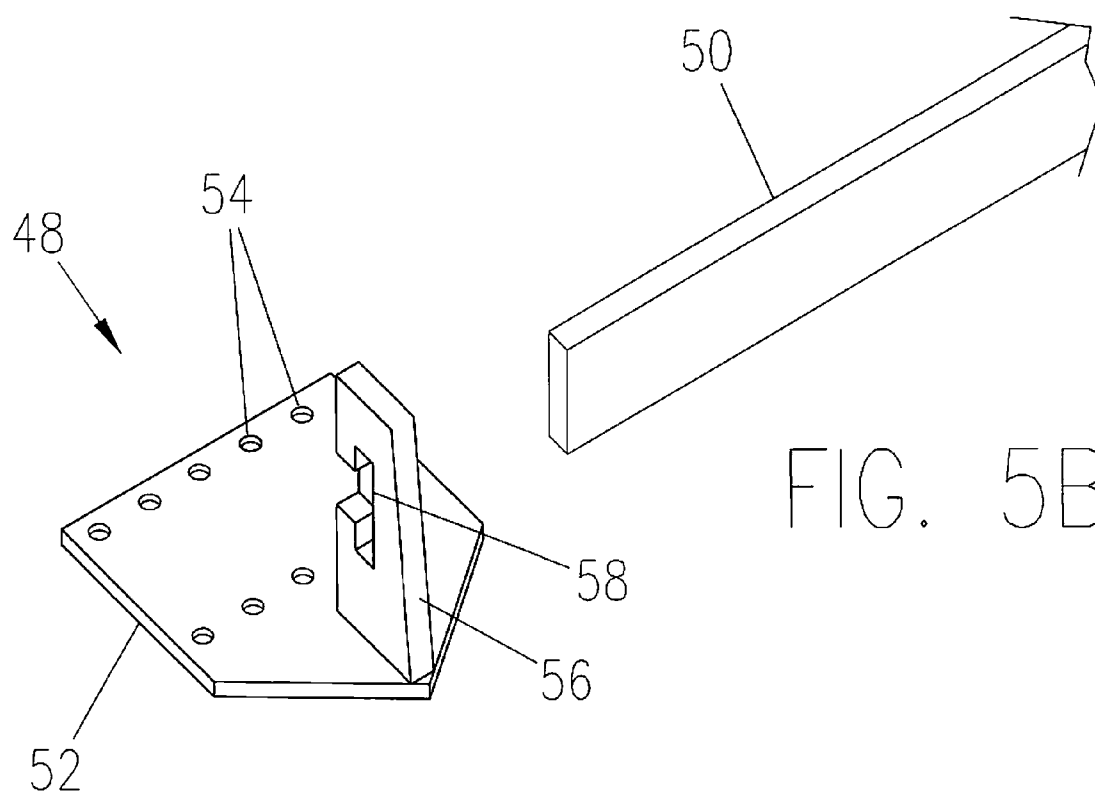


FIG. 5A

FIG. 5B

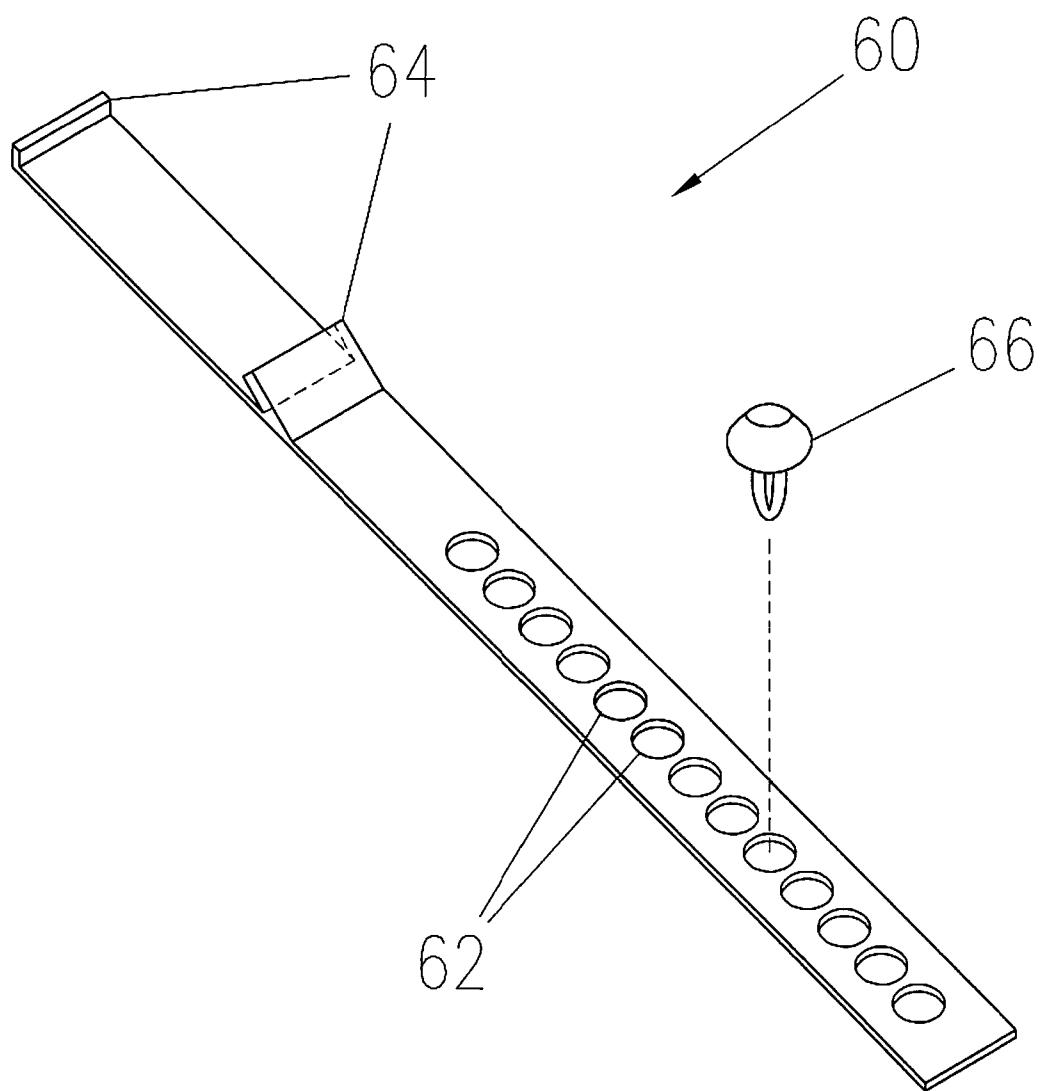


FIG. 6

SHELF DIVIDER SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not Applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not Applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The present invention relates generally to retail store product storage and display, and, more specifically, to a shelf divider system for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items on a store shelf.

[0005] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0006] In grocery stores and general merchandize and department stores, retail merchandize is often stocked and sold on open shelves where the items are freestanding. Store personnel must arrange, organize, and straighten the merchandize item by item so that it is readily displayed and visible to the shopper. This process is known as “facing, fronting, or zoning,” and normally occurs during off-peak hours, as does restocking, reordering, and inventory management. Freestanding merchandize presents a problem for consumers when different types or brands of products become mixed or lost in a jumble behind other products. Also, after the frontmost items are removed from the shelf by purchasers, the remaining items are often not within view or easily accessible by later shoppers. Items located on the upper shelves often cannot be reached. In addition, whole departments of shelves and their merchandize are continuously rearranged in “resets” due to seasonal changes or consumer demands. The shelves are then completely emptied and an entirely new line of merchandize is stocked and displayed on the shelves.

[0007] A number of shelf divider systems have been used in the past. Some use clear plastic dividers to separate different types of product, but have no means for conveying the rear merchandize to the front. Some systems include coil springs that are designed to push merchandize forward as the product in front is removed. These systems often have rails that are fastened to the front of the shelf. However, due to spring failure or a product too heavy to be pushed forward, these systems are often not effective in moving the remaining product to the front of the shelf.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 6,155,438 to James Garth Close discloses a system and method for product display, arrangement, and rotation using magnetic attraction to assist in the method. U.S. Pat. No. 6,227,386, also to James Garth Close, discloses a system and method for product display, arrangement, and rotation using position and support elements to pull items forward on a shelf. (See FIGS. 12 and 13.) U.S. Pat. No. 6,719,151, also to James Garth Close, discloses a system and method for product display, arrangement, and rotation in which products are pulled forward by pulling a front member which is attached to two slide rails which fit into the vacant space near the bottom of rounded container sides. U.S. Pat. No. 6,041,720 to Stephen Hardy discloses a

product management display system for organizing and displaying items on a gondola shelf. The system uses coiled ribbon springs to move products forward on a shelf.

[0009] However, all of the prior art devices have significant drawbacks that have limited their widespread commercial use. A need therefore exists for a shelf divider system that effectively separates, organizes, and displays merchandize items on a store shelf. Preferably, such a system will permit conservation of shelf space by eliminating wasted space between stocks of different products. Still more preferably, this system will be quickly assembled and installed on or removed from a store shelf without the need for tools or separate fasteners. Even more preferably, such a system will provide a means for easily moving merchandize items forward on a shelf, but also preventing the items from inadvertently falling from the shelf.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention addresses the aforementioned need. According to one embodiment of the invention, a shelf divider system is provided for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items on a store shelf. A plurality of dividers attach perpendicularly to a plurality of base strips by inserting knobs on the dividers into mating holes in the base strips. Each adjacent pair of dividers forms a channel for the merchandize. Merchandize carriers slide over the base strips between each adjacent pair of dividers. A pull strap is attached to the front end of each carrier for pulling it forward for moving the merchandize items forward on the shelf. The pull straps have longitudinal grooves therein for dividing the pull straps longitudinally into two narrower pull straps. The merchandize items are prevented from falling from the front of the shelf by transparent guards attached to guard holders. In one embodiment, the shelf divider system is attached to the shelf by clips, which attach a base strip to the shelf.

[0011] Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a shelf divider system that separates, organizes, and displays merchandize items on a store shelf. It is another object of the invention to provide a shelf divider system that provides a merchandize channel or track in which merchandize items are organized in order and separated from unlike products. It is another object of the invention to provide a manual means for moving merchandize items forward so that the items will be prominently displayed and not be lost near the back of shelves or unreachable on the higher shelves. It is another object of the invention to provide a shelf divider system that conserves shelf space by eliminating wasted space between rows of different products stored on a shelf. It is a further object of the invention to provide a shelf divider system that can be quickly assembled and installed on or removed from a store shelf without the need for tools or separate fasteners. Other objects of the invention are apparent from the following description, the claims set forth below, and the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] For a more complete understanding of the present invention and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following Detailed Description of an Example Embodiment of the Invention, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0013] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the shelf divider system of the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 2A is a perspective view of a base strip of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

[0015] FIG. 2B is a top view of a portion of the base strip of FIG. 2A.

[0016] FIG. 3A is a perspective view of a divider of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

[0017] FIG. 3B is a bottom view of a portion of the divider of FIG. 3A.

[0018] FIG. 4A is a perspective view of merchandise carrier of the divider system of FIG. 1.

[0019] FIG. 4B is a perspective view of a pull strap of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

[0020] FIG. 5A is a perspective view of guard holder of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

[0021] FIG. 5B is a perspective view of a guard of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

[0022] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a clip of the shelf divider system of FIG. 1.

DESCRIPTION OF AN EXAMPLE EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

[0023] The invention and its advantages are best understood by referring to the drawings, like numerals being used for like and corresponding parts of the various drawings. In FIG. 1 there is shown in perspective view a shelf divider system, generally designated 10, according to an example embodiment of the invention. Shelf divider system 10 is useful for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items, such as jars of spices, on a grocery store shelf (not illustrated). Shelf divider system 10 comprises at least one base strip 12 for engaging the shelf divider system 10 with the shelf. It further includes a plurality of dividers 14 attached perpendicularly to the base strips 12. Each adjacent pair of dividers 14 forms a merchandize channel 16.

[0024] A merchandize carrier 18 is slidably disposed between each adjacent pair of dividers 14. Each carrier 18 has an elongated runner 20 slidably engaging at least one base strip 12. Referring to FIG. 4A, runner 20 has a front end 22 and a rear end 24. A backstop 26 is on the rear end 24 of runner 20. A pull strap 28 is attached to the front end 22 of each carrier 18 for pulling carrier 18 for moving the merchandize items forward on the shelf.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. 1, 2A, and 2B, base strips 12 have a plurality of spaced holes 30 therein. Referring to FIG. 3A, each divider 14 comprises an elongated base 34 and an upstanding wall 36 extending upward from the base 34. The cross-sectional shape of the divider 14 is thus an inverted "T". A plurality of spaced knobs 32 are on the lower surfaces of dividers 14. Knobs 32 are arranged to mate with the holes 30 in base strips 12 for attaching the dividers 14 to the base strips 12. The spaced holes 30 in the base strips 12 and the spaced knobs 32 on the dividers 14 are arranged so that the dividers 14 attach to the base strips 12 only perpendicularly with respect to the base strips 12.

[0026] As best seen in FIG. 2B, the spaced holes 30 in the base strips 12 are arranged in parallel rows. The holes 30 are

staggered from one another in sequential rows. This configuration allows dividers 14 to be placed as close as possible to the merchandize to prevent wasted shelf space. As best seen in FIG. 3B, the knobs 32 on the dividers are arranged in parallel rows and columns. In one embodiment of the invention, the spacings A and B of knobs 32 on divider 14 are 0.702 inches and 0.281 inches, respectively, and the spacings C, D, and E of holes 30 in base strip 12 are 0.702 inches, 0.281 inches, and 0.094 inches, respectively.

[0027] As seen in FIG. 4A, the carrier runners 20 have a plurality of spaced knobs 38 near their front ends 22. Pull straps 28 have a plurality of spaced holes 40. Knobs 38 on the carrier runners 20 mate with selective holes 40 in the pull straps 28 for adjustably attaching the pull straps 28 to the carrier runners 20.

[0028] Referring to FIG. 2B, base strips 12 have opposite beveled edges 42. Referring to FIG. 4A, carrier runners 20 have front and rear ends 22 and 24, respectively, with beveled edges 44 thereon for smooth sliding engagement over the base strips 12. Pull straps 28 have longitudinal grooves 46 for dividing the pull straps 28 longitudinally into two narrower pull straps for use in narrower merchandize channels 16.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 1 guard holders 48 are attached to the front ends of dividers 14. An elongated guard 50 is attached to the guard holders 48 for preventing the merchandize items from falling from the front of the shelf. Referring to FIG. 5A, each guard holder 48 includes a base 52 having a plurality of spaced holes 54. A guard receptor 56 extends perpendicularly from base 52. Guard receptor 56 has an opening 58 for receiving guard 50. Knobs 32 on dividers 14 mate with the holes 54 in the base 52 of guard holders 48 for attaching the guard holders 48 to the dividers 14. Guard 50 is transparent for viewing the merchandize items through guard 50.

[0030] Referring to FIG. 6, clip 60 attaches the shelf divider system 10 to the shelf. A plurality of spaced holes 62 extend inward from one end of clip 60 for attaching clip 60 to the shelf by means of plastic push-in fastener 66 or other suitable fastener. A pair of spaced tabs 64 are located near the opposite end of clip 60 for attaching to a base strip 12 for securing the shelf divider system 10 to the shelf.

[0031] In one example embodiment of the invention, base strip 12, divider 14, carrier 18, pull strap 28, and guard holder 48 are formed of medium density polypropylene thermoplastic. Guard 50 is formed of acrylic transparent plastic. Clip 60 is made from steel.

[0032] The shelf divider system of the present invention, and many of its intended advantages, will be understood from the foregoing description of an example embodiment, and it will be apparent that, although the invention and its advantages have been described in detail, various changes, substitutions, and alterations may be made in the manner, procedure, and details thereof without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, as defined by the appended claims, or sacrificing any of its material advantages, the forms hereinbefore described being merely an exemplary embodiment thereof.

What is claimed is:

1. A shelf divider system for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items on a shelf, which comprises:

at least one base strip for engaging with the shelf;

a plurality of dividers attached perpendicularly to the base strips, each adjacent pair of dividers forming a merchandize channel;

a merchandize carrier slidably disposed between each adjacent pair of dividers, each carrier having an elongated runner slidably engaging at least one base strip, the runner having a front end and a rear end, and a backstop on the rear end of the runner; and

a pull strap attached to the front end of each carrier for pulling the carrier for moving the merchandize items forward on the shelf.

2. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein:

the base strips have a plurality of spaced holes therein; and

the dividers have lower surfaces having a plurality of spaced knobs thereon, selective knobs on the dividers mating with selective holes in the base strips for attaching the dividers to the base strips.

3. The shelf divider system of claim 2, wherein the spaced holes in the base strip and the spaced knobs on the dividers are arranged so that the dividers attach to the base strips only perpendicularly with respect to the base strips.

4. The shelf divider system of claim 3, wherein the spaced holes in the base strips are arranged in parallel rows, the holes being staggered from one another in sequential rows.

5. The shelf divider system of claim 3, wherein the spaced knobs on the dividers are arranged in parallel rows and columns.

6. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein each divider comprises an elongated base and an upstanding wall extending from the base, the cross-sectional shape of the divider thus being an inverted "T".

7. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein the carrier runners have at least one knob near their front ends and the pull straps have at least one hole therein, the knobs on the carrier runners mating with the holes in the pull straps for attaching the pull straps to the carrier runners.

8. The shelf divider system of claim 7, wherein the carrier runners have a plurality of spaced knobs near their front ends and the pull straps have a plurality of spaced holes therein, selective knobs on the carrier runners mating with selective holes in the pull straps for adjustably attaching the pull straps to the carrier runners.

9. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein the base strips have opposite beveled edges and the carrier runners have front and rear ends with beveled edges thereon for smooth sliding engagement therebetween.

10. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein the pull straps have longitudinal grooves therein for dividing the pull straps longitudinally into two narrower pull straps.

11. The shelf divider system of claim 1, wherein the dividers have front and rear ends and further including:

guard holders attached to the front ends of at least some of the dividers; and

an elongated guard attached to the guard holders for preventing the merchandize items from falling from the front of the shelf.

12. The shelf divider system of claim 11, wherein:

each guard holder includes a base with a plurality of spaced holes therein; and

the dividers have lower surfaces having a plurality of spaced knobs thereon, the knobs on the dividers mating with the holes in the guard holder base for attaching the guard holders to the dividers.

13. The shelf divider system of claim 11, wherein each guard holder includes:

a base; and

a guard receptor extending perpendicularly from the base, the guard receptor having an opening therein for receiving the elongated guard.

14. The shelf divider system of claim 11, wherein the elongated guard is transparent for viewing the merchandize items therethrough.

15. The shelf divider system of claim 1, further including at least one clip for attaching the shelf divider system to the shelf.

16. The shelf divider system of claim 15, wherein the clip has first and second ends, and wherein a plurality of holes are proximate the first end for attaching the clip to the shelf, and a pair of spaced tabs are proximate the second end of the clip for attaching to the base strip.

17. A shelf divider system for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandise items on a shelf, which comprises:

at least one base strip for engaging with the shelf, the base strip having a plurality of spaced holes therein;

a plurality of dividers attached perpendicularly to the base strips, each divider having front and rear ends and comprising an elongated base and an upstanding wall extending from the base, the cross-sectional shape of the dividers thus being an inverted "T",

each adjacent pair of dividers forming a merchandize channel, the dividers having lower surfaces having a plurality of spaced knobs thereon,

selective knobs on the dividers mating with selective holes in the base strips for attaching the dividers to the base strips, the spaced holes in the base strips and the spaced knobs on the dividers being arranged so that the dividers attach to the base strips only perpendicularly with respect to the base strips;

a merchandize carrier slidably disposed between each adjacent pair of dividers, each carrier having an elongated runner slidably engaging at least one base strip, the runner having a front end and a rear end, and a backstop on the rear end of the runner;

a pull strap attached to the front end of each carrier for pulling the carrier for moving the merchandise items forward on the shelf, the pull strap having a longitudinal groove therein for dividing the pull strap longitudinally into two narrower pull straps;

guard holders attached to the front ends of at least some of the dividers; and

an elongated guard attached to the guard holders for preventing the merchandize items from falling from the front of the shelf.

18. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein:

the spaced holes in the base strips are arranged in parallel rows, the holes being staggered from one another in sequential rows; and

the spaced knobs on the dividers are arranged in parallel rows and columns.

19. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein the carrier runners have a plurality of spaced knobs near their front ends and the pull straps have a plurality of spaced holes therein, selective knobs on the carrier runners mating with selective holes in the pull straps for adjustably attaching the pull straps to the carrier runners.

20. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein the base strips have opposite beveled edges and the front and rear ends of the carrier runners have beveled edges thereon for smooth sliding engagement with the base strips.

21. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein:

each guard holder includes a base with a plurality of spaced holes therein; and

the dividers have lower surfaces having a plurality of spaced knobs thereon, the knobs on the dividers mating with the holes in the guard holder base for attaching the guard holders to the dividers.

22. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein each guard holder includes:

a base; and

a guard receptor extending perpendicularly from the base, the guard receptor having an opening therein for receiving the elongated guard.

23. The shelf divider system of claim 17, wherein the elongated guard is transparent for viewing the merchandize items therethrough.

24. The shelf divider system of claim 17, further including at least one clip for attaching the shelf divider system to the shelf, wherein the clip has first and second ends, and wherein a plurality of holes are proximate the first end for attaching the clip to the shelf and a pair of spaced tabs are proximate the second end of the clip for attaching to the base strip.

25. A shelf divider system for organizing, moving, and displaying merchandize items on a shelf, which comprises:

at least one base strip for engaging with the shelf, the base strip having opposite beveled edges and a plurality of spaced holes therein, the spaced holes being arranged in parallel rows, the holes being staggered from one another in sequential rows;

a plurality of dividers attached perpendicularly to the base strips, each divider having front and rear ends and comprising an elongated base and an upstanding wall extending from the base, the cross-sectional shape of the dividers thus being an inverted "T",

each adjacent pair of dividers forming a merchandize channel, the dividers having lower surfaces having a plurality of spaced knobs thereon arranged in parallel rows and columns;

selective knobs on the dividers mating with selective holes in the base strips for attaching the dividers to the base strips, the spaced holes in the base strips and the spaced knobs on the dividers being arranged so that the dividers attach to the base strips only perpendicularly with respect to the base strips;

a merchandize carrier slidably disposed between each adjacent pair of dividers, each carrier having an elongated runner slidably engaging at least one base strip, the runner having a front end and a rear end and a backstop on the rear end of the runner, the runners having a plurality of spaced knobs near their front ends, the front and rear ends of the runners having beveled edges thereon for smooth sliding engagement with the base strips;

a pull strap attached to the front end of each carrier for pulling the carrier for moving the merchandize items forward on the shelf the pull strap having a longitudinal groove therein for dividing the pull strap longitudinally into two narrower pull straps, the pull straps having a plurality of spaced holes therein, selective knobs on the carrier runners mating with selective holes in the pull straps for adjustably attaching the pull straps to the carrier runners;

guard holders attached to the front ends of at least some of the dividers, each guard holder including a base with a plurality of spaced holes therein, the knobs on the dividers mating with the holes in the guard holder base for attaching the guard holders to the dividers,

and including a guard receptor extending perpendicularly from the base, the guard receptor having an opening therein for receiving the elongated guard:

an elongated guard attached to the guard holders for preventing the merchandize items from falling from the front of the shelf, wherein the elongated guard is transparent for viewing the merchandize items therethrough; and

at least one clip for attaching the shelf divider system to the shelf, wherein the clip has first and second ends, and wherein a plurality of holes are proximate the first end for attaching the clip to the shelf, and a pair of spaced tabs are proximate the second end of the clip for attaching to the base strip.

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