An ornament storage system and device is described that provides for secure, compartmentalized, and compact storage of ornaments and other similar objects ("ornaments"). The ornament storage system and device provides easy access to the ornaments through removal of the top and one or more sides of the system and device. Access is further improved by separating the stored ornaments onto individual storage trays or shelves. The individual storage trays or shelves are easily accessible by substantially vertically telescoping the storage trays or shelves in such a way as to provide increased vertical separation between each successive shelf. Additionally, each individual storage tray or shelf may be removable from the ornament storage system and device. In such a way, each ornament in the ornament storage system and device may be simultaneously viewed while in storage and may be easily stored in or accessed from the ornament storage system.
FIG. 2
FIG. 4
TELESCOPING ORNAMENT STORAGE SYSTEMS AND DEVICES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to storage devices, and more particularly to a telescoping, easy-access storage device for storage of Christmas tree ornaments and other similar objects.

[0003] 2. Background and Related Art

[0004] The storage of Christmas tree ornaments and other similar objects (referred to herein as simply, "ornaments") provides a particular challenge. Many ornaments are fragile and require careful storage. Additionally, many ornaments include strings, hooks, or other hanging mechanisms as well as decorative embellishments that may tangle with the hanging mechanisms or decorative embellishments of other ornaments. For these and other reasons, it is generally considered desirable to provide for individual storage of ornaments.

[0005] To provide for individual storage of ornaments, several types of boxes or shelves have been developed. However, such boxes or shelves have several significant limitations for the storage of ornaments. Particularly, to maximize storage space in a compact package, typical storage boxes and shelves stack one box or shelf of ornaments immediately above the next box or shelf of ornaments. Thus, a user is typically unable to readily see all available ornaments when decorating a Christmas tree or accessing the ornaments for whatever reason. As may be appreciated, this may lead to difficulty when decorating a tree in properly distributing different types and/or colors of ornaments in a desirable, coordinated fashion. A user may therefore have to remove and redistribute ornaments as a tree is decorated several times in order to properly distribute the ornaments on the tree.

[0006] Meanwhile, some users decide to remove and/or open each box or shelf of ornaments before decorating so that all ornaments are visible. This is problematic for additional reasons, since the ornaments and boxes may need to be distributed across a significant area before all ornaments are visible, creating clutter and leading to an increased possibility that the user may accidentally step on, trip over, or otherwise break one of the boxes, shelves, or ornaments during a decorating process.

[0007] Similar problems may be encountered during removal and re-storage of the ornaments, such as at the end of a holiday season. A user storing a certain type of ornament may be unable to locate each of that type of ornament on the tree during a first search, and may have to leave a box or shelf for that type of ornament aside while other types of ornaments are removed, or may have to mix ornament types in a single shelf or box. Either approach is problematic: either clutter during removal and storage is increased, or finding of a desired ornament at a later time becomes more difficult. Additionally, where individual boxes or shelves are used to store ornaments, it is possible to misplace or separate ornaments into different locations. When this occurs, it becomes difficult to locate ornaments for the next holiday decoration cycle.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] An ornament storage system and device is described that provides for secure, compartmentalized, and compact storage of ornaments and other similar objects ("ornaments"). The ornament storage system and device permits easy access to the ornaments by providing for removal of the top and one or more sides of the ornament storage system and device and further improves access to the ornaments by separating the stored ornaments onto individual storage trays or shelves. The individual storage trays or shelves are easily accessed by telescoping the storage trays or shelves in a substantially vertical and linear fashion in such a way as to provide increased vertical separation between each successive shelf and may be further improved by making each individual storage tray or shelf removable from the ornament storage system and device. In such a way, each ornament in the ornament storage system and device may be simultaneously viewed and may be easily stored in or accessed from the ornament storage system.

[0009] Therefore, in some embodiments, the ornament storage system and device includes a plurality of storage trays attached to a telescoping handle such that when the telescoping handle is telescoped up, the storage trays simultaneously and substantially linearly telescope up and separate from each other. The plurality of storage trays may be removable from the telescoping handle to facilitate ornament access, ornament storage, and ornament removal, and may be rearranged in some instances as needed or desired.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The objects and features of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the following description and appended claims, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. Understanding that these drawings depict only typical embodiments of the invention and are, therefore, not to be considered limiting in its scope, the invention will be described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings in which:

[0011] FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of an ornament storage device in a closed position;

[0012] FIG. 2 shows a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 1 in an opened and fully-telescoped up position;

[0013] FIG. 3 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of telescoping handle in a partially-telescoped position;

[0014] FIG. 4 shows an alternate perspective view of the telescoping handle from FIG. 3;

[0015] FIG. 5 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a tray support;

[0016] FIGS. 6 and 7 show alternate perspective views of the telescoping handle of FIGS. 3-4 with tray supports attached to the telescoping handle and with wire trays resting on the tray supports; and

[0017] FIG. 8 shows a perspective view of the embodiment of the ornament storage device from FIGS. 1 and 2 with one of the trays partially removed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] A description of the embodiments of the present invention will now be given with reference to the Figures. It is expected that the present invention may take many other forms and shapes, hence the following disclosure is intended to be illustrative and not limiting, and the scope of the invention should be determined by reference to the appended claims.

[0019] An ornament storage system and device is described that provides for secure compact storage of ornaments, trim-
kets, decorations, and other similar objects (referred to herein as simply “ornaments”). The ornament storage system and device provides for easy access to the ornaments through removal of the top and one or more sides of the storage system and device and further improves access to the ornaments by separating the stored ornaments onto individual storage trays or shelves. The individual storage trays or shelves may be accessed by telescoping the storage trays or shelves in such a way as to provide increased vertical separation between each successive shelf and may be further improved by making each individual storage tray or shelf removable from the ornament storage system and device. In such a way, each ornament in the ornament storage system and device may be simultaneously viewed and may be easily stored in or accessed from the ornament storage system.

[0020] In at least one embodiment, the ornament storage system and device includes a plurality of storage trays attached to a telescoping handle such that when the telescoping handle is telescoped up, the storage trays simultaneously telescope up and separate from each other in a substantially vertical, substantially linear fashion. The plurality of storage trays may be removable from the ornament storage system and device to facilitate ornament access, ornament storage, and ornament removal. When the storage trays are removable, they may be removed either with or without telescoping the trays apart. The ornament storage system and device, as well as each of the individual removable trays may include handles to facilitate carrying of the system and device, the trays, and any contained ornaments.

[0021] In the description and in the claims, the term “ornament” shall refer to all types of Christmas tree ornaments and other similar objects where storage of such objects is desirable in an individualized manner in such a way that multiple such objects in storage may be simultaneously visible.

[0022] FIG. 1 shows an embodiment of an ornament storage device 10. The illustrated ornament storage device 10 is a soft-sided rectangular storage bag or exterior case for containing a plurality of ornaments. The illustrated ornament storage device 10 is approximately cubical in shape, although alternate ornament storage devices 10 may take any number of shapes, from approximately cylindrical to cubical. Embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 may also be hard-sided or semi-rigid instead of soft-sided. The sides, bottom and top of the ornament storage device 10 provide protection for the stored ornaments against breakage or undesired spilling of the ornaments. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the ornament storage device 10 includes side panels 12 having handles 14 to facilitate transportation of the ornament storage device. The location of handles 14 may be modified in some embodiments, including to the top of the ornament storage device 10. The ornament storage device 10 also includes a removable front panel 16 and a removable top panel 18. The removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 permit access to the interior of the ornament storage device 10. Although not specifically depicted in FIG. 1, it may be understood that the ornament storage device 10 includes a back panel and a bottom panel as well.

[0023] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 1, the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 may be contiguous and may further be contiguous with the back panel. In this fashion, the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 may be removable in the sense that they may be removed from their respective substantially-planar positions at the front and top of the ornament storage device 10 to allow access to the interior of the ornament storage device. In such an embodiment, the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 may remain attached to the ornament storage device 10, as may be appreciated by reference to FIG. 2, which shows the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 rolled into a roll 20 located at the top of the back panel where the roll 20 is out of the way of access to any stored ornaments.

[0024] To facilitate securing to and removal of the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 to the body of the ornament storage device 10, the lines where the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 meet the side panels 12 and/or the bottom panel may be provided with a means for reversibly attaching the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 to the side panels 12 and/or to the bottom panel. Such means for attaching may include a zipper, snaps, a hook-and-loop fastener system, clips, buttons, or any other reversible fastener known in the art. By way of example, the ornament storage device may include a continuous zipper that may extend along the joint between the removable top panel 18 and one side panel 12, continues along the joint between the removable front panel 16 and the first side panel 12, continues along the joint between the removable front panel 16 and the bottom panel, continues along the joint between the removable front panel 16 and the second side panel 12 and finally extends along the joint between the removable top panel 18 and the second side panel 12. One of skill in the art will understand that in embodiments where the ornament storage device 10 is hard-sided, the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 may be hingedly-connected panels and may be completely removable. One of skill in the art will also understand that in some embodiments, the side panels 12 may also be made removable.

[0025] FIG. 2 depicts the embodiment of the ornament storage device 10 shown in FIG. 1, with the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 removed to show the interior of the ornament storage device 10. The interior of the ornament storage device 10 is shown in FIG. 2 in an expanded configuration, as will be appreciated from the description below. The interior of the ornament storage device 10 includes a plurality of storage trays 24 for storing ornaments in an individual, secure manner. The interior also includes a telescoping handle 26 that extends from a point at or near the bottom of the ornament storage device 10. The telescoping handle 26 includes a grip 28 and multiple telescoping segments 30. The storage trays 24 are attached to the telescoping segments 30 so as to telescope up with the telescoping handle 26 to quickly and simultaneously provide access to all storage trays and any ornaments contained therein, as may be appreciated by reference to FIG. 2. In some embodiments, the telescoping action may occur in a substantially-linear, substantially-vertical fashion. In other embodiments, the telescoping action may include a slightly curved or non-linear path. As may be appreciated by reference to the Figures, the telescoping action does not require any removal or re-attachment of the storage trays 24 during either expansion or collapsing, and both expansion and collapsing may occur with the storage trays 24 either contained on or removed from the ornament storage device 10.

[0026] One embodiment of the telescoping handle 26 is illustrated in more detail without the attached storage trays 24 and without the surrounding structure of the ornament storage device 10 in FIG. 3. FIG. 3 shows multiple telescoping seg-
ments 30, only one of which is shown in a fully- or partially-extended position. Each of the telescoping segments 30 in which another telescoping segment 30 is nested may be a substantially-tubular member of any desired cross-sectional shape, such as round, square, and rectangular. The telescoping segment 30 with the smallest diameter may be a substantially-tubular member, or it may be a substantially-solid member. The telescoping segments 30 may be manufactured of varying materials, including plastics and metals such as aluminum, steel, or alloys thereof, and may include extruded or formed structures. If the telescoping segments 30 are substantially-tubular members, the substantially-tubular members need not be completely closed members, as will be recognized by those of skill in the art.

[0027] As may also be appreciated by one of skill in the art, each successive ascending telescoping segment 30 may be constructed so as to be narrower or to have a smaller diameter than the telescoping segment 30 below, so as to allow successive nesting of all the telescoping segments 30. Alternatively, a portion of each telescoping segment 30 may be narrower than a remaining portion of the telescoping segment 30 to allow such nesting. Additionally, as may be readily appreciated, the telescoping segments 30 may be provided with a means for securing the extended telescoping segments 30 against unwanted collapse. Any such means for securing the extended telescoping segments 30 against unwanted collapse that is known in the art may be used, including a frictional engagement between successive telescoping segments 30, a spring-loaded bearing lock or other spring-loaded engagement mechanism, a manually-actuated lock, or any other such mechanism. Such mechanisms are well known in the art of telescoping handles such as those used for rolling luggage.

[0028] As is known to those of skill in the art, typical telescoping handles, such as for luggage, normally provide a maximal extended handle length for a minimal nested or retracted handle length. Therefore, the telescoping segments of a typical telescoping handle may be sized so as to completely or almost completely nest within each other in their retracted position. Such is not the case with the telescoping handle 26 illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3.

[0029] Use of fully-nested telescoping segments, as has been previously used with prior telescoping handles, could result in undesirable crushing or breakage of any ornaments stored in the ornament storage device 10, as full nesting could permit an upper storage tray 24 to press down upon a lower storage tray 24. Therefore, in the embodiment depicted in FIGS. 2 and 3, relative travel of the adjacent telescoping segments 30 is interrupted before full nesting occurs. Specifically, travel is interrupted at a location providing sufficient depth for each adjacent storage tray 24. As may be appreciated by those skilled in the art, ornaments come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Therefore, the spacing provided to the storage trays 24 (and therefore the location where relative travel between adjacent telescoping segments 30 is interrupted) may be varied between embodiments and even within embodiments to provide adequate storage for the variety of ornaments. For example, vertical-stored (minimum) spacing between the tops of vertically-adjacent storage trays 24 may be varied to fit 2-inch, 3-inch, 4-inch, 5-inch, 6-inch, or larger sizes of stored ornaments, as well as any desired size in between. One of skill in the art will readily appreciate that the embodiments of the invention may be scaled as appropriate to permit storage of any desired size of ornament.

[0030] To permit attachment of the storage trays 24 to the telescoping handle 26 in such a way that the storage trays 24 telescope up and down with the telescoping handle 26 for easy access, the telescoping segments 30 may be provided with tray mounting brackets 32. The tray mounting brackets 32 may be attached at the tops of each telescoping segment 30 by any attachment means known in the art, including screws, set screws, cement, rivets, glue, a frictional fit, or any other means of attachment that does not prevent telescoping of the other telescoping segments 30. As the tray mounting brackets 32 are attached to the top of each telescoping segment 30 (or pair of telescoping segments 30, as illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3), the tray mounting brackets 32 will telescope up and down as the telescoping handle 26 telescopes up and down. The telescoping action of the tray mounting brackets 32 is advantageous, however, in that the motion of each tray mounting bracket 32 is not tied to the total movement of the grip 28, but is rather tied to the movement of the respective telescoping segments 30, so that as the telescoping handle 26 is fully extended, a desired separation is provided for each tray mounting bracket 32 and therefore each storage tray 24.

[0031] Therefore, as may be appreciated by one of skill in the art, the telescoping handle 26 and trays 24 of the present invention provide a unique method for storing ornaments and quickly providing simultaneous viewing and access to all the stored ornaments. To further provide such access in a stable manner, the art, a telescoping handle 26 may be attached to an inner base support 34, as is shown in FIG. 3. The inner base support 34 may extend the full depth of the storage trays 24 to prevent the weight of the storage trays 24 and any contained ornaments from causing the ornament storage device 10 to tip over. As may be appreciated by one of skill in the art by reference to FIGS. 2 and 3, the bottommost storage tray 24 need not telescope up or down to provide access to any lower storage trays 24. Therefore, the bottommost telescoping segment 30 need not move relative to the inner base support 34, but may only serve as a nesting member for the other telescoping segments 30.

[0032] Additionally, as may be recognized by one of skill in the art, it may be desirable for the ornament storage device 10 to be easily moved from one point to another while the ornaments are fully visible. Therefore, in some embodiments, the point 36 where the inner base support 34 joins the telescoping handle 26 may be provided with wheels (not shown). In this fashion, the ornament storage device 10 may be tipped back to some degree, as shown in FIG. 4, and rolled to a desired location, similarly to the manner in which wheeled luggage is often transported.

[0033] FIG. 4 also illustrates further details of one embodiment the tray mounting brackets 32. As may be seen, the tray mounting brackets 32 may be configured to attach to or to receive a tray support 38; one embodiment of the tray support 38 is shown in FIG. 5. Each tray support 38 may be attached to a different tray mounting bracket 32 to support an individual storage tray 24. The tray supports 38 may be attached to the tray mounting brackets 32 by any appropriate attachment means known in the art, such as screwing, bolting, riveting, a snap interference fit, gluing, cementing, etc. By way of example, as may be appreciated by reference to FIGS. 3-5, the tray supports 38 may slidingly engage the tray mounting brackets 32 in a sideways fashion, and, once in place, may be further secured by small screws, rivets, or bolts at one or more attachment points 40.
In some embodiments, the tray support 38 may be integrally formed with the tray mounting brackets 32, rather than separately attached as described above. Additionally, in some embodiments, the tray supports 38 (and the tray mounting brackets 32, when integrally formed with the tray supports 38) may be integrally formed with all or a portion of the storage trays 24. For example, it is possible to form or mold the storage trays 24 out of a material such as plastic such that the storage trays 24 include the tray supports 38 and optionally the tray mounting brackets 32. Alternatively, it may be desirable to form the remaining portions of the storage trays 24 separately from the tray mounting brackets 32. In such embodiments, such as illustrated in FIG. 5, the tray mounting brackets 32 may be provided with one or more notches 42 to seat other portions of the storage trays 24, as may be appreciated with reference to FIGS. 6 and 7.

FIGS. 6 and 7 show rear and front perspective views, respectively, of an embodiment of the ornament storage device 10, with wire trays 44 resting in the notches 40 of the tray supports 38. In the embodiment shown, the wire trays 44 are not attached to the tray supports 38, but instead rest on the tray supports 38, with the wires of the wire tray 44 potentially nested in the notches 42 of the tray supports 38. This means that the wire trays 44 may be easily removed from the tray supports 38 by lifting the wire trays 44 up from the tray supports 38. This removability of the wire trays 44 allows a user of the ornament storage device to remove a full storage tray 24 with ornament(s), if desired, to a remote location from the ornament storage device 10 during decoration, removal of stored ornaments, and/or storage of ornaments, as will be set forth in additional detail below.

In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 6 and 7, the wire trays 44 are approximately rectangular and have a grid pattern. As may be appreciated by one of skill in the art, in other embodiments where the ornament storage device has a different shape, the wire trays 44 may be modified to conform to that shape. Therefore, in some embodiments, the wire trays 44 may be approximately square, approximately circular, or may take any of a number of functional and/or aesthetic shapes. In the illustrated embodiment, the grid of each of the wire trays 44 defines a plurality of small storage openings 46 along the sides and front of the wire tray 44 and surrounding a centrally-located large storage opening 48 that is approximately the same size as the tray support 38. In this way, the wire tray 44 provides structural support members to support storage space for the ornaments. In some embodiments, the large storage opening 48 may be replaced by additional small storage openings 46. However, as will be appreciated from the discussion below, the space defined by the large storage opening 48 may be further subdivided into smaller storage spaces without requiring actual grid/wire support from the wire tray 44 within the large storage opening 48.

Although the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7 show embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 wherein each of the tray supports 38 and the wire trays 44 are substantially identical (i.e., each of the tray supports 38 is the same size and shape, and each of the wire trays 44 has the same pattern of the small storage openings 46 and the large storage opening 48), it will be readily recognized that the size, the layout, and the configuration of the tray supports 38 and the wire trays 44 may be varied from embodiment to embodiment of the ornament storage device 10, as well as between storage trays 24 of individual embodiments to suit the storage needs of particular users and situations. This may be appreciated in more detail with reference to FIG. 8.

FIG. 8 shows a perspective view of the embodiment of the ornament storage device 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, with one of the storage trays 24 partially removed from its tray support 38. As may be appreciated from FIG. 8, each of the wire trays 44 has been covered with a compartmentalized cloth that defines various storage areas or storage compartments in association with the grid of the wire tray 44. In this fashion, the ornament storage device 10 provides for individual, protected, compartmentalized storage of ornaments. The compartmentalized cloth of each individual storage tray 24 is supported by the wire tray 44 and may be made of any suitable material, including natural and manmade fibers and cloths, lightweight and heavyweight fabrics, plastics, or any other known material suitable for providing the storage compartments. In some embodiments, for example, the wire tray 44 and the compartmentalized cloth may be replaced by an integral rigid or semi-rigid plastic tray having molded or formed ornament compartments. One of skill in the art will, therefore, readily appreciate the many forms that the various components of the storage trays 24 may take.

FIG. 8 illustrates how the function of each individual storage tray 24 may be varied. For example, the uppermost storage tray 50 is different from the remaining storage trays 24 in that it includes a large central storage compartment 52. The large central storage compartment 52 may provide storage for a larger ornament, such as a Christmas tree topper. The uppermost storage tray 50 also includes three small storage compartments 54 along each side of the large central storage compartment 52. As may be appreciated by one skilled in the art by reference to the uppermost storage tray 50, if storage of an ornament that is large in all three dimensions is desired, a central or other portion of an upper storage tray 24 may be provided without a bottom, so that the large ornament may be stored in a lower storage tray 24 and the ornament storage device 10 may be telescoped closed with the bottomless portion of the upper storage tray 24 passing over the large ornament without causing any damage.

In the embodiment of FIG. 8, the second storage tray 56 is illustrated as being partially removed from its resting position within the ornament storage device 10. In contrast to the uppermost storage tray 50, the second storage tray 56 has been devoted entirely to small storage compartments 54, and has a total of twenty small storage compartments 54. Although the wire tray 44 of the second storage tray 56 may include a grid that completely demarcates all twenty small storage compartments 54, it has been found that the wire along the outer boundaries of the large storage opening 48 typically provides sufficient support for the inner back nine small storage compartments 54 without requiring the additional wire support. Therefore, a single style of wire tray 44 may be used for multiple final styles of storage trays 44 in some embodiments.

To facilitate removal, carrying, and replacement of the storage trays 24, the storage trays 24 may be provided with storage tray handles 58, as is illustrated in FIG. 8. The storage tray handles 58 may take any form that facilitates use of the storage trays 24, and the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 8 shows the storage tray handles 58 as being a pair of straps mounted on either end of the uppermost storage tray 50 and the second storage tray 56. The other storage trays shown in FIG. 8 also have storage tray handles 58 that are not visible in the perspective view of the Figure.
FIGS. 9-14 show perspective views of details of an alternate embodiment of the ornament storage device 10. The embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 9-14 includes a larger number of components made from plastic to reduce the overall cost of the ornament storage device 10, and includes some additional features not previously discussed. FIG. 9 shows a perspective view of the ornament storage device 10, with any outer storage case and base omitted. The telescoping handle 26 and storage trays 24 are visible. As in FIGS. 6 and 7, the compartmentalized cloth is not shown in order to more clearly show the structure of the ornament storage device 10.

FIG. 10 shows a detailed view of the telescoping handle 26 of the ornament storage device 10. The telescoping handle 26 includes the grip 28 and the telescoping segments 30. The tray mounting brackets 32 are attached to the telescoping segments 30, as in the previously-described embodiments. In this embodiment, the tray mounting brackets 32 include tray locks 60 that may be used to lock the storage trays 24 to the tray mounting brackets 32 to prevent unwanted separation of the storage trays 24 from the telescoping handle 26 and from the ornament storage device 10. The tray locks 60 may be any kind of locking mechanism to secure the storage trays 24 to the telescoping segments 30 of the telescoping handle 26 and/or the tray mounting brackets 32, including slide locks, snaps, or buckles. The tray locks 60 are illustrated in FIGS. 10-13 as being slide locks.

Specifically, FIGS. 11 and 12 illustrate detailed perspective views of the tray locks 60, and show the tray lock 60 may slide from a locked position in FIG. 11 to an unlocked position in FIG. 12. In the locked position, the attached storage tray 24 may not be removed from the telescoping handle 26. In the unlocked position, the storage tray 24 may be removed from and/or connected to the telescoping handle 26.

FIG. 13 illustrates a perspective back view of the ornament storage device 10, showing the attachment of the storage trays 24 to the tray mounting brackets 32. One of skill in the art will appreciate that the illustrated shapes and forms are merely illustrative of a representative embodiment of the invention. FIG. 14 illustrates a perspective view of a plastic tray 62 for use with the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 9-13. The illustration shows how one plastic tray 62 may be inverted and stacked with a second plastic tray 62 for compact storage when the ornament storage device 10 is not in use. Additionally, one of skill in the art will appreciate from FIG. 14 that the plastic tray 62 includes vertical sections that extend downward to provide supporting surfaces so that the plastic trays 62 may be stacked one upon another, and also may be set or rested on smooth surfaces during ornament removal and/or storage. The plastic trays 62 also include storage tray handles 58 for ease of transportation of individual storage trays.

The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. For example, although the embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 illustrated herein all have four storage trays 24, it is envisioned that embodiments may be provided with more or fewer storage trays 24. By way of example, alternate embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 may have two, three, five, six, seven, eight, or more storage trays 24. In some such embodiments having a large number of telescoping storage trays 24, a mechanism may be provided to selectively telescope and access only a portion of the storage trays 24, such as providing additional grips 28 actuating selected numbers of the storage trays 24.

As an additional example, the embodiments illustrated herein all have matched pairs of telescoping segments 30. Other embodiments may rely on a single column of telescoping segments 30 to provide the functions described herein. Still other embodiments may utilize three or more matched columns of telescoping segments, or may utilize different non-continuous sets of telescoping segments to provide additional telescoping range, such as for embodiments having a larger number of storage trays 24, as discussed above. Still other embodiments may provide access to the telescoping handle 26 when the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18 are closed or attached, so that the telescoping handle 26 may be used to help move the closed ornament storage device 10. In such embodiments, the ornament storage device 10 may be provided with wheels as discussed above. Additionally, in some such embodiments, the telescoping handle 26 may be provided with a number of telescoping segments 30 at the top of the telescoping handle 26 that are not attached to storage trays 24, so that a portion of the telescoping handle 26 may be extended to facilitate rolling transport of the ornament storage device 10 without any of the storage trays 24 being extended or elevated.

As may be appreciated by one of skill in the art by reference to the drawings and the above description, the embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 described above utilize various modular components. The various components and the modularity of the ornament storage device permit straightforward changing of components, such as for storing of different types of ornaments and for switching the stacking order of the storage trays 24. The components and modularity also permit shipping of the ornament storage device 10 in a compact, unassembled package that is straightforward to assemble for use. Similarly, the ornament storage device 10 may also be disassembled and stored in a compact space when not in use.

The individual storage trays 24 may be provided with a lid, a cover, or any other desired means for securing the ornaments within the storage compartments of the storage trays 24. The means for securing the ornaments may include elastic and non-elastic straps, elastic and non-elastic webbing, elastic and non-elastic cloth, and rigid lids and covers. The means for securing the ornaments may prevent inadvertent spillage of ornaments from the storage trays 24. In embodiments wherein each of the storage trays 24 is individually covered, the outer case of the ornament storage device 10 may optionally be omitted.

That the features and advantages of the embodiments of the ornament storage device 10 and systems described above may be more fully appreciated and understood, a description of the ornament storage device 10 in use will now be given. The ornament storage device 10 may first be assembled or may be purchased/acquired in an assembled state to provide a setup as shown in FIG. 1, whereupon a user might decide to store ornaments in the ornament storage device 10. The user could then transport the ornament storage device to a desired location using the handles 14. To store ornaments in the ornament storage device 10, the user opens the ornament storage device 10 by detaching/removing any mechanisms securing the removable front panel 16 and the removable top panel 18, and moves out of the way or removes the top panels 16 and 18, revealing the storage trays 24 and the telescoping handle 26.

To improve access to the various storage trays, the user could perform one of two actions. First, the user could
simply remove the uppermost storage tray 50, providing access to the second storage tray 56 below, and could repeat this process for each subsequent storage tray. Alternatively, the user could grasp the grip 28 and pull upwards to actuate the telescoping segments 30 of the telescoping handle 26. In doing so, the various trays would simultaneously substantially vertically telescope and separate to provide the configuration shown in FIG. 2. Once the ornament storage device 10 is in the configuration of FIG. 2, the user has at least two options for storing ornaments in the various storage compartments. First, the user can access the storage compartments and place ornaments in the storage compartments without removing the storage trays 24, as the telescoping action provides sufficient room to access the storage trays 24. Second, the user may selectively remove one or more storage trays 24, as depicted in FIG. 8, to improve access and/or to move the storage tray(s) 24 to a more desirable location for ornament storage and retrieval.

The user can then store any desired ornaments in the ornament storage device, may return any removed storage trays 24 to their positions in the ornament storage device 10 (or alternatively may choose to rearrange the order of the storage trays 24), and may collapse the telescoping handle 26 and the associated trays if they were in the extended position. The removable top panel 18 and the removable front panel 16 may then be reattached and/or securely in place, and the ornament storage device 10 may be transported to a desired storage location. When the ornaments are to be accessed and/or used again, the above steps may be repeated. Therefore, it may be appreciated that the described ornament storage device 10 provides for compact, convenient storage of ornaments while providing improved access to stored ornaments and to ornament storage space.

The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated by the appended claims, rather than by the foregoing description. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.

What is claimed and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is:

1. An ornament storage apparatus comprising:
   a telescoping handle comprising:
   a grip; and
   a plurality of telescoping segments at least partially slid-
   ingly nested within each other; and
   a plurality of storage trays, wherein each storage tray is
   attached to a different telescoping segment so that when
   the telescoping handle is extended, the plurality of stor-
   age trays move with the telescoping segments and verti-
   cally separate from each other.

2. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 1, wherein the
   telescoping handle and the plurality of storage trays telescope
   in a substantially linear and substantially vertical fashion.

3. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of
   the plurality of storage trays is removable from the tele-
   scooping handle.

4. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 3, wherein each of
   the plurality of storage trays comprises:
   a tray mounting bracket attached to at least one of the
   telescoping segments; and
   a tray support attached to the tray mounting bracket.

5. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 4, wherein each of
   the plurality of storage trays further comprises:
   a wire tray; and
   a compartmentalized cloth attached to the wire tray;
   wherein the storage tray is removable in that the wire tray
   and the compartmentalized cloth rest on the tray support
   and may be selectively lifted off of the tray support.

6. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 4, wherein each of
   the plurality of storage trays further comprises a compart-
   mentalized tray wherein the storage tray is removable in that
   the compartmentalized tray rests on the tray support and may
   be selectively lifted off of the tray support.

7. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 1, further com-
   prising an exterior case that surrounds the plurality of storage
   trays when the storage trays and the telescoping handle are in
   a collapsed position, the exterior case comprising a top, a
   bottom, and one or more sides, and wherein the top and at
   least one of the sides is removable to permit access to the
   storage trays and to permit telescopic expansion of the tele-
   scooping handle and the storage trays.

8. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 7, wherein the
   exterior case is soft-sided.

9. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 1, wherein the
   telescoping segments are configured so that they do not fully
   nest within each other but at most only partially nest within
   each other to provide a minimum separation between each of
   the plurality of storage trays when the telescoping handle is in
   a collapsed position.

10. An ornament storage device comprising:
    a telescoping handle comprising:
    a grip; and
    a plurality of telescoping segments at least partially slid-
    ingly nested within each other to provide a telescoping
    action to the telescoping handle, wherein when the
    telescoping handle is in a fully collapsed position, the
    telescoping segments have a minimal vertical separa-
    tion between successive upper ends of immediately
    adjacent nesting telescoping segments; and
    a plurality of storage trays, wherein each storage tray is
    removably attached to a different telescoping segment
    so that when the telescoping handle is extended, the
    plurality of storage trays move with the telescoping seg-
    ments and vertically separate from each other, wherein
    the vertical height of the storage trays corresponds to the
    minimum vertical separation between the successive
    upper ends of the immediately adjacent nesting tele-
    scooping segments in the fully collapsed position.

11. The ornament storage device of claim 10, further com-
    prising an exterior case, wherein at least a portion of the
    exterior case is removable to provide access to the storage
    trays and to permit telescopic expansion of the telescoping
    handle and the storage trays.

12. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 10, wherein the
    telescoping handle and the plurality of storage trays tele-
    scope in a substantially linear and substantially vertical fash-
    ion.

13. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 10, wherein
    each of the plurality of storage trays comprises:
    a tray mounting bracket attached to at least one of the
    telescoping segments; and
    a tray support attached to the tray mounting bracket.
14. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of storage trays further comprises:
a wire tray; and
a compartmentalized cloth attached to the wire tray;
wherein the storage tray may be removed in that the wire
tray and the compartmentalized cloth rest on the tray
support and may be selectively lifted off of the tray
support.
15. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of storage trays further comprises a compartmentalized tray wherein the storage tray is removable in that the compartmentalized tray rests on the tray support and may be selectively lifted off of the tray support.
16. The ornament storage apparatus of claim 13, wherein the tray mounting bracket and the tray support are one integral piece.
17. An ornament storage system comprising:
a base;
a telescoping handle attached to the base comprising:
a grip; and
a plurality of telescoping segments at least partially slidingly nested within each other to provide a substantially-linear telescoping action to the telescoping handle; and
a plurality of storage trays removably connected to the telescoping handle, each storage tray comprising:
a tray mounting bracket attached to at least one of the telescoping segments so that when the telescoping handle is extended, each storage tray moves with a different telescoping segment, causing increased vertical separation between the storage trays;
a tray support attached to the tray mounting bracket; and
a compartmentalized tray resting on the tray support; and
an exterior case surrounding the telescoping handle and the plurality of storage trays when the telescoping handle and the storage trays are in a collapsed position, wherein at least a portion of the exterior case is removable to provide access to the storage trays and to permit telescopic expansion of the telescoping handle and the storage trays.
18. The ornament storage system of claim 17, wherein the compartmentalized tray comprises:
a wire tray; and
a compartmentalized cloth attached to the wire tray.
19. The ornament storage system of claim 17, wherein the storage trays are removable in that they may be lifted off of the tray support.
20. The ornament storage system of claim 17, wherein the plurality of telescoping segments comprise partially-nested tubular members.