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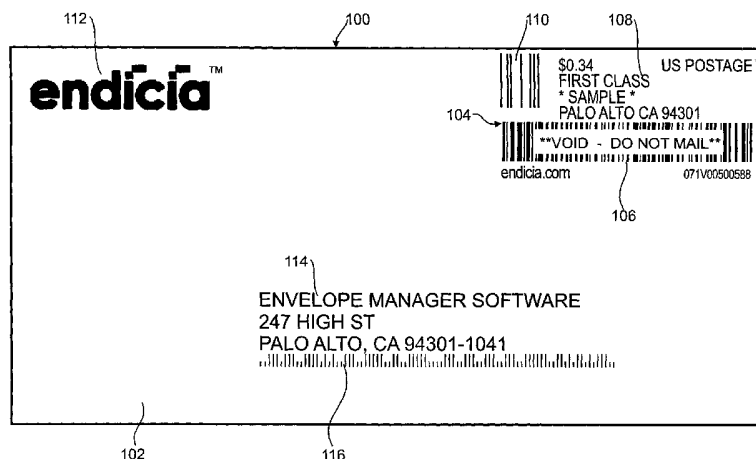
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(54) Title: SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR DETECTING POSTAGE FRAUD USING A UNIQUE MAIL PIECE INDICIUM, REDUCING THE SIZE OF POSTAGE INDICIA, AND REFUNDING POSTAGE



(57) Abstract: A method and system detects copy fraud by using a unique character string, e.g., a tracking ID that can be associated with a postage indicium and digitally signed to provide for a self-validating unique postage indicium. Once validated by the postal authority, the tracking ID within the unique postage indicium can be compared to the tracking ID's in all other postage indicia or to a standard tracking ID to ensure that tracking ID is indeed unique. Another improvement uses an indexing identifier (such as, e.g., a tracking ID, or a postage vendor ID, user account, and piece count) to decrease the size, or eliminate the use, of the postage indicium transmitted to an end user computer. An indexing identifier, rather than the postage indicium, is transmitted to the end user computer. Yet another improvement facilitates refunding unused postage. Information for a postage transaction, along with the tracking ID and delivery status, is stored. Unused postage exists when there is duplicative postage transactions or the mail piece was not delivered.

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Previous Correction:

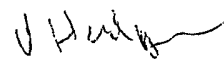
see PCT Gazette No. 19/2004 of 6 May 2004, Section II

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B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) U.S. : 705/62 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 6,005,945 (Whitehous et al) 21 December 1999 (21.12.1999), column 2, lines 43-52, column 6, lines 30-45, column 13, lines 40-60, column 14, line 66-column 15, line 17, column 26, lines 49-55	1-12 and 30-90
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
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