US 20040245128A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0245128 A1**

MacColl et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 9, 2004**

(54) **MEDIA STORAGE AND ORGANIZATION SYSTEM**

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(21) Appl. No.: **10/859,781**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 2, 2004**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/476,043, filed on Jun. 4, 2003.

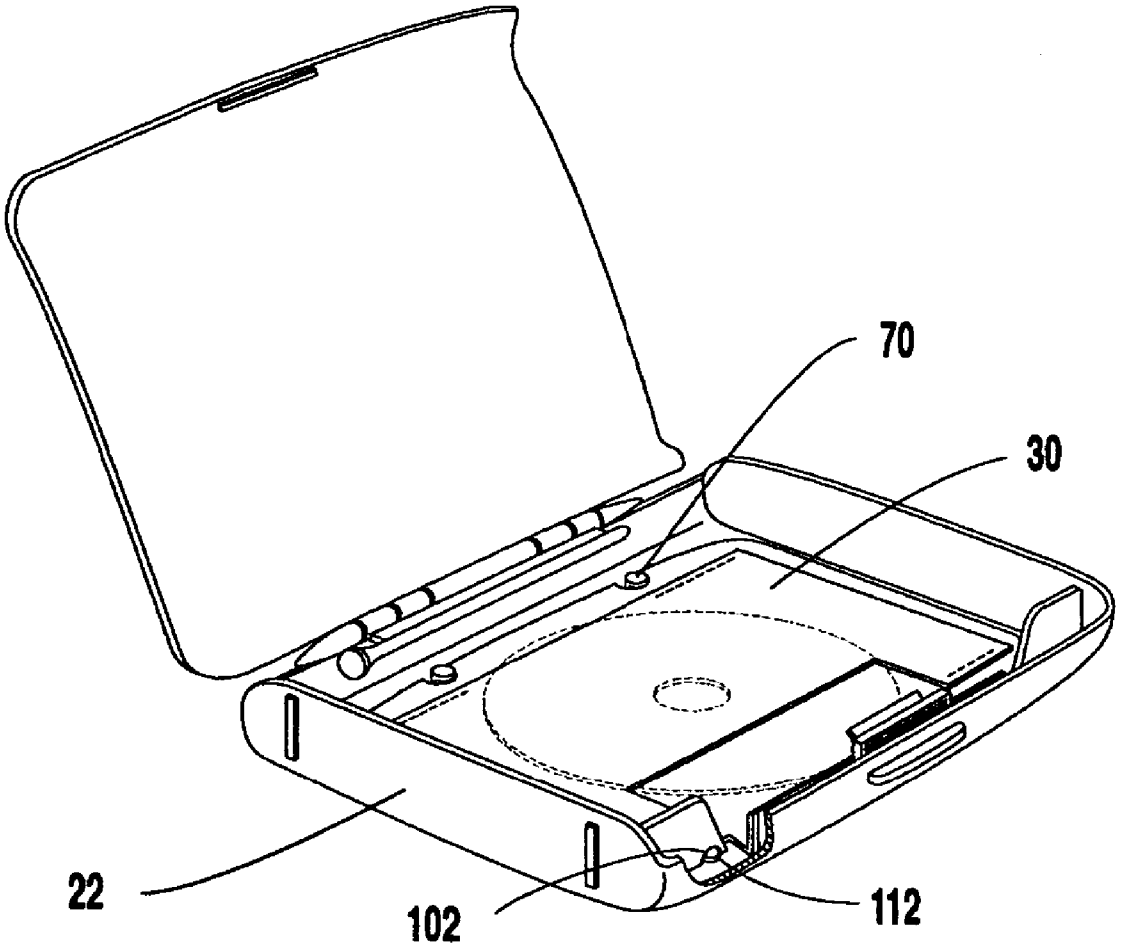
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B65D 69/00**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **206/232**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A media storage and organization system is comprised of a durable enclosure and a plurality of inserts for holding photographs, negatives, digital computer disks, memory cards, slides, business cards, a calendar, and the like. Inserts are attached to the enclosure by means of a mounting rail, which is integral to a hinge used for connecting a top and bottom covers that form said enclosure.



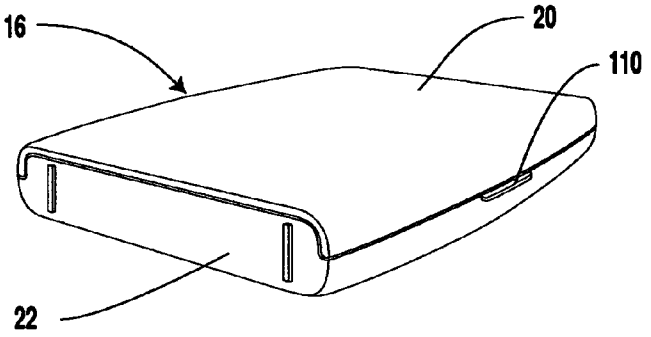


FIG. 1

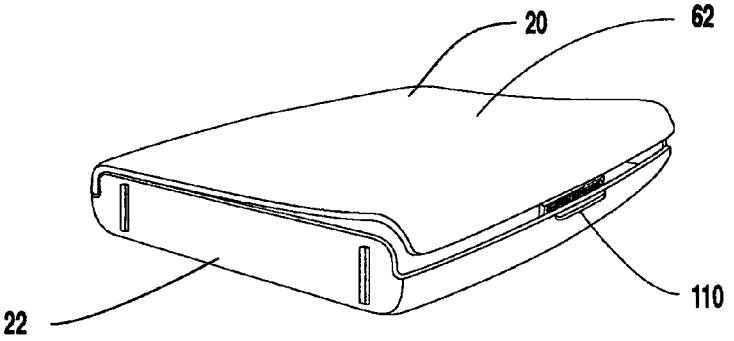


FIG. 2

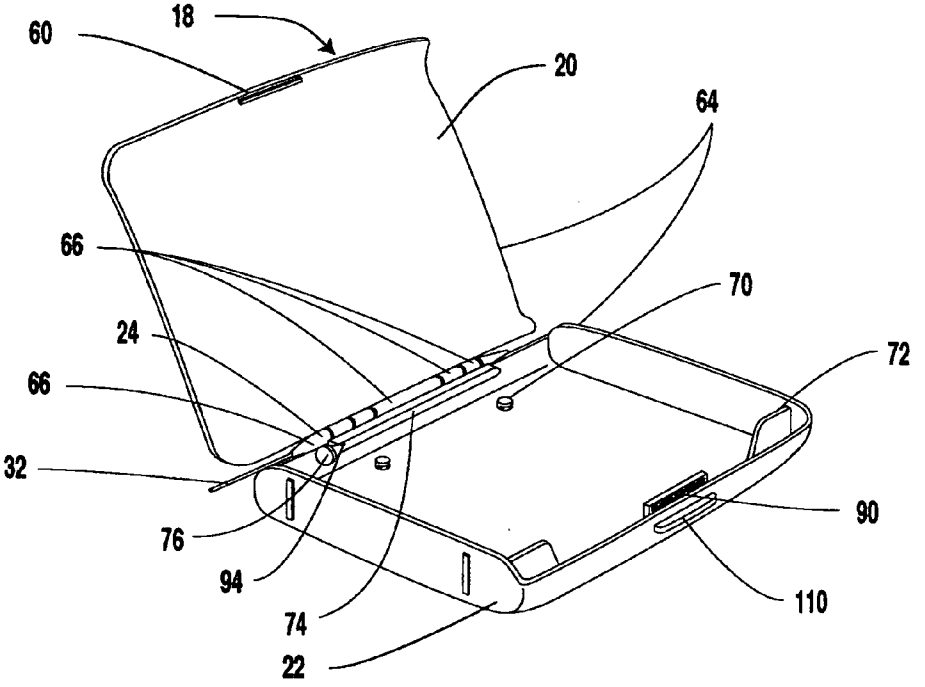


FIG. 3

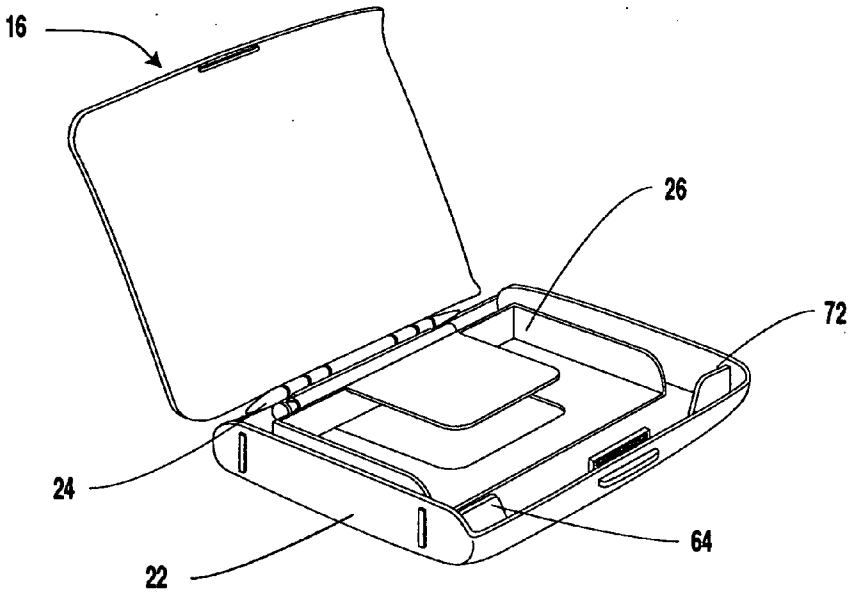


FIG. 4

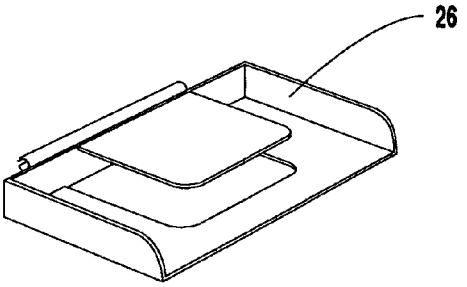


FIG. 5

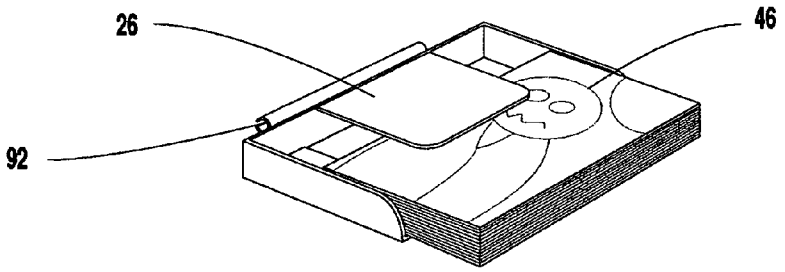


FIG. 6

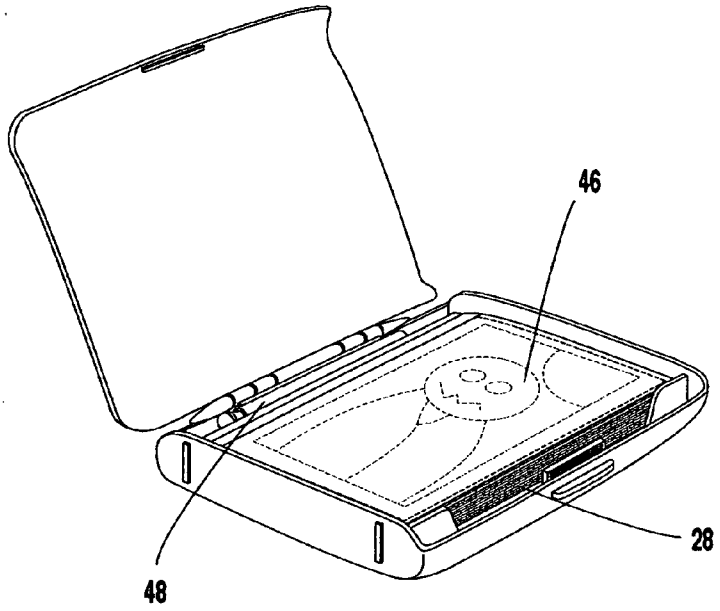


FIG. 7

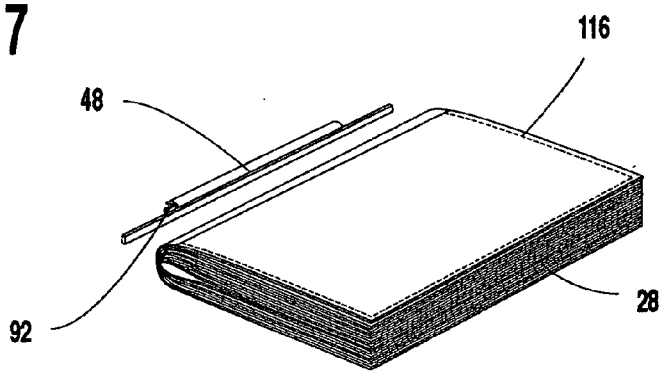


FIG. 8

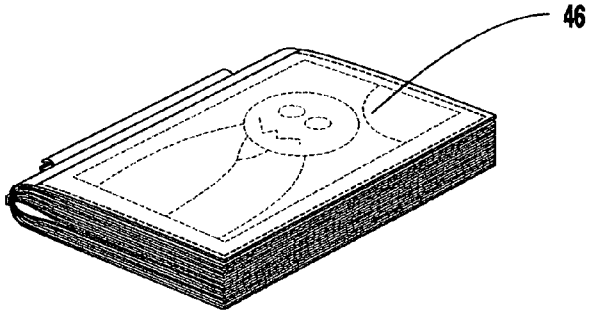


FIG. 9

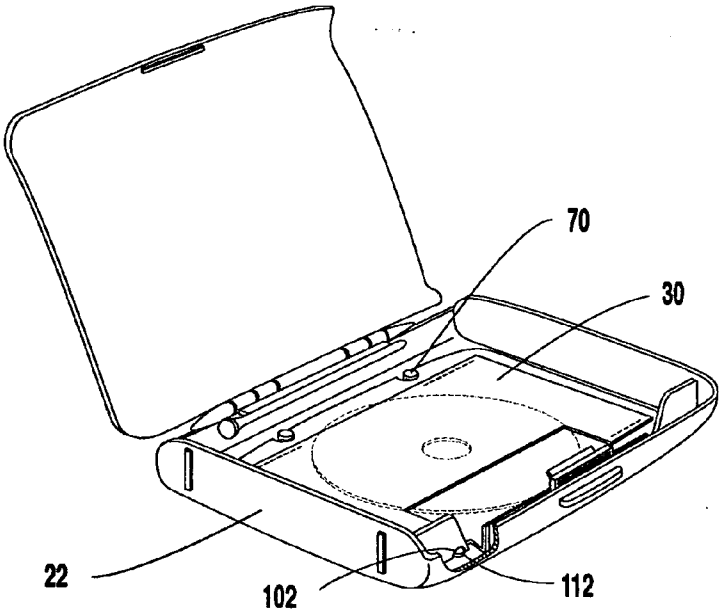


FIG. 10

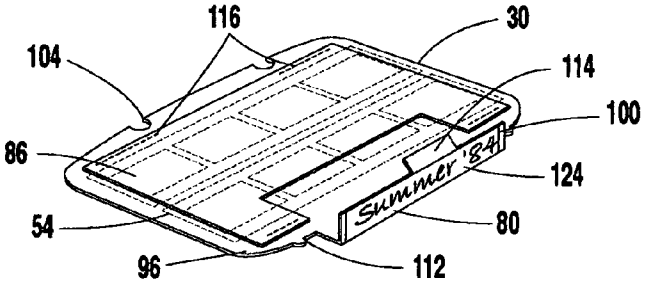


FIG. 11

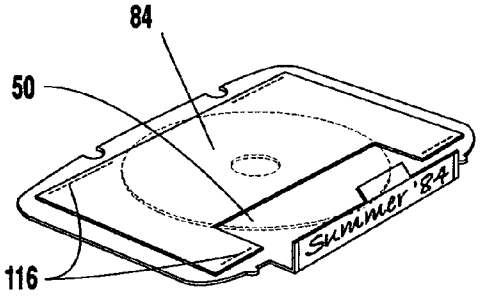


FIG. 12

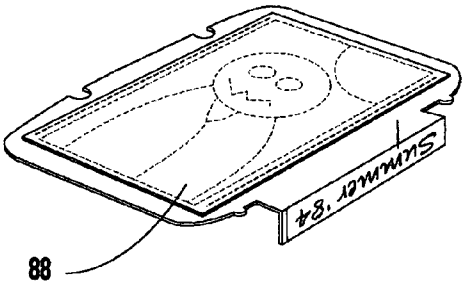


FIG. 13

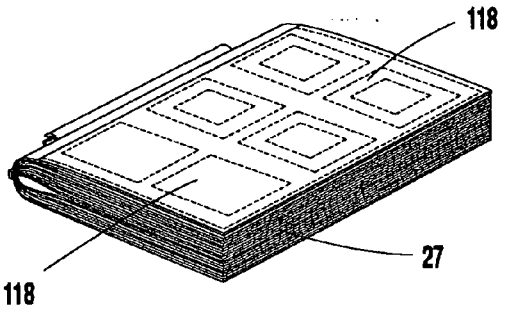


FIG. 14

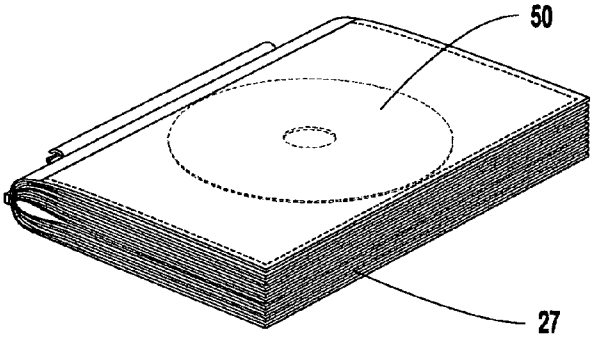


FIG. 15

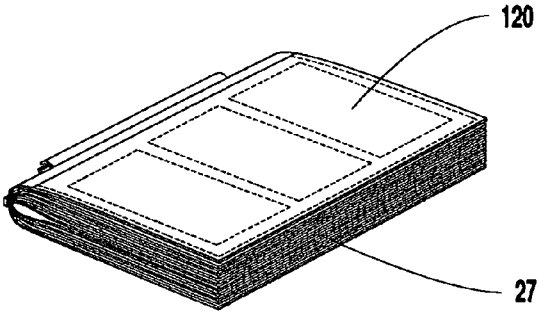


FIG. 16

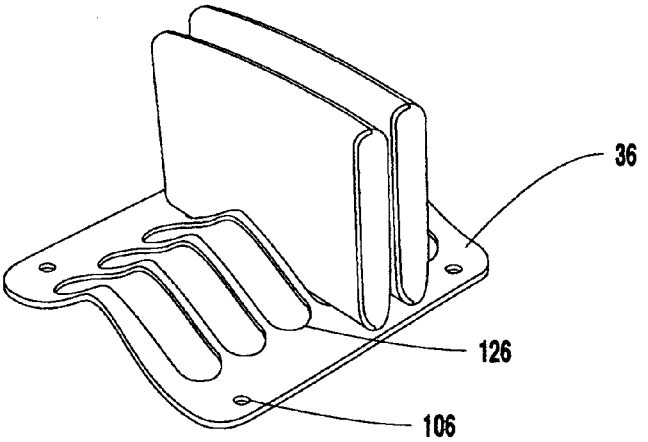


FIG. 17

MEDIA STORAGE AND ORGANIZATION SYSTEM

[0001] CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED CASES

[0002] This patent claims priority of PPA Serial Number: 60/476,043 filed Jun. 04, 2003

[0003] BACKGROUND

[0004] 1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention generally relates to storage and organization of media including photographs, negatives, compact disks, digital video disks, slides, memory cards, business cards, etc.

[0006] 2. DESCRIPTION OF PRIOR ART

[0007] Media, such as photographs, digital media disks, slides, memory cards, and business cards, are often marketed using packaging which organizes individual units. Users of such media need to organize and store multiple media within the same collection.

[0008] As an example, film-based photographs are generally developed and printed at a photo-processing vendor; or, in the case of a digital photography, by a consumer directly using a computer, a printer, and a compact disk burner. Photographs are stored and organized by a variety of existing systems; these include the vendor's packaging, photo albums, and photo boxes.

[0009] The most common method of storing photographs is using the vendor's packing. This generally consists of a paper or thin cardboard envelope in which the photographs, an index print, negatives, and a compact disk are stored. The envelope often has a label area on which to write information corresponding to the contents. This envelope, while common, does little to help consumers organize photographs and offers little protection from damage.

[0010] Photo albums are excellent for displaying images but often do not solve the problem of archiving negatives or compact disks. Photo boxes, similar in size and capacity to a shoe box, are appropriate for storing photographs but the ability to organize, label, and retrieve specific items is limited. Thus, while the topic of photo organization and storage has been addressed, no system has been created which offers a complete solution.

[0011] Furthermore, users of the other media mentioned above have similar needs for organization. They need a system of storage which accommodates a wide range of media and the flexibility to customize it for each of these media.

[0012] The French company Posso Systems makes a media storage system which organizes media using a series of uniform storage containers. The system, sold under he trademark Media Box Space Saver, has dividers that enable 23 single CD's, 11 double CD's in their plastic box, or 100 single CD's in a sleeve to be stored. The Media Box Space Saver system can be stacked and arranged in order to address media, audio, video and computing filing needs.

[0013] Advantus Corporation makes a Photo Organization System under the name KeepSafe® which uses polypropylene envelopes to store photographs and negatives. The KeepSafe® system also includes cases for storage of multiple envelopes. The Advantus system does not specify storage of a CD with the photographs and does not provide options for storing other media. The Advantus system does provide a label for the envelopes in the form of an adhesive-backed paper label.

[0014] CD Projects, a US company, makes a system which works on guided rails; users can organize and reorganize CDs between portable units, without ever removing them from their protective sleeves. While the system has flexibility, it does not provide inserts for storing other media.

[0015] Seifert et al. (US Pat. No. 5,725,098; issued Mar. 10, 1998) describe a similar system of media organization which uses a durable case to which several inserts can be attached. Seifert's system uses a two mounting blocks, located at each end of a seam created by two covers of an enclosure, for attaching and detaching inserts. However, Seifert's method of mounting creates potential binding and alignment problems.

[0016] Kim et al. (US Pat. No. 6,239,968; issued May 29, 2001) disclose a case specifically for an electronic organizer using a mounting rail. The mounting rail is attached to the hinge which holds together two covers for protecting the organizer. The case is limited to storing only an electronic organizer and does not store any other items.

[0017] Users need for a system of organizing media which gives them the ability to both organize and to have flexibility within the organizational system. Again using the example of photography, users have no system which (a) stores photographs, negatives, a compact disk, and an index print in a single archived location, (b) combines negatives, a compact disk, and an index print in a single labeled container, (c) reorganizes photographs and media cards within a variety of storage options, and (d) offers the flexibility to use elements of the system to store other types of media like disks, slides, memory cards, and business cards.

OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

[0018] Accordingly, several advantages of the present invention are:

[0019] (a) to provide an improved media storage system,

[0020] (b) to provide a system which can store photographs, negatives, compact disks, digital video disks, slides, memory cards, and business cards in an organized manner in an enclosure;

[0021] (c) to provide a system which can store additional supplemental items to media, for example, photographic negatives, index prints, labels, and compact disks) within an enclosure;

[0022] (d) to provide a system which can customize inserts and allows different media to be stored in different methods within an enclosure;

[0023] (e) to provide a system which can retain within, or without, a label visible from the exterior of an enclosure;

[0024] (f) to provide storage racks and other storage methods for multiple enclosures.

[0025] Further advantages of the invention will become apparent from a consideration of the drawings and ensuing description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0026] **FIG. 1** is an isometric view of a media storage case according to the invention in a closed position.

[0027] **FIG. 2** is an isometric view of the case in a latch-release position.

[0028] **FIG. 3** is an isometric assembly view of the case in an open position with an axle shown partially inserted into the hinge.

[0029] **FIG. 4** is an isometric view of the case in the open position with a tray insert.

[0030] **FIG. 5** is an isometric view of the tray insert.

[0031] **FIG. 6** is an isometric view of the tray insert with photographs inserted.

[0032] **FIG. 7** is an isometric view of the case in the open position with an album pages insert.

[0033] **FIG. 8** is an isometric exploded view of the album pages insert.

[0034] **FIG. 9** is an isometric assembly view of the album pages insert.

[0035] **FIG. 10** is an isometric view of the case in the open position with a media card inserted.

[0036] **FIG. 11** is an isometric view of the media card showing the top with negatives inserted.

[0037] **FIG. 12** is an isometric view of the media card showing the top with digital media disk inserted.

[0038] **FIG. 13** is an isometric view of the media card showing the bottom with an index print pocket.

[0039] **FIG. 14** is an isometric assembly view of a slide storage insert.

[0040] **FIG. 15** is an isometric assembly view of a digital media disk storage insert.

[0041] **FIG. 16** is an isometric assembly view of a business card storage insert.

[0042] **FIG. 17** is an isometric view of a storage rack with an enclosure inserted.

REFERENCE NUMERALS

16	Enclosure	18	Case
20	Top	22	Bottom
24	Hinge	26	Tray
27	Album	28	Pages
30	Media Card	32	Axle
36	Storage Rack	46	Photographs
48	Binder	50	Digital Media Disk
52	Index Print	54	Negatives
60	Top Latch	62	Curved Surface
66	Hinge knuckle	70	Attachment Base
72	Retention Rib	74	Mounting Rail
76	Mounting Rail Base	80	Label
84	Digital Media Disk Pocket	86	Negative Pocket
88	Index Print Pocket	90	Bottom Latch
92	C-channel	94	Detent
96	Rigid Card	100	Protrusion
102	Attachment Top	104	Notch
106	Hole	110	Release Button
112	Tab	114	Handle

-continued

REFERENCE NUMERALS

116	Weld	118	Slides
120	Business Card	122	Memory Card
124	Label Pocket	126	Slot

SUMMARY

[0043] In accordance with the present invention a storage and organization system comprises an enclosure that incorporates various inserts for media such as photographs, digital computer disks, negatives, slides, business cards, and the like as well as storage racks for organizing multiple enclosures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0044] Overview—**FIGS. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16,** and **17**

[0045] A typical embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in **FIGS. 3, 4,** and **7,** which show an oenclosure **16** used for holding and organizing media including but not limited to photographs as shown in the present embodiment. An enclosure **16** generally refers to the assembly of a case **18,** a media card **30,** and one of either a tray **26** or an album **27**. Case **18** is an assembly of a top **20,** a bottom **22,** a hinge **24,** and an axle **32**. Case **18** is removably attached to either tray **26** or album **27**. Album **27** is configured to store a variety of media including but not limited to individual or a combination of photographs **26,** negatives **54,** digital media disks **50,** slides **118,** or business cards **120**. Media card **30** is removably attached to case **18**; in the present embodiment it is attached to bottom **22**. Media card **30** includes a label **80,** a digital media disk pocket **84,** a negative pocket **86,** and an index card pocket **88**.

[0046] Tray **26** is constructed such that it retains multiple individual card-type media, including photographs **46** and is generally attached to case **18** by means of hinge **24** as shown in **FIG. 6**. Album **27** is constructed of pages **28** attached to a binder **48,** which generally attaches to case **18** by means of hinge **24** as shown in **FIG. 8**.

[0047] Multiple enclosures **16** can be organized by means of a storage rack **36** as shown in **FIG. 17**.

[0048] Case—FIGS. **1** to **4**

[0049] Referring to **FIG. 3,** case **18** is assembled of top **20,** bottom **22,** and hinge **24,** attached to each other by axle **32**. Axle **32** passes through hinge knuckles **66** on each of the assembled components. The current embodiment indicates two hinge knuckles **66** on top **20,** two hinge knuckles **66** on bottom **22,** and three hinge knuckles **66** on hinge **24** such that top **20** and bottom **22** can open at least 180 degrees.

[0050] Top **20** is generally constructed from injection molded plastic material and forms a cavity when joined by means of hinge **24** and axle **32** to bottom **22**. In **FIG. 3,** top **20** and bottom **22** are secured in the closed configuration with a top latch **60** and a bottom latch **90** which overlap and interfere as they rotate on axle **32**. The overlapping interference is constructed of a female cavity on either the top latch **60** or the bottom latch **90,** and a male protrusion, small

enough to fit within the female cavity, on the corresponding other part. Case **18** is opened by pressing on one of the parts, which can include a release button **110**, such that the material deflects and removes the interference from between the two parts, thus allowing the enclosure to open.

[**0051**] Referring to **FIG. 2**, top **20** and bottom **22** are constructed with a curved surface **62**, which creates a positively loaded bias towards the opening of the latch between top **20** and bottom **22**. When the overlapping interference is removed as indicated above, the bias of curved surface **62** opens the case partially. The current embodiment allows a user to open case **18** by using only one hand by pressing on release button **110**.

[**0052**] Referring to **FIGS. 4 and 6**, bottom **22** has a retention rib **72** which acts to prevent photographs **46** from sliding out of tray **26** when enclosure **16** is closed. Retention rib **72** is distant from the axis of hinge **24** such that enclosure **16** closes properly when either tray **26** is filled with photographs **46** or album **27** is contained with case **18**.

[**0053**] Tray and Album—FIGS. **3** to **9**. **14** to **16**

[**0054**] Tray **26** is an enclosure for storing photographs **46** and is removably attached to case **18**. In **FIG. 6**, tray **26** stores photographs **46** in a stack by providing a rectangular enclosure with five closed sides and a sixth open side for access. Also referring to **FIG. 4**, when tray **26** with photographs **46** is captured within case **18**, the sixth side of the rectangular enclosure is formed by retention ribs **72** on bottom **22**. The retention rib **72** extends from the bottom **22** such that it is proximate to top **20** when case **18** is closed. Thus, tray **26** in combination with case **18** form an enclosure which secures photographs **46** and prevents them from sliding out of tray **26**. The enclosure stores single or multiple photographs **46**. Tray **26** is constructed to allow for simplification in the molding process—specifically no additional core is needed to form the cavity for holding photographs **46**. Other alternatives also exist for creating such a cavity.

[**0055**] The size of tray **26** is determined by photographic media commonly available. The current embodiment envisions an oversized cavity of 100 mm by 150 mm. The number of photographs **46** can vary as well and the current embodiment can have a maximum cavity thickness equal to the stacking of approximately **52** photographs.

[**0056**] Tray **26** is removably attached to the case **18** by hinge **24**. In FIG, **6**, tray **26** integrates a C-channel **92**, a tube with a longitudinal section less that 180 degrees removed. One end of C-channel **92** is closed and the other end open. Hinge **24** has a mounting rail **74** whose outer diameter roughly corresponds to the inner diameter of C-channel **92** and, at one end, a mounting rail base **76**. C-channel **92** slides over mounting rail **74**, shown in **FIG. 3**, as the primary means of removably attaching the parts together. Mounting rail **74** is attached to hinge **24** such that it does not interfere with C-channel **92** sliding over mounting rail **74**. As shown in **FIG. 3** and **6**, it is possible to hinder the accidental detachment of C-channel **92** from mounting rail **74** by means of a detent **94** or other suitable method of providing frictional interference between the parts. Album **27** constructed of pages **28** and binder **48**. In **FIG. 8**, pages **28** are generally constructed as multiple pages, each pocket sized for the storage and viewing of an individual photograph in the current embodiment. Each pocket is sealed on three sides with an opening for inserting the photograph. The individual pages are attached together to form a book bound in the center and an individual page can be turned to view an individual photograph. Album **27** preferably has a sandwich construction and is die-cut for providing pockets and binding the book. A variety of manufacturing techniques exist for accomplishing this, the most common being sheet plastic material which is heat or ultrasonically welded together at a weld **116** and die-cut to the appropriate size.

[**0057**] Again in **FIG. 8**, one or more pages **28** are attached to binder **48** as an assembly by established manufacturing methods, in the current embodiment by means of ultrasonic welding or heat staking. Binder **48** has C-channel **92** similar to tray **26**.

[**0058**] Referring to **FIGS. 4 and 7**, enclosure **16** can be made of case **18** coupled with either tray **26** or album **27**. As enclosure **16** will use the same manufactured case **18**, the dimensions and specifications of tray **26** and album **27** are necessarily co-dependent, specifically the maximum size dimensions, the attachment method to hinge **24**, and the placement of retention ribs **72**. As shown in **FIGS. 14, 15**, and **16**, album **27** can be manufactured in other embodiments to hold negatives **54**, digital media disks **50**, slides **118**, memory cards **122**, or business cards **120**.

[**0059**] Media Card—**FIGS. 10-13**

[**0060**] Referring to **FIGS. 11 and 13**, media card **30** incorporates a label **80**, a digital media disk pocket **84**, a negative pocket **86**, and an index card pocket **88**. Media card **30** has a sandwich construction commonly used in manufacturing. At the center of the construction is a rigid card **96** which can be constructed of sheet plastic or paper material. The outer planes of the sandwich construction are negative pocket **86** and index print pocket **88**, depicted as one on top and one on the bottom. Pockets can be formed by sealing on two or three sides or by means of single points at necessary locations to secure media. Media card **30** is constructed using thermoform plastics and heat or ultrasonic welding techniques combined with die-cutting. Pockets can be formed alternatively in a variety of combinations on the top and/or bottom surface of media card **30**. Pockets can also be combined to contain more than one article or medium.

[**0061**] Referring to **FIG. 11**, label **80** is constructed of a material upon which common marking media can write, generally paper in the current embodiment. There are a variety of ways that label **80** can be attached to media card **30**. A label pocket **124** is open on one or two sides into which a paper card can be removably inserted. Rigid card **96** includes a protrusion **100** which acts to guide the placement of label **80**, specifically when media card **30** is inserted into case **18**. Protrusion **100** enables label pocket **124** to bend such that it is coplanar with the corresponding side wall of either top **20** or bottom **22**. By orienting label **80** coplanar to the side wall, label **80** can more easily be read from the exterior of case **18**. Alternatively, protrusion **100** can be manufactured of a material that can be marked with common media to make label **80** visible from the exterior of case **18**.

[**0062**] Media card **30** (**FIG. 10**) integrates several features for securing it to case **18**. An attachment base **70** and an attachment top **102** are included for this purpose. Media card **30** can be attached to either top **20** or bottom **22**, the current configuration showing it on bottom **22**. Media card **30** has a

notch **104** which corresponds in size to attachment base **70** and a tab **112** which corresponds in size to attachment top **102**. With media card **30** coplanar and in contact with bottom **22**, notch **104** is inserted into attachment base **70**. Tab **112** is then inserted into attachment top **102** to create an interference fit. By such a method of insertion, media card **30** is captured by bottom **22** at attachment base **70** and attachment top **102**. Media card **30** is removed from bottom **22** by a handle **114** which, when pulled vertically, removes tab **112** from attachment top **102** and, subsequently, notch **104** from attachment base **70**.

[**0063**] Storage Rack System—**FIG. 17**

[**0064**] Multiple enclosures **16** can be organized using a variety of storage systems. **FIG. 17** shows multiple enclosures **16** stored in a storage rack **36**. Enclosure **16** is oriented in storage rack **36** such that label **80** is oriented outwards. Enclosure **16** attaches to storage rack **36** by means of simple placement in a slot **126**, and held in place by friction. Storage rack **36** can be used on a flat planar surface like a table or the bottom of a drawer, or can be attached to a vertical surface by means of a screw at a hole **106**.

[**0065**] Alternative Embodiments

[**0066**] Alternatively, the system described above can use inserts, similar to tray **26** or album **27**, modified to store specific media.

[**0067**] Case **18** can be realized in a variety of ways using alternative materials, opening and closing mechanisms, and form factors. Using specific injection-molding techniques, an alternative embodiment combines top **20** and bottom **22** into the same part using what is commonly referred to as a live hinge or film-joint hinge. Additionally, again with injection-molding techniques, any combination of two or more of hinge **24**, top **20**, and bottom **22** can be integrated into the same part and act substantially as case **18**.

[**0068**] Tray **26**, album **27**, or any alternative embodiments can also be permanently attached to one of the top **20**, bottom **22**, or hinge **24**.

[**0069**] Given the sensitivity of photographic materials, the system can be made using more expensive archival materials.

Operation

[**0070**] Enclosure **16** (**FIG. 4**) is opened and one or more photographs **46** are inserted as a stack into tray **26** in one configuration and individually in pages **28** in album **27** (**FIG. 7**). Photographic negatives **54** or digital media disk **50**, used for backing-up digital photographs, are stored by removing media card **30** (**FIG. 10**) from bottom **22** and sliding them into negative pocket **86** (**FIG. 11**) or digital media disk pocket **84** (**FIG. 12**), respectively. Label **80** (**FIG. 11**) is removed from label pocket **124**, written upon to identify the contents of enclosure **16**, and replaced in label pocket **124**. Index print pocket **88** (**FIG. 13**), open at one or more ends, can receive a photograph or an index print. Once populated, media card **30** is placed back in bottom **22** as described above.

[**0071**] Multiple enclosures **16** (**FIG. 17**) can be stored vertically or horizontally on a surface or using storage rack **36** to organize them in a drawer, on a table, or on a vertical surface like a wall. Inserts like tray **26** or album **27** can be removed and used with other parts of a future further-expanded system of organization.

Conclusions, Ramifications, and Scope

[**0072**] It has been shown that enclosure **16** is an improved system for storing and organizing a plurality of media including photographic material, digital media disks, and business cards. By creating a case **18** to which different inserts can be attached including media card **30**, tray **26**, and album **27**, which can be fabricated to store a plurality of media, a user can store multiple diverse items in a single flexible system. Additionally, a manufacturer need not create high investment tooling for case **18** for each new media being stored; rather, the manufacturer need only create new inserts to accommodate the storage of new media.

[**0073**] The system can store additional items supplemental to media (for example, for photographs it would be negatives, an index print, a label, and a compact disk) within enclosure **16**. Enclosure **16** can be further stored in storage rack **36** to add additional functionality to the system.

[**0074**] Although the description above contains many specificities, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments of this invention. While certain exemplary embodiments have been described above and shown in the accompanying drawings, such embodiments are merely illustrative of and are not restrictive to the broad invention, and that this invention not be limited to the specific constructions and arrangements shown and described, since various other modifications may occur to those ordinarily skilled in the art. For example, enclosure **16** might be manufactured as a single piece using a live hinge; a mechanical clip might be used to secure tray **26** or album **27** to hinge **24**; tray **26** or album **27** might be permanently attached to enclosure **16** while still retaining the manufacturing flexibility of the storage system; etc.

[**0075**] Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.

1. A storage system comprising

an enclosure comprising a plurality of sides, one of said sides being openable, so as to provide access to the interior of said enclosure, and closeable, so as to prevent access to said interior,

a mechanism for attaching at least one insert within said enclosure,

one or more inserts, each for holding at least one medium selected from the group consisting of

a label,

an index print,

a photograph,

a digital computer disk,

a photographic negative,

a photographic slide,

a business card,

a memory card for a digital recording device,

a one tape-based storage medium, and

a sheet of paper.

2. The storage system of claim 1 wherein said insert is detachably attached to said enclosure.

3. The storage system in claim 1 wherein said enclosure has a label visible from the exterior.

4. The storage system in claim 1 further including a latch mechanism for holding said one of said sides closed, said one of said sides being biased to open when said latch mechanism is released.

5. The storage system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said mechanism is a mounting rail configured to allow said insert to be removably mounted to said mounting rail.

6. The storage system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said one side of said enclosure consists of a top cover and wherein said enclosure has a bottom cover and a hinge connecting said top and bottom covers.

7. The storage system as set forth in claim 8, wherein said hinge and at least one of said inserts are integral.

8. The storage system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said insert is attached to said enclosure by multiple attachment points.

9. The storage system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said enclosure is substantially constructed of material which inhibits the transmission of ultraviolet light to the interior.

10. A protective enclosure for use with inserts for media, comprising

a top cover,

a bottom cover,

a hinge operatively coupling said top cover to said bottom cover for allowing said top cover and said bottom cover to pivot about each other along an edge axis for opening and closing said protective enclosure,

a mounting rail coupled to said hinge for mounting inserts within said enclosure, and

at least one of said inserts for holding media said insert being attached to said mounting rail.

11. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said media is selected from the group consisting of photographs, digital computer disks, photographic negatives, photographic slides, business cards, memory cards for a digital recording device, a calendar, and tape-based storage media.

12. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said protective enclosure has a label visible from the exterior.

13. The storage system in claim 1 further including a latch mechanism for holding said one of said sides closed, said one of said sides being biased to open when said latch mechanism is released.

14. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said mounting rail is configured to allow said insert to be removably mounted to said mounting rail.

15. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said mounting rail is shorter than said hinge, and operable within an area as defined by said top cover and said bottom cover when in a closed configuration.

16. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said mounting rail is an elongated generally cylindrical body situated a predetermined distance from said hinge axis, said mounting rail being pivotable about said hinge axis and limited only by an area defined by said top and bottom cover assemblies.

17. The protective enclosure of claim 10, wherein said hinge further comprises a hinge pin, said hinge pin being inserted into hinge knuckles of said top cover, said bottom cover, and said mounting rail to operatively allow said top cover, said bottom cover, and said mounting rail to pivot about an axis defined by said hinge pin.

18. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said hinge and said insert are integral.

19. The protective enclosure of claim 10 wherein said top and bottom covers are made from material which inhibits the transmission of ultraviolet light to the interior of said protective enclosure.

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