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(54) **Mail handling apparatus**

(57) Mail handling apparatus has a secure container (10) to receive mail items to be handled by a postal authority or other carrier. The apparatus includes means (17) to receive payment for a mail item. Prior to inserting the mail item, the user is required to pay the required postage charge and to enter on a keyboard (15) the destination town and destination post code of the mail item. A controller (18) checks the post code against the town to ensure that the information input by the user is correct. Provided the input information is verified and payment is received, the controller permits entry of the mail item into the container (10).

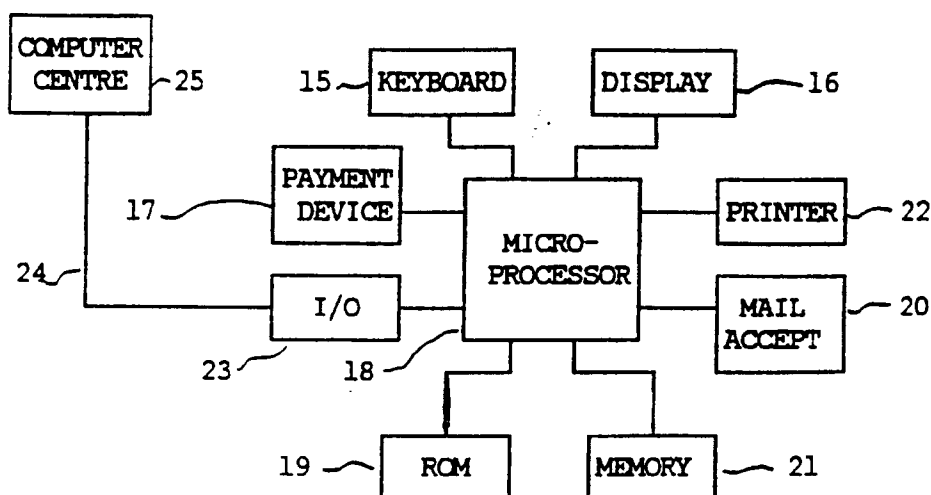


FIGURE 2

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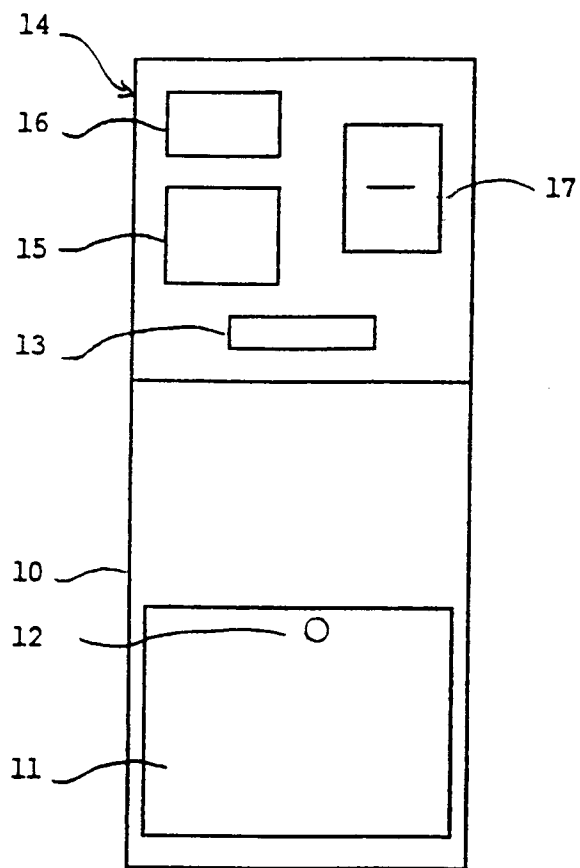


FIGURE 1