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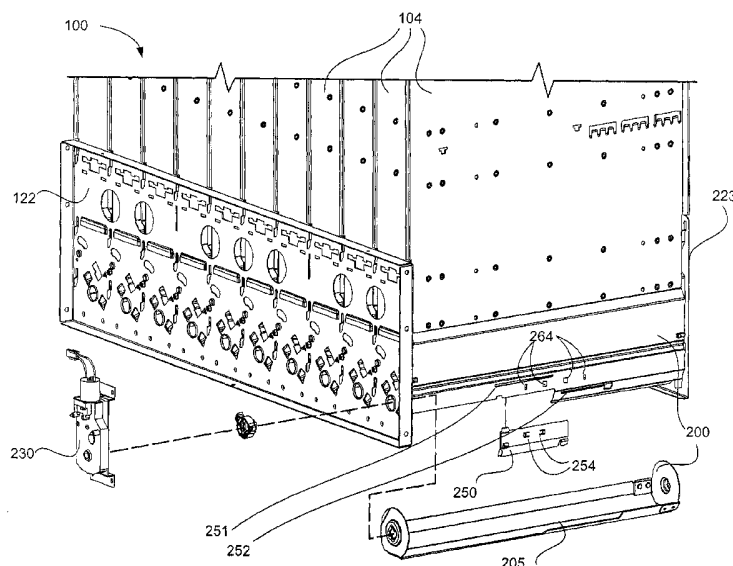
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(54) Title: RETRACTABLE GAUGE STEP FOR FLEXIBLE MULTI-DEPTH VENDING



(57) Abstract: The disclosed invention is a dispensing apparatus and method for dispensing product (108) from a vending machine (100). In the present invention, the gauging portion (264) of a product dispensing mechanism (205,230) in a vending machine (100) can be easily configured to accommodate the depth and number of products being dispensed without adding or removing parts, as required by existing product dispensing mechanisms. The present invention provides a sliding gauge step that can be easily extended or retracted to create or eliminate a product gauge step. Thus, the present invention avoids the use of removable parts, which are required in existing vending machines, to configure product dispensing assemblies to vend an array of products.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US03/024897

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : B65H 31/20; G07F 11/16
 US CL : 221/242

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 U.S. : 221/242, 241; 21159.2,59.4; 312/35

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)
 PLUS DB, East: USPAT, Derwent, EPO, JPO; EIC:Dialog

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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X	US 4986615 A (HIEB et al) 22 January 1991, fig 4-6, column 6-9.	1-22
X	US 5529207 A (ODEN et al) 25 June 1996, fig 2-8, column 4-5.	1-22
X	US 6302293 A (WITTERN, Jr. et al) 16 October 2001, Fig. 1-13, column 4-7.	1-22
X,P	US 6513887 A (PACZKOSKI et al) 4 February 2003, fig. 2-10 X,P column 4	1-22
X	US 3684131 A (KURIMSKY) 15 August 1972, fig. 1-3, column 3.	1-22
X	US 4209111 A (LOTSPEICH et al) 24 June 1980, Fig 2-3 column 4-5.	1-5, 11-22

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C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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Y	fig 27	6-10
X	US 3674175 A JAQUISH 4 July 1972, Fig. 2-6.	1-7, 11-22
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