



(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2000/02/01

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2001/08/01

(51) Cl.Int.⁷/Int.Cl.⁷ B41L 47/00, B41L 47/58

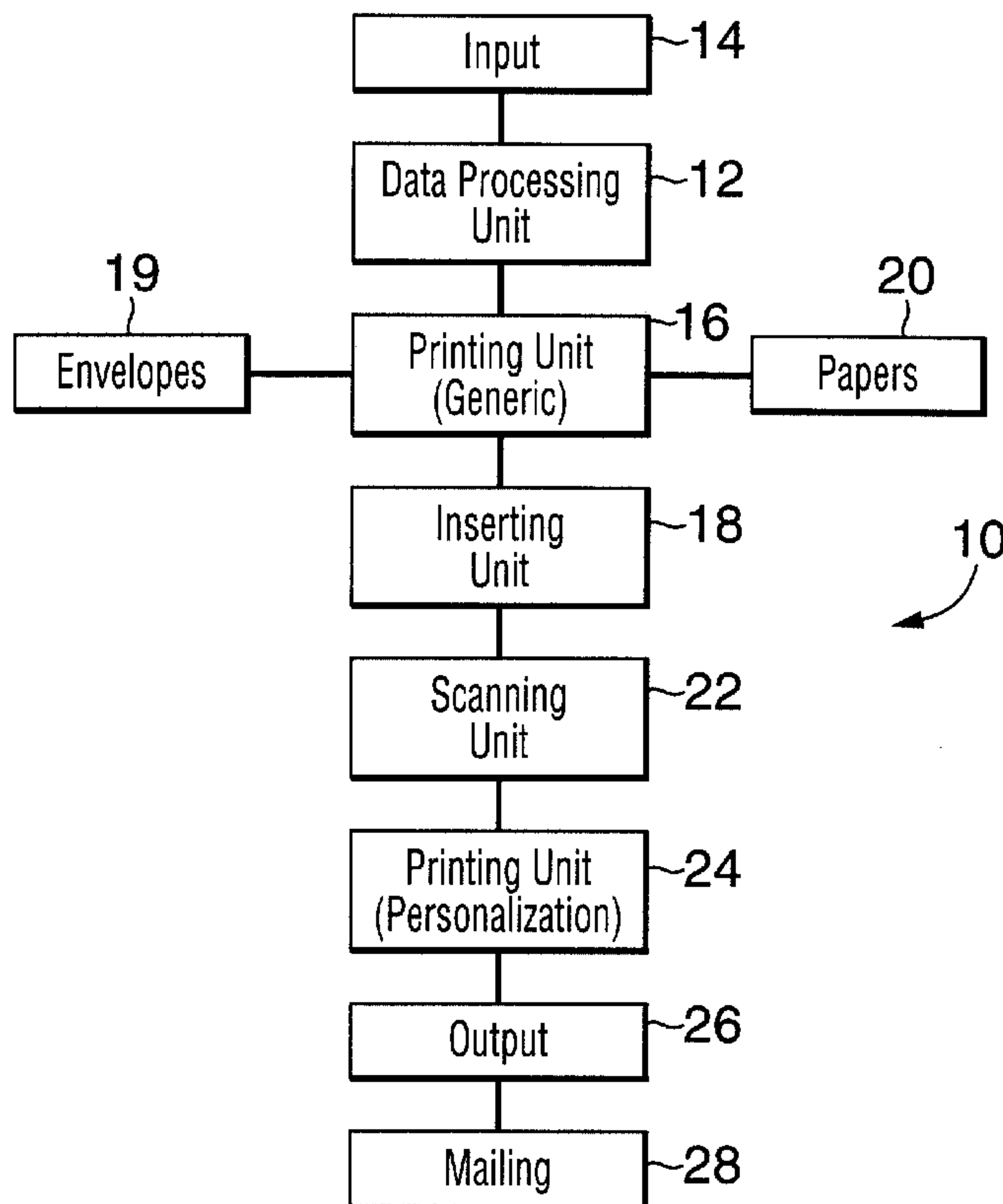
(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
INNOVATIVE GRAPHICS INC., CA

(72) Inventeur/Inventor:
ENGEL, DAVID, CA

(74) Agent: MOFFAT & CO.

(54) Titre : SYSTEME ET TECHNIQUE DE PERSONNALISATION DE COURRIER IMPRIME

(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PERSONALIZING PRINTED MAILER



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A system and method for the preparation of items to be mailed, preparation of each item varying in accordance with selected values of pre-determined parameters. The system employs a code provided for coordinating the printing of a personalized message prior to shipping.

ABSTRACT

5 A system and method for the preparation of items to be mailed, preparation of each item varying in accordance with selected values of pre-determined parameters. The system employs a code provided for coordinating the printing of a personalized message prior to shipping.

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PERSONALIZING A PRINTED MAILER

5 The present invention relates generally to a system for coordinating the shipping of printed materials, and more particularly to the field of personalizing printed materials for targeting specific recipients of the printed materials.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 It is well known that numerous businesses are required or desire from time to time to send letters to an addressee. Often, the message required to be sent is defined as being of a generalized nature, such as bills, coupons or other promotional materials.

15 Recently, it has become desirable to add messages of a more personalized nature to the materials being sent out. It can be appreciated that the addition of a message of a more personalized nature once the automatic processing of the printed materials to be sent out is done can be difficult.

20 Direct mail advertising being already as expensive as it is, it is therefore a natural measure from an economic stand point that more than one goal be achieved at once. This can be realized by turning personally to the addressee in the hope of converting just another envelope or mailer into a mean of advertisement.

25 The printing industry has also recognized the need for flexibility in producing different versions of the same product to be mailed to different users and the added value of printing personalized messages i.e. directed to a specific consumer or group of consumers.

Furthermore, existing publication personalization systems are costly and time consuming to operate.

It is clear that there exists a need for a new and improved system and method which obviates the foregoing problems and limitations, and which is relatively inexpensive and simple in construction and operation.

5 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the above shortcomings.

10 Briefly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a system and method that obviates and mitigates from the disadvantages of the prior art.

15 It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method for personalizing a mailer comprising the steps of: assigning pre-determined parameters to a plurality of addressees; preparing a plurality of outgoing carrier envelopes; scanning for encoded messages; and printing a personalized message on said carrier envelopes.

20 In accordance with a further object of the present invention there is provided a method for personalizing a mailer comprising the steps of: assigning pre-determined parameters to a plurality of addressees, comprising the sub-steps of creating an address database and coding message information; preparing a plurality of outgoing carrier envelopes, comprising the sub-steps of addressing said carrier envelopes, inserting materials into said carrier envelopes, printing a code and collating said carrier envelope; scanning for encoded messages; and printing a personalized message on said carrier envelopes.

25 In accordance with yet another object of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for personalizing a mailer, comprising: data processing means; printing means; inserting means; and scanning means; whereby an envelope is addressed and filled with items to be mailed before proceeding to scanning of a code containing information pertaining to a personalized message to be printed onto said envelope.

In accordance with still yet another object of the present invention there is provided a personalized messaging device, the device comprising: a carrier envelope; and a printed message onto said carrier envelope.

5 Further objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description, wherein preferred embodiments of the invention are clearly shown.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 The present invention will be further understood from the following description with reference to the drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a flow chart illustrating a sequence of steps for personalizing a mailer in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention; and

15 Figure 2 is an illustration of a final printed mailer produced by the system and method of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

20 Referring to Figures 1 and 2, there is generally shown a system 10 for the preparation of items to be mailed according to pre-determined parameters. The system 10 employs a bar code for coordinating the printing of a personalized message prior to shipping.

25 A main control, including a data processing unit 12, is preferably located at a point remote from the printing and inserting lines and may be in an environmentally controlled room thereby ensuring that the most sensitive equipment is not exposed to the dusty environment of the printing and inserting lines.

The system 10 includes a digital processor 12, such as a computer or other device, for manipulating the input digital information 14. The processor 12 is coupled via a communications link to a printing unit 16 line wherein a generic message and/or the address of the recipient of the mailer is printed out in the correct position.

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In order to ensure more efficient and faster production volumes, a preferred embodiment of the present invention would then take the now addressed envelopes 19 and materials 20 to the inserting unit 18 for conventional preparation of the mailer 32. The mailer 32 would then proceed to the scanning unit 22 wherein a bar code, or other reading coded information means, would be scanned, which code may have been imprinted already at the printing stage 16, or possibly earlier on, pursuant to the information passed on from the digital processing unit 12, for information to be used in creating a personal message to be printed onto the back, or any other part, of an envelope 30 providing sufficient space is available, by printing unit 24.

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In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the scanning unit 22 may be positioned prior to the printing unit 16, or totally foregone in the case of the entire information coming directly from the data processing unit 12 in the first place, thereby considering the personal message information as well as the rest of the addressee's information in one step. The result of this might be a slower processing line as a whole since not all of the mailers 32 might be provided with a personal message.

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Once the necessary personalized message has been applied to the envelope 30, the resulting mailer 32 at output 26 with its items incorporated is ready for mailing 28.

Several preparatory procedures are required before performing a production run. First, the addressees' information must be entered into the system database. The names and addresses may also be grouped by postal code for selective gathering of the resulting mailers 32 making postal routing duties more efficient. The preparation of different types of messages

and associated coding procedures must also be done. The coding according to the type of information specific addressees are to receive is performed. Finally, in preparation for the production run, the information is transferred to the data processing unit 12.

5 In operation, a promoter wishing to advertise a product or service, may request that his message be directed to a group of people that have previously been determined to be his market target. By adding his message to the back of an envelope 32 which may have to be sent in any event, his costs are kept to a reasonable level and attention is more quickly drawn to his offer thereby resulting in more efficient marketing and cross-marketing techniques. It should
10 be noted that all kinds of information database could be used in order to design a message which is highly targeted and personalized.

 For the sake of illustration purposes only, the above noted elements of the preferred embodiment of the present invention may be linked and synchronized to a Scitex 3600 printing
15 unit, as manufactured by Wallace Computer Services, Inc., thereby allowing to individually image each mailer 32.

 The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiments are therefore to be
20 considered as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method for personalizing a mailer comprising the steps of:
 - a) assigning pre-determined parameters to a plurality of addressees;
 - b) preparing a plurality of outgoing carrier envelopes;
 - c) scanning for encoded messages; and
 - d) printing a personalized message on said carrier envelopes.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein step a) comprises the steps of:
 - a) creating an address database; and
 - b) coding message information.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the database may be any available type of database serving a promoter's goal of targeting a specific segment for commercial purposes.

4. A method according to claim 1 wherein step b) comprises the steps of:
 - a) addressing said carrier envelopes;
 - b) inserting materials into said carrier envelopes;
 - c) printing a code; and
 - d) collating said carrier envelope.

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein the personalized message appears on the back of said carrier envelopes.

6. An apparatus for personalizing a mailer, comprising:
 - a) data processing means;
 - b) printing means;

c) inserting means; and

d) scanning means;

whereby an envelope is addressed and filled with items to be mailed before proceeding to scanning of a code containing information pertaining to a personalized message to be printed onto said envelope.

7. A personalized messaging device, the device comprising:

a) a carrier envelope; and

b) a printed message onto said carrier envelope.

8. A device according to claim 7 wherein the printed message is on the back portion of said carrier envelope.

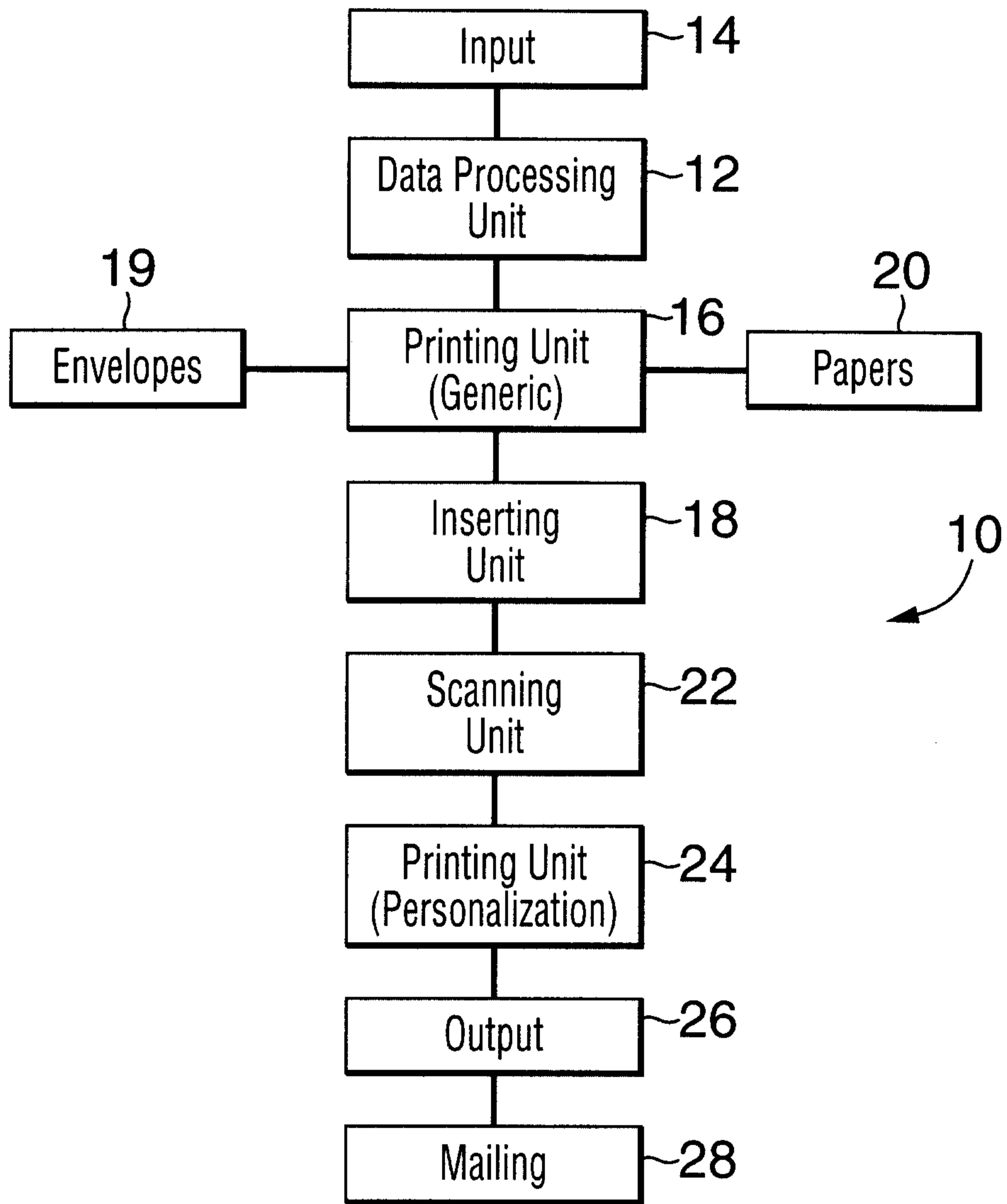


FIG. 1

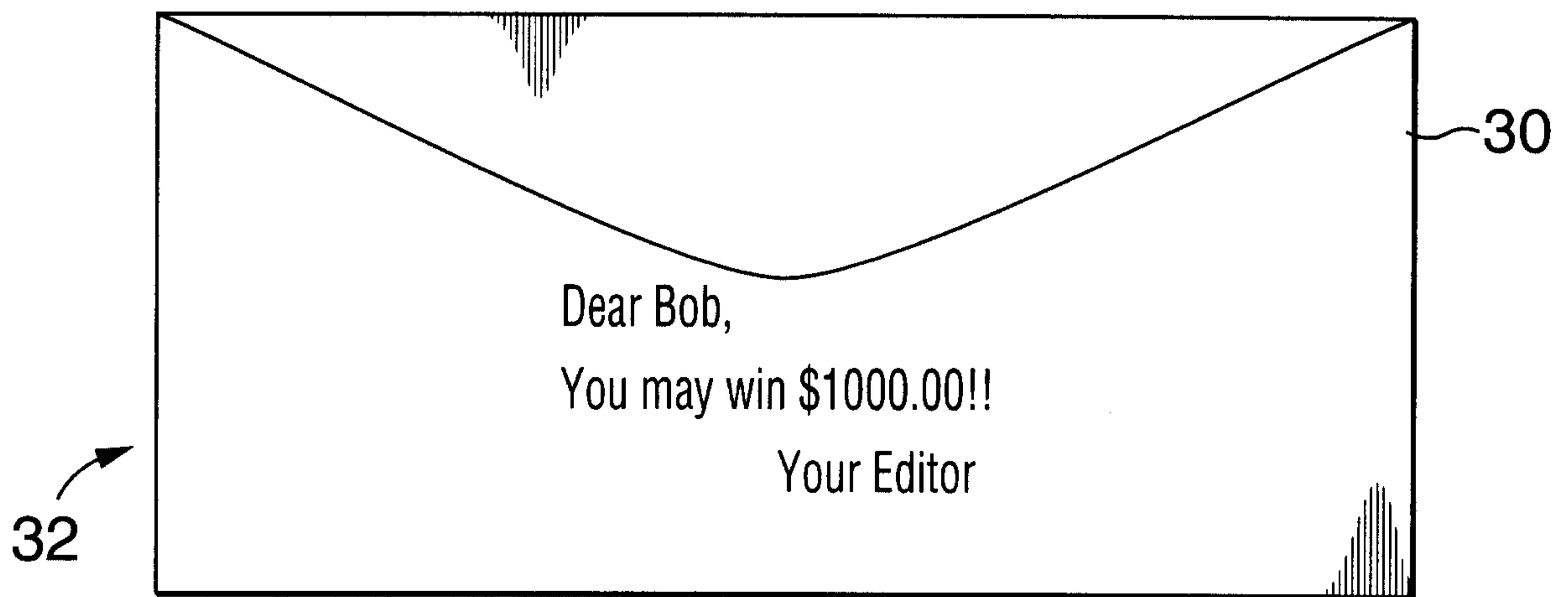


FIG. 2

