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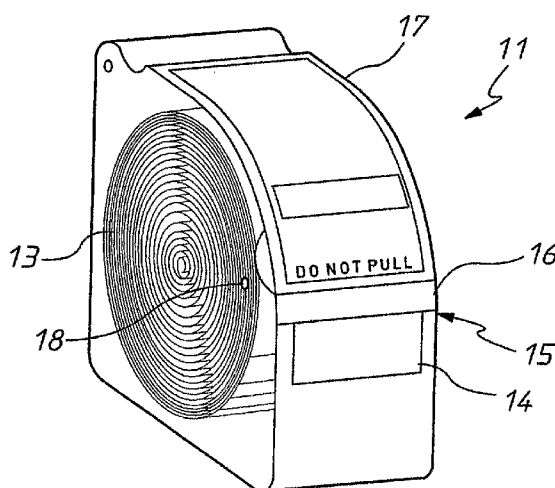
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(54) Title: RIBBON DISPENSER



(57) Abstract: A ribbon display unit (10) used to display ribbons (14) for sale in a retail store and the like. The unit (10) includes a number of cassettes (11) releasably secured to a base (12). The base (12) can be a display stand which is able to be stood on a counter or the like, or can be attached to a wall. Each of the cassettes (11) contains a ribbon roll (13) with the ribbon (14) of the roll being lead through a slot (15) in the front of the cassette (11). Preferably there is a stop (16) adjacent the slot (15), the stop (16) being used to prevent the ribbon (14) from rewinding into the cassette (11). The end of the ribbon (14) preferably extends outside the slot (15) and hangs out the front like a tongue when on display. The end of the ribbon (14) is therefore also on display making a much more attractive display where the customer can see the design of the ribbon (14) and can even take hold of so as to establish its feel, including thickness, smoothness, tenacity etc. It is preferable that the ribbon (14) cannot be pulled further than about 4 to 6 cm from the slot (15), a distance set by the retailer.

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RIBBON DISPENSER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to the sale of ribbons and, in particular, to displaying for purchase ribbons of different types or styles.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Even though the following description refers to ribbons in particular, it will be appreciated that all piece goods such as braids, elastics, bandings, etc which are used for clothing and other soft goods can be substituted for the term ribbons in the description as the present invention is not limited to ribbons per se.

15 The traditional manner to display and dispense ribbons in retail stores is that the ribbons to be sold are stored on rolls or spools. These rolls are usually made of cardboard or plastics material, and are usually approximately 50-150 mm in diameter and have widths depending on the width of the ribbon.

20 It has been found that there are inherent problems with the traditional roll when displaying and dispensing, and with stock control as there is no secure or permanent location for the roll. The rolls usually sit side by side on a shelf or rack and once a customer has decided on a purchase, the roll is removed from the rack and when the purchase is completed, the roll can easily be put back into a different position. In practice this occurs regularly. Thus whatever colour, size and style coordination of the original display it may have had, is lost.

25 Furthermore, the customer purchasing the ribbon usually takes the roll to the counter where a quantity of ribbon is rolled off and cut. However, in many instances the roll is left on the counter or is thrown into a basket for the staff to return to the rack at a later date, which is usually at the end of the day or the next morning. This procedure can result in situations where another customer looking for a particular ribbon, having
30 a specific colour, style and size cannot find it on the shelf or rack. Thus the customer often believes the store is out of stock or does not sell that colour, style or size. This may lead to a reduction in sales.

The traditional roll has no cover and no device for securing the loose end of the ribbon. As a result, the ribbon can become unwound and soiled. It is often the case that a portion has to be cut off before a clean length can be measured off. This leads
5 to a loss of stock which is costly for the retailer. Also the display rack can become very untidy and disorganised and therefore requires constant supervision by the retailer's staff.

It is also known that some salespersons use a pin to contain the loose end of the
10 ribbon. This has the disadvantage that the pin penetrates several layers of the ribbon. The pinhole can often destroy the appearance and usability of the ribbon.

Existing types of ribbon rolls which are made from cardboard or thin plastics material can be damaged during their time in the store. Such damage includes the sides of the
15 rolls falling off, or become dilapidated, whereby the ribbon information for the consumer, ie, type of ribbon material used, care instructions, etc can be damaged or lost. The electronic barcode which is usually displayed on the roll can also be disfigured or lost thereby making the dispensing and serving of the ribbon more complicated and time consuming than it need be.

20 Furthermore, existing ribbon rolls are not ideally suited for the fitting of electronic source tags which are increasingly used to prevent theft. The nature of these rolls is such that it is difficult to fit the source tag in a position where it cannot be seen, and therefore possibly removed. The cost of a single roll of ribbon is such that most
25 retailers do not source-tag these products as it is not cost effective.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

The genesis of the present invention is a desire to provide a storage and dispensing unit for ribbons and other piece goods which substantially overcomes or ameliorates
30 the above mentioned disadvantages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to one aspect of the present invention there is disclosed a set of ribbon dispensers for displaying for purchase ribbons of different types or styles, said set comprising a multiplicity of cassettes each having a corresponding spool of ribbon,
5 and a base on which said cassettes are retained to form an array of said cassettes.

Preferably each cassette is releasably mounted on the base.

The base is preferably substantially rectangular and the array comprises rows and
10 columns of the cassettes.

In preferred forms, each cassette carries an indicium or indicia indicative of the contents of the spool.

15 Preferably, the space on the base visible following release of the cassette carries the same indicium or indicia as the released cassette.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention there is disclosed a method of displaying ribbons of different types or styles for sale, said method comprising the
20 steps of:

- i) locating a spool of each type or style of ribbon in a corresponding cassette
- ii) locating each said cassette on a corresponding position on a base to thereby form an array of said cassettes

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In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention there is disclosed ribbon displayed in accordance with the above-mentioned method.

In accordance with a fourth aspect there is disclosed a cassette containing a ribbon roll
30 with the ribbon of the roll extending through a slot in the front of the cassette.

Preferably, a stop located adjacent the slot prevents the ribbon from moving into and out of said cassette. The ribbon is preferably prevented from being pulled further than about 4 to 6 cm from the slot.

Preferably, the cassette has a lid opening to allow the roll of ribbon to be inserted therein.

- 5 In a preferred embodiment, the cassette is adapted to be used with a counter holding means whereby the cassette is held in position on a counter whilst the ribbon is dispensed. Preferably, the cassette has a release mechanism to release ribbon from the stop when interacting with the counter holding means. In a preferred embodiment the counter holder includes a measuring device and cutting device.

10

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

One embodiment of the present invention will now be described in which:

- 15 Fig. 1 is a front perspective view of a cassette ribbon dispenser of the preferred embodiment,

Fig. 2 is a front view of a set of cassette ribbon dispensers located on a base,

Fig. 3 is a side view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1,

Fig. 4 is a front view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1,

- 20 Fig. 5 is a side view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1, being inserted or removed from a base,

Fig. 6 is a side view of the cassette ribbon dispenser shown being inserted in the base,

Fig. 7 is a side view similar to Fig. 3 showing a security tag inserted therein,

- 25 Fig. 8 is perspective view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1 showing the lid slightly open,

Fig. 9 is a cross-sectional view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1 being inserted into a release mechanism,

- 30 Fig. 10 is a cross-sectional view similar to Fig. 9 showing application of the release mechanism,

Fig. 11 is a cross-sectional view of a cassette ribbon dispenser of another embodiment,

Fig. 12 is a cross-sectional view of a cassette ribbon of Fig. 11 being inserted into the release mechanism,

Fig. 13 is a cross-sectional view similar to fig. 12 showing application of the release mechanism,

Fig. 14 is a schematic cross-sectional view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1 shown mounted on a counter holder used for measuring and dispensing the ribbon, and

Fig. 15 is a schematic cross-sectional view of the cassette ribbon dispenser of Fig. 1 shown mounted on a counter holder used for measuring and dispensing the ribbon without a cutting implement.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A ribbon display unit 10 as seen in Fig. 2 is used to display ribbons for sale in a retail store and the like. The unit 10 includes a number of cassettes 11 releasably secured to a base 12. The base 12 can be a display stand which is able to be stood on a counter or the like, or can be attached to a wall.

Each of the cassettes 11 contains a ribbon roll 13 with the ribbon 14 of the roll being lead through a slot 15 in the front of the cassette 11. Preferably there is a stop 16 adjacent the slot 15, the stop 16 being used to prevent the ribbon 14 from rewinding and being pulled into or from the cassette 11. The stop 16 is preferably made from a soft grip plastics material. The end of the ribbon 14 preferably extends outside the slot 15 and hangs out the front like a tongue when on display. The end of the ribbon 14 is therefore also on display making a much more attractive display where the customer can see the design of the ribbon 14 and can even take hold of so as to establish its feel, including thickness, smoothness, tenacity etc. It is preferable that the ribbon 14 cannot be pulled further than about 4 to 6 cm from the slot 15, such 4 to 6 cms being set by store staff.

It is preferable that the stop 16 can be interchanged with different thicknesses to allow for accommodation of different thicknesses of ribbons 14.

The cassette 11 in the preferred embodiment is enclosed with a lid 17. The lid 17 opens to allow the user to insert the ribbon roll 13 which is allowed to sit inside the cassette 11. The end of the ribbon 14 is placed outside the cassette 11 and the lid 17

is closed and locks down over a catch 18. The stop 16 is attached to the lid 17 and forms the slot 15 and is preferably made from a soft plastics material to be able to grip the end of the ribbon 14. The lid 17 of the cassette 11 is not easily opened by the consumer thus the consumer is prevented from either stealing or handling the ribbon 14.

The ribbon roll 13 can be replaced by another roll when finished and as such each cassette 11 can be used for a substantial amount of time before any cassette 11 needs replacing.

Alternatively, the cassette 11 can be supplied with the single ribbon and can be disposed of and recycled when the roll of ribbon is finished. That is, the cassette 11 is supplied with every replacement roll of ribbon 14.

Other forms of the cassette can be used, eg the cassette 111 as seen in Figs. 11 to 13. This cassette 111 has sides which are opened for replacing the ribbon rolls 13 and the slot 15 is formed in the body of a cassette with a suitable spring loaded stop 116 being provided. In this arrangement, the spring loaded stop 116 can have variable positions so as to vary the opening height of the slot 15.

The cassettes 11 are releasably mounted on the base 12 by means of a plurality of brackets 19. Each bracket 19 includes a u-shaped shell 20 into which the cassette is placed. The top portion of the shell 20 has a resilient ridge 21 which aligns with a corresponding groove 22 formed on the top of the cassette 11. As seen in Figs. 5 and 6, the cassette 11 is easily manipulated into and out of position with the bottom surface of the cassette 11 having a friction fit the lower portion 23 of the shell 20.

As seen in Fig. 2, the set of cassettes 11 in the display unit 10 are selected for size so that there are many differing sizes, types and colours of ribbons 14 displayed for sale. The display of the cassettes 11 provide a colour, style and size coordination from which it is easy for the customer to make an appropriate selection of the product as well as providing a pleasing arrangement to the eye. It is believed that the use of such a display arrangement enhances potential sales of the ribbons 14.

The cassette 11, in another arrangement can be used by the customer to dispense the ribbon 14 at the display unit 10 by releasing the stop 16 or 16 from the cassette 11 or by providing suitable instructions so that the customer can release the locking device and dispense the ribbon 14. Alternatively, the cassette 11 is preferably removed from the display unit 10 and taken to a sales counter or the like where the ribbon 14 can be dispensed either using the usual methods or as to be described later.

In the arrangement as seen in Figs. 9 and 10, a release mechanism 25 is used to release the stop 16 by placing the cassette 11 in a well 26. The release mechanism when pressed by the sides of the well 26 release the stop allowing the ribbon 14 to be pulled from the cassette 11 through the slot 15. Similarly, the cassette 11 of Figs. 11 to 13 also has a release mechanism 25 for the spring loaded stop 116.

As seen in Fig. 7, in a preferred form, the cassette 11 has an electronic source tag 27 (eg an RFID tag) located within its casing. The source-tags 27 are used for the prevention of theft and as they are fitted inside the cassette 11 they can not be easily removed by the consumer. As the cassette 11 can be used for a number of ribbon rolls 13 as described above, the cost of a source-tag can be amortized to an extent which is acceptable to the retailer.

As seen in Fig. 2, when a cassette 11 is removed from the base 12, a backing label 30 which is located at each cassette location on the base 12 is then visible. The backing label 30 is used to indicate which cassette 11 has been removed from that location and has the same indicia as the cassette 11. If the incorrect cassette 11 is replaced into the any position, it is easily noticed as the pattern of the types of ribbons and colours of the display unit 10 looks out of place.

If a particular ribbon 14 wanted by a customer is not on the display unit 10, the customer is nevertheless aware that it is normally for sale and thus can approach the staff at the appropriate counter to locate the desired ribbon 14.

When purchasing the ribbon 14 at a counter, the cassette 11 can be placed on a counter holder 31 as seen in Figs. 14 and 15. The counter holder 31 of the preferred embodiment sits upright in a well 32 such that when so placed in the well 32 the

locking device is released so that the ribbon can be dispensed. In this manner, the cassette 11 is secured whilst dispensing the ribbon 14 therefrom. The holder 31 includes a measuring device 33 and a cutter tool 34 arranged for the user to measure out the length required and cut the ribbon respectively. In the arrangement as shown in Fig. 15, a slot 35 in the counter holder 31 allows the positioning of lower blade of scissors (not illustrated) such that the ribbon 14 can be cut at exactly the right angles.

The counter holder 31 preferably has a release mechanism (not illustrated) to release the lid 17 or side cover of the cassette 11.

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The ribbons rolls 13 are sitting within the cassette 11 but can be placed on an axle spool (not illustrated) as an alternative. In the preferred embodiment, the cassette 11 can be opened and refilled with a new roll of ribbon 13. Therefore the rolls 13 can be more inexpensively manufactured as they do not require all the printing and packaging that is currently necessary on a free standing traditional roll. The lid 17 of the cassette 11 is easily opened in a manner known to the staff but not immediately obvious to the consumer.

The cassettes 11 of the preferred embodiment can also be sold to the customer as a set, whereby the customer can also enjoy the unique advantages of the cassette system for their own home use. The use of the set of cassettes 11 can prevent the damage that can presently occur to a roll of ribbon when stored at home in a drawer or sewing box.

The size and design of the cassettes for home use can be of a smaller size than for retailance as it is generally the case as a lesser quantity of ribbon is required for home use than for retailance.

The foregoing describes only one embodiment of the present invention and modifications, obvious to those skilled in the retailing of piece goods, can be made thereto without departing from the scope of the present invention.

The term "comprising" (and its grammatical variations) as used herein is used in the inclusive sense of "including" or "having" and not in the exclusive sense of "consisting only of".

CLAIMS

1. A set of ribbon dispensers for displaying for purchase ribbons of different types or styles, said set comprising a multiplicity of cassettes each having a corresponding spool of ribbon, and a base upon which said cassettes are retained to form an array of said cassettes.
2. The set as claimed in claim 1 wherein each said cassette is releasably mounted on said base
3. The set as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein said base is substantially rectangular and said array comprises rows and columns of said cassettes.
4. The set as claimed in any one of claims 1-3 wherein each said cassette carries an indicium or indicia indicative of the contents of said spool.
5. The set as defined in claim 4 when dependent upon claim 2 wherein the space on said base visible following release of each cassette carries the same indicium or indicia as the released cassette.
7. A method of displaying ribbons of different types or styles for sale, said method comprising the steps of:
 - i) locating a spool of each type or style of ribbon in a corresponding cassette
 - ii) locating each said cassette on a corresponding position on a base to thereby form an array of said cassettes
8. The method as claimed in claim 6 including the step of:
 - iii) releasably engaging each said cassette with said base
9. The method as claimed in claim 6 or 7 including the step of:
 - iv) arranging said cassettes in columns and rows to form a substantially rectangular array of said cassettes.

10. The method as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8 including the further step of:

- v) applying an indicium or indicia to each of said cassettes which is inclusive of the ribbon contained therein.

10. The method as claimed in claim 9 when dependant upon claim 7 including the further step of:

- vi) applying to said base on the location occupied by each said cassette the same indicium or indicia as is/are applied to the corresponding cassette.

11. Ribbon as displayed by the method as defined in any one of the claims 6 to 10.

12. A cassette for use on a ribbon dispenser unit, said cassette containing a ribbon roll with the ribbon of the roll extending through a slot in the front of the cassette.

13. The cassette as claimed in claim 12 wherein a stop located adjacent the slot prevents the ribbon from moving into and out of said cassette.

14. The cassette as claimed in claim 12 or 13 wherein the slot is variable in size of the opening.

15. The cassette as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 14 wherein the ribbon is prevented from being pulled further than about 4 to 6 cm from the slot.

16. The cassette as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 15 wherein the cassette has a lid opening to allow the roll of ribbon to be inserted therein.

17. The cassette as claimed in claim 16 wherein the lid opening is lockable to prevent access to the ribbon by a customer.

18. The cassette as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 17 wherein the cassette is adapted to be used with a counter holding means whereby the cassette is held in position on a counter whilst the ribbon is dispensed.

19. The cassette as claimed in claim 18 wherein said cassette has a release mechanism to release ribbon from said stop when interacting with said counter holding means.

20. The cassette as claimed in claim 18 wherein said cassette has a release mechanism to open said lid opening.

21. The cassette as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 20 wherein the counter holder includes a measuring device and cutting device.

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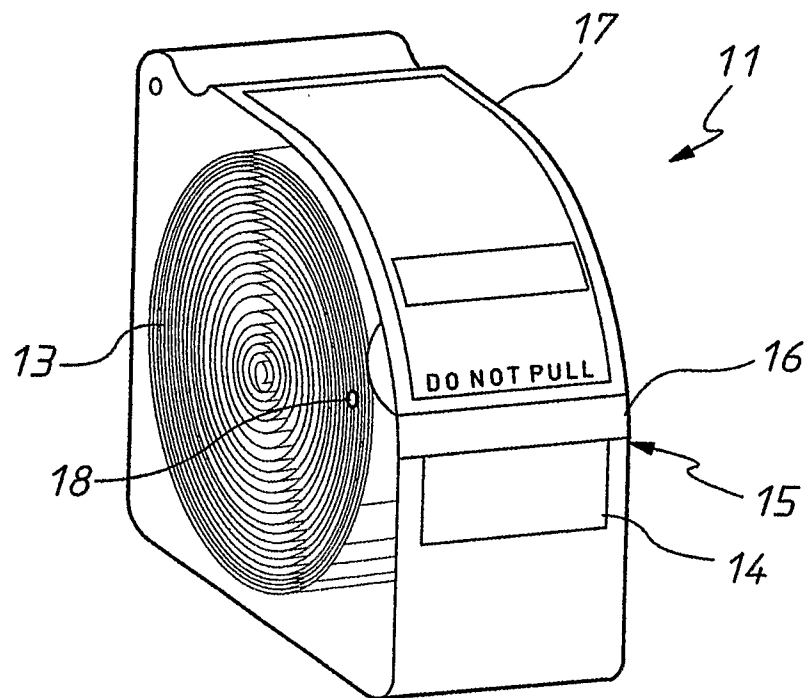


FIG. 1

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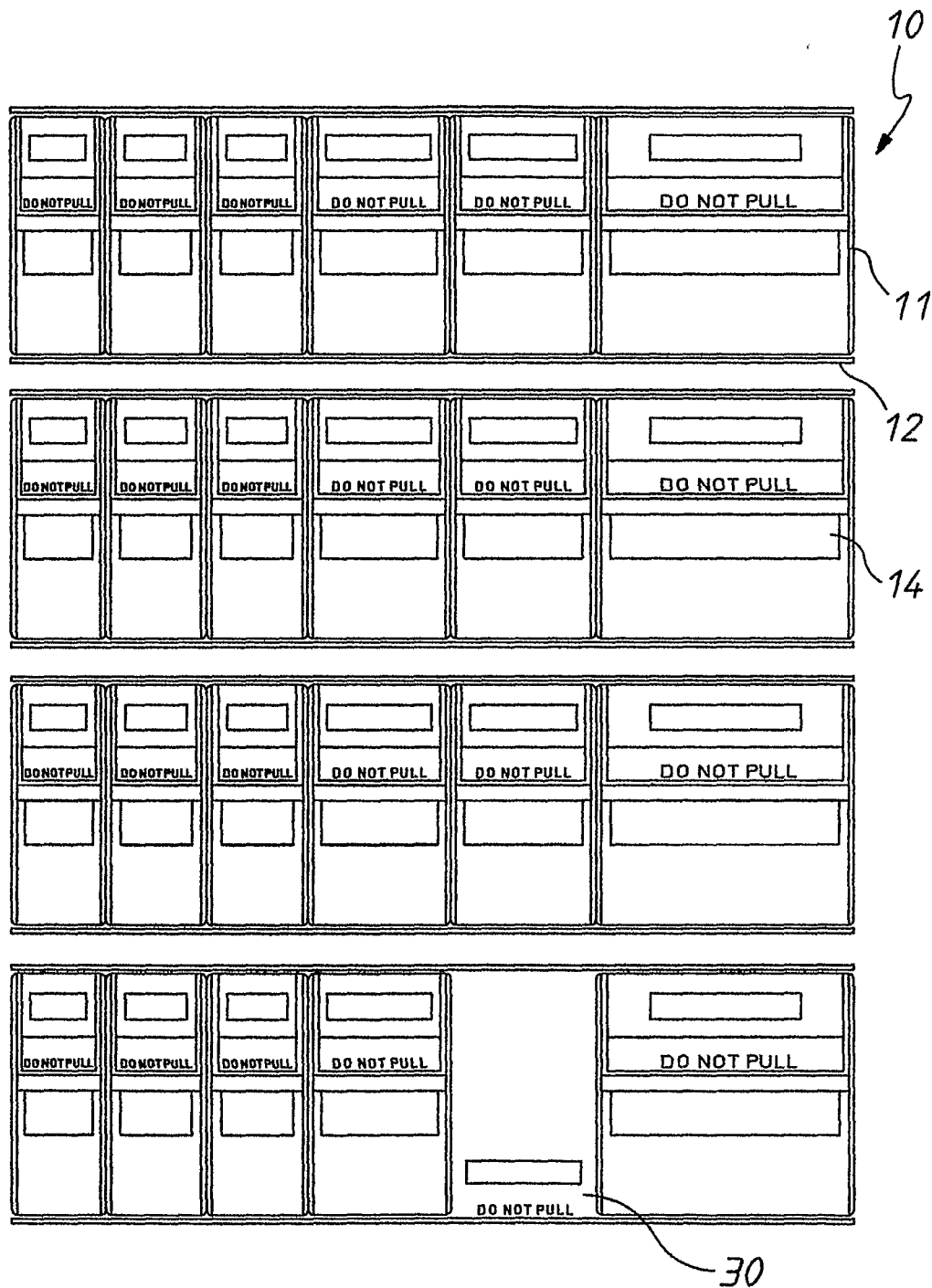


FIG. 2

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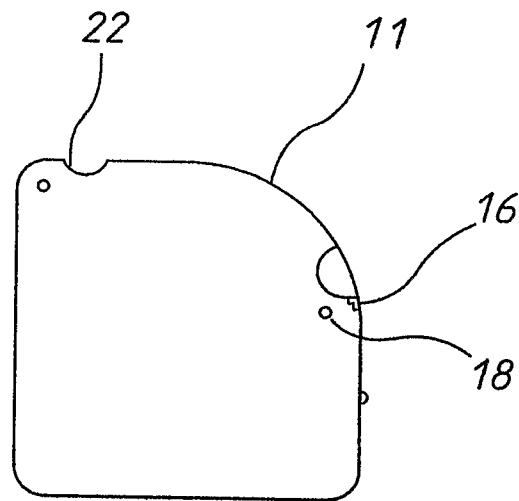


FIG. 3

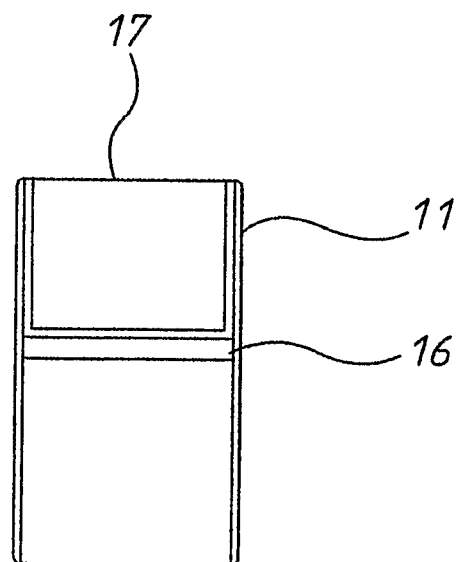


FIG. 4

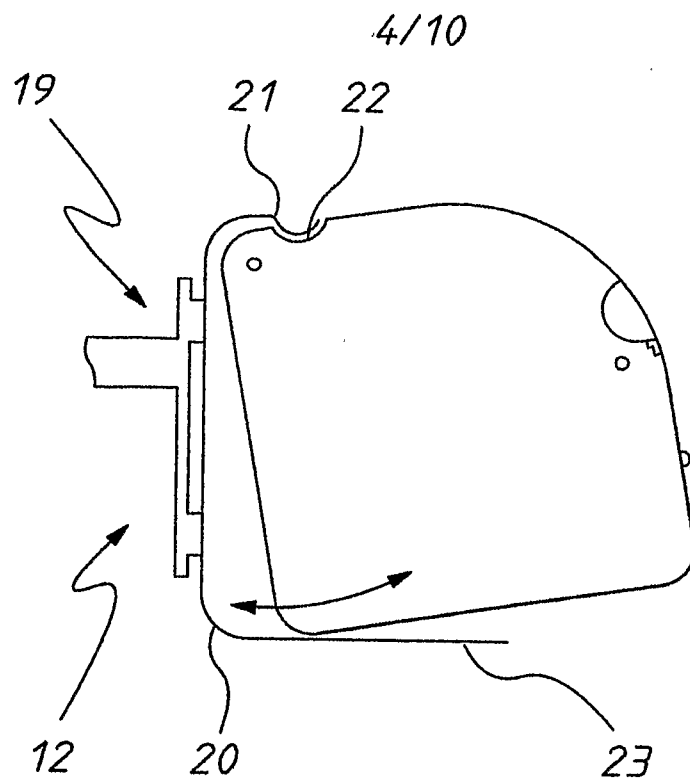


FIG. 5

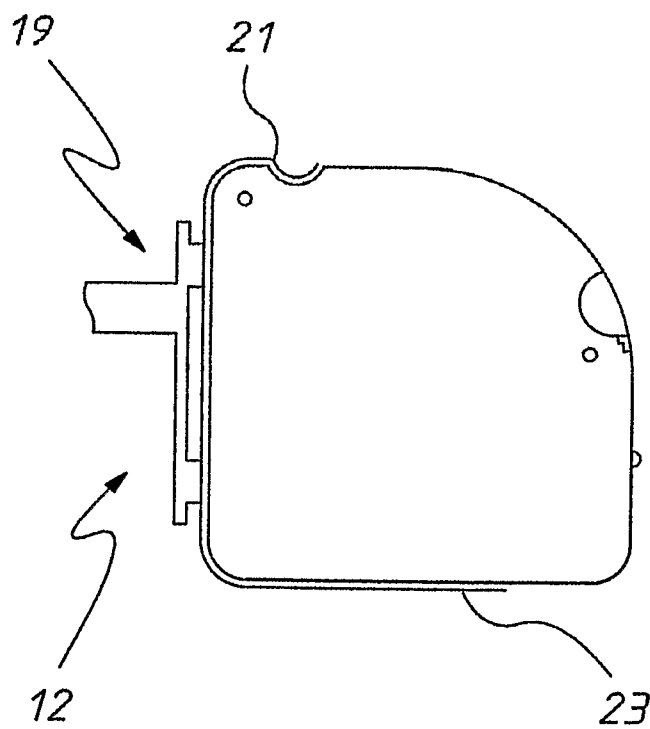


FIG. 6

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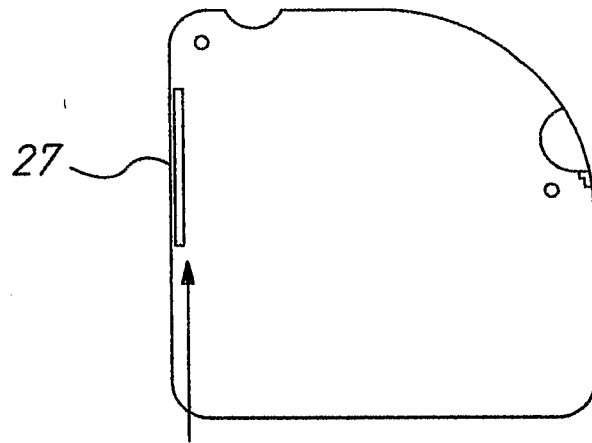


FIG. 7

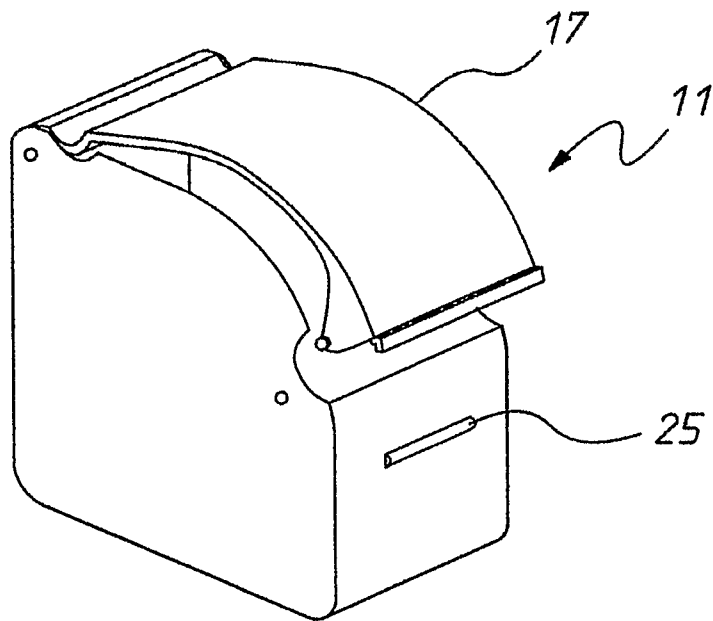


FIG. 8

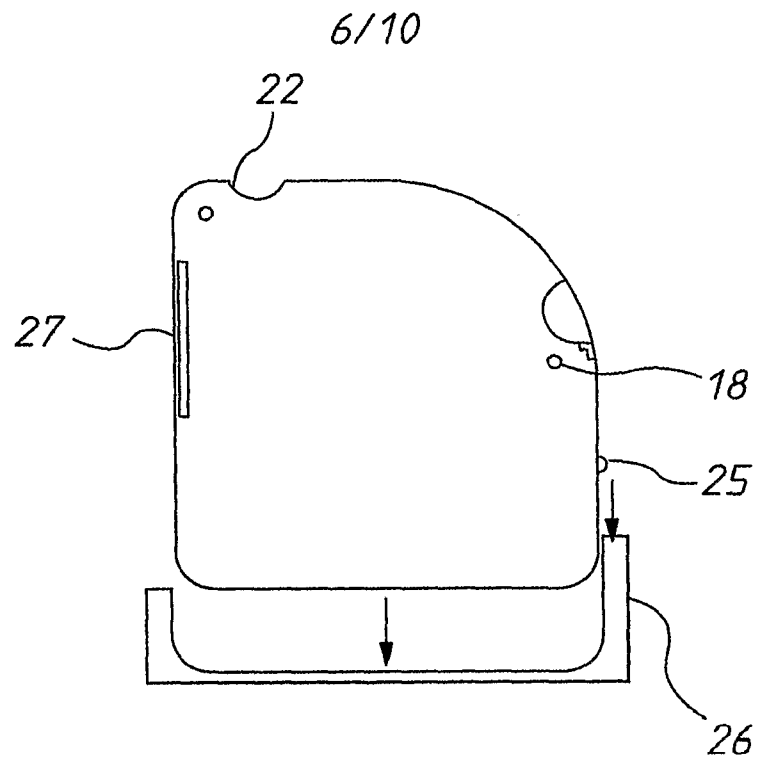


FIG. 9

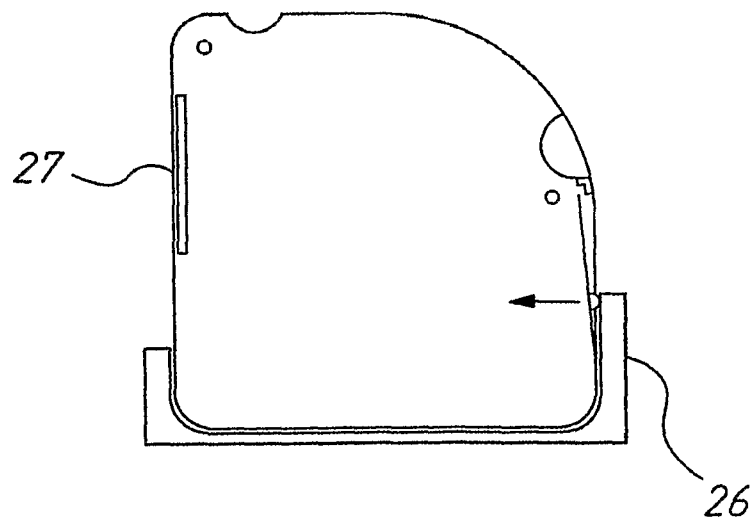


FIG. 10

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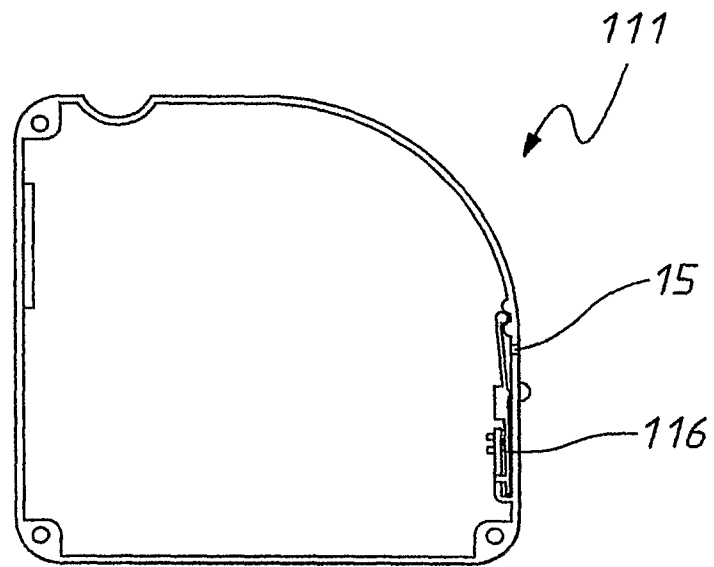


FIG. 11

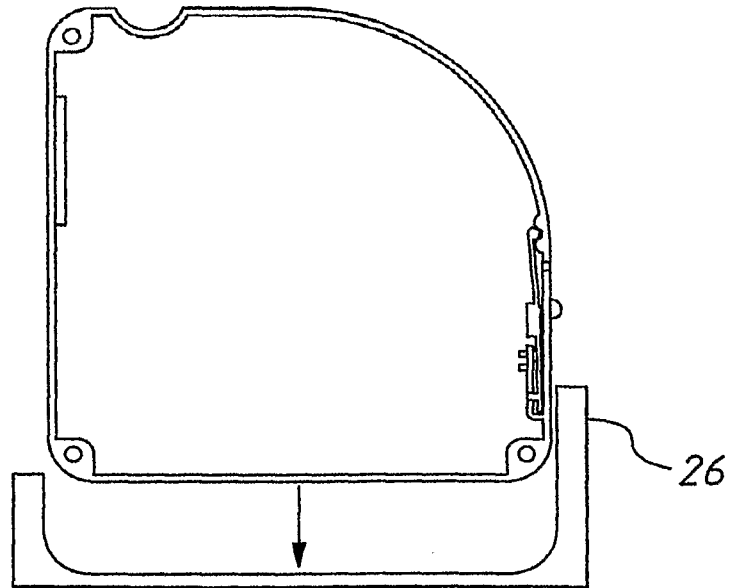


FIG. 12

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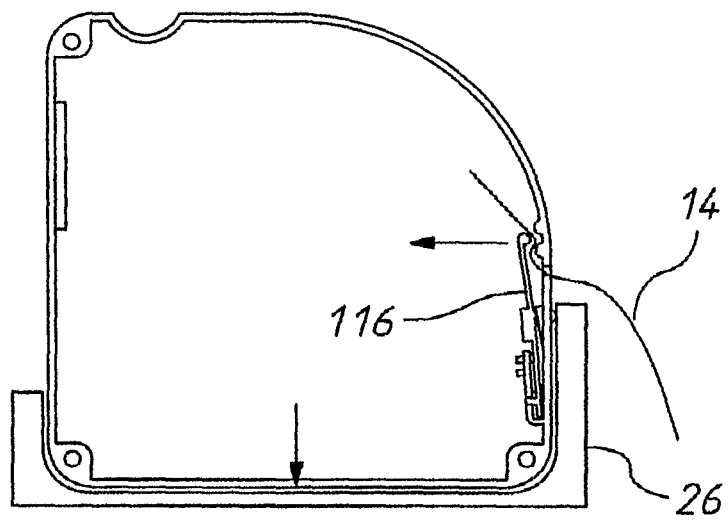


FIG. 13

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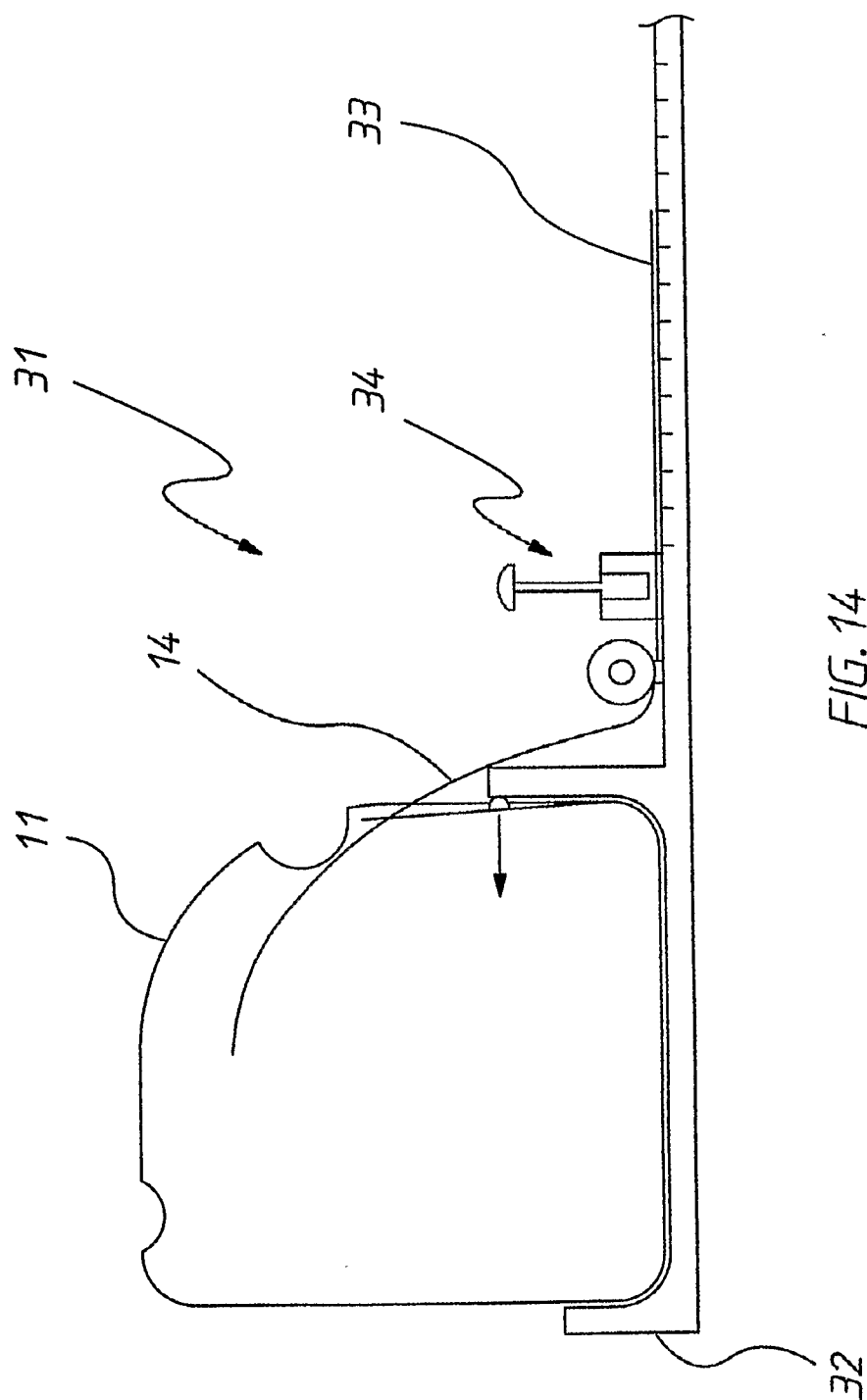
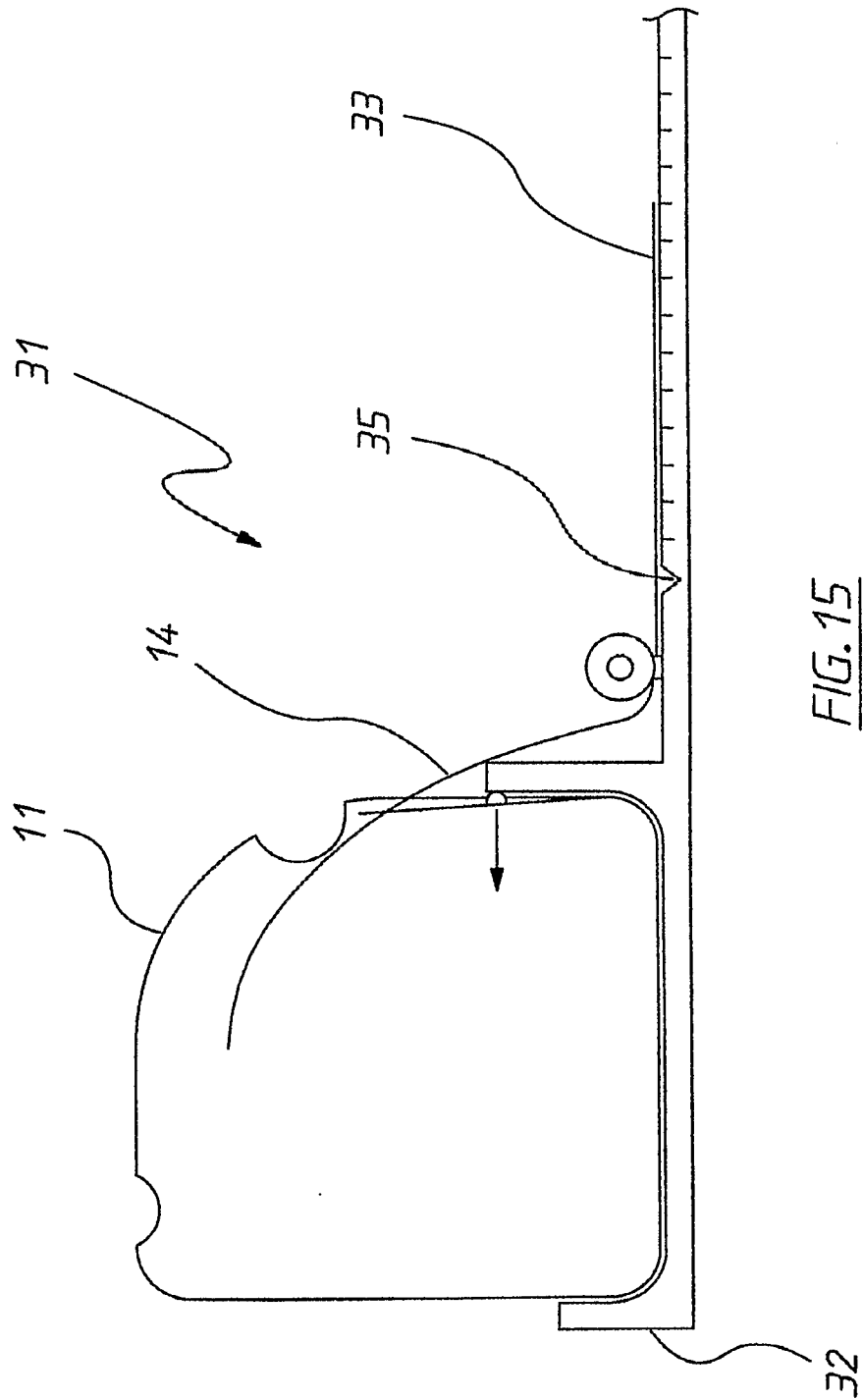


FIG. 14

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2007/000446

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.

B65H 75/00 (2006.01)**B65H 16/02** (2006.01)**B65H 75/28** (2006.01)

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)

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)

DWPI:: Key Words (ribbon, tape, dispenser, display, cassette, array, grid etc)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 3709445 A (ADAMS) 9 January 1973 See figures 1-8, lines 23-36 column 2	1-11
A	AU 72606/87 A1 (DICKSON) 12 November 1987 See figure 1	1-11
A	US 3948455 A (SCHWARTZ) 6 April 1976 See abstract and figure 1	1-11
A	US 2004/0222248 A1 (HUANG) 11 November 2004 See figure 2 and abstract	1-11

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C☒ See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:	
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search
06 August 2007

Date of mailing of the international search report

9 - AUG 2007

Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2007/000446

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

See Extra Sheet.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.: 1-11

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2007/000446

Supplemental Box

(To be used when the space in any of Boxes I to VIII is not sufficient)

Continuation of Box No: III

This International Application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention because it does not relate to one invention or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept.

In assessing whether there is more than one invention claimed, I have given consideration to those features which can be considered to potentially distinguish the claimed combination of features from the prior art. Where different claims have different distinguishing features they define different inventions.

This International Searching Authority has found that there are different inventions as follows:

- Claims 1-11 are related to a set of ribbon dispensers for displaying for purchase ribbons of different types and styles. It is considered that a base upon which said cassettes are retained to form an array comprises a first distinguishing feature.
- Claims 12-21 are related to a cassette for use in a ribbon dispenser unit. It is considered that said cassette containing a ribbon roll with the ribbon of roll extending through a slot in the front of the cassette comprises a second distinguishing feature.

PCT Rule 13.2, first sentence, states that unity of invention is only fulfilled when there is a technical relationship among the claimed inventions involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features. PCT Rule 13.2, second sentence, defines a special technical feature as a feature which makes a contribution over the prior art.

Each of the abovementioned groups of claims has a different distinguishing feature and they do not share any feature which could satisfy the requirement for being a special technical feature. Because there is no common special technical feature it follows that there is no technical relationship between the identified inventions. Therefore the claims do not satisfy the requirement of unity of invention *a priori*.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/AU2007/000446

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member	
US	3709445		
AU	7260687	AU	72606/87
US	3948455		
US	2004222248	US	6913178
Due to data integration issues this family listing may not include 10 digit Australian applications filed since May 2001.			
END OF ANNEX			