RETRACTABLE BADGEHOLDER DEVICE

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Abstract

A retractable badgeholder device, including a housing having a side wall. The housing may include first and second portions pivotally interconnected with one another. A cord is retractably disposed within the housing, and attached to an object at a free end thereof. A window may be formed in the housing, with a slit formed in the side wall of the housing so as to be in communication with the window for insertion of a sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window. The sheet includes identifying indicia, such as a photograph.
RETRACTABLE BADGEBOLDER DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to retractable badgeholders. More particularly, the present invention relates to a retractable badgeholder having a housing with two pivotal portions, and one or more windows capable of removably receiving a sheet, such as a photograph.

[0002] A retractable badgeholder is a device having a case or housing inside of which is a reel with a cord wrapped around it. The reel is configured such that the free end of the cord can be pulled, thereby rotating the reel. When the end of the cord is released, the reel, which is biased by a spring, automatically rewinds the cord. The housing typically has a clip on its backside for securing it to a shirt pocket, pants waistband, belt, etc., of the wearer. The free end is attached to an end piece or bob, which in turn is typically attached to a badgeholding strap or other object.

[0003] The purpose of the retractable badgeholder is to allow a wearer to attach an object, typically keys or a badge, to his or her clothing. With the advent of encoded magnetic strips or RFID chips and the like, the badge can be "scanned" or "swiped" past a stationary sensing device to identify someone and permit access as a means for security. In other instances, the badge merely contains printed identifying indicia of the company and/or wearer of the badge as being authorized to have access. The retractable badgeholder enables the wearer to have the keys, electronic ID badge, or other such object, visible and readily accessible so as to extend the object towards a lock, electronic sensing device, etc., the object automatically retracted towards the wearer after it has been used for its intended purpose.

[0004] A design or logo is often imprinted on a front side of the housing of the retractable badgeholder device. These designs and logos are intended to make what could otherwise be an unattractive or detracting device into an interesting clothing accessory. Further, the logo often identifies the company for which an employee wearing a badgeholder works, or a club or organization to which the wearer belongs. Thus, the logos provide further identifying information about the wearer, and in some circumstances, free publicity for the company or organization. However, such logo or design must either be permanently imprinted upon the upper face of the typically plastic housing, or on a sheet or label which is adhered thereto.

[0005] There is a continuing need for a retractable badgeholder device which includes a slot for removably receiving a sheet having a logo, design, indicia, or a photograph thereon. Furthermore, there is a continuing need for such a retractable badgeholder device which housing has two portions pivotally connected to one another, for example to enable the creation of multiple windows insertion of multiple sheets for identification purposes or the pleasure of the wearer of the device. The present invention fulfills these needs and provides other related advantages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention resides in a retractable badgeholder device. In one embodiment, the device comprises a housing having a side wall. A cord is retractably disposed within the housing, and attached to an object at a free end thereof. A window is formed in the housing, and a slit formed in the housing is in communication with the window for insertion of a sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window. Typically, the side wall of the housing extends upwardly from a back face to a front face of the housing, wherein the window is formed in the front face thereof. The sheet includes identifying indicia, such as a photograph of an individual or a logo of a company.

[0007] In another embodiment, the housing comprises first and second portions which are pivotally attached to one another. The first portion includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a side wall. The second portion also includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a side wall. The inner faces of the first and second portions face one another when in the closed positions. A window may be formed in the housing, with a slit in communication with the window for insertion of a sheet or photograph therethrough so as to be visible through the window. The window may be formed in the first portion of the housing, with the slit formed in the side wall of the first portion. A second window may be formed in the interface of the second portion of the housing, with a slit formed in the side wall of the second portion so as to be in communication with the second window for removable insertion of a sheet or photograph therein. Preferably, the first and second portions of the housing can be pivotally opened and closed in a selective step-wise manner so as to enable the partial opening or closing of the housing portions to one another. The top of the entire unit may be recessed to contain logo information of the company.

[0008] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following more detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The accompanying drawings illustrate the invention. In such drawings:

[0010] FIG. 1 is a side perspective retractable badgeholder device embodying the invention, and having a cord thereof extended from the housing;

[0011] FIG. 2 is a perspective view similar to FIG. 1, illustrating the insertion of a sheet through a slit and into a window thereof, in accordance with the present invention;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the retractable badgeholder, with indicia on the sheet viewable through the window of the device, in accordance with the present invention;

[0013] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of another retractable badgeholder embodying the present invention in a closed state;

[0014] FIG. 5 is a side elevational view taken generally along line 5-5 of FIG. 4;

[0015] FIG. 6 is an end elevational view taken generally along line 6-6 of FIG. 4;

[0016] FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view taken generally along line 7-7 of FIG. 4, and diagrammatically illustrating a top portion thereof moved into an open position;

[0017] FIG. 8 is an enlarged view of area "B" of FIG. 7, illustrating the selective step-wise opening and closing of the top portion;

[0018] FIG. 9 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of area "9" of FIG. 8, illustrating a catch extending downwardly from the top portion of the housing and into spaces between
circumferential ridges of a hinge portion of the bottom portion of the housing, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 10 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of area “A” of FIG. 8, illustrating the catch of the top portion of the housing moved into another space between ridges of the hinge portion of the bottom housing, such that the top portion is moved in a step-wise manner, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 11 is a front perspective view of the retractable badgeholder of FIG. 4, in an open state;

FIG. 12 is a front perspective view similar to FIG. 11, illustrating the insertion of sheets through slits and into windows of the device, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 13 is a front perspective view illustrating indicia on these sheets viewable through the windows of the retractable badgeholder device, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 14 is a side elevational view of another retractable badgeholder embodying the present invention;

FIG. 15 is a top perspective view of the retractable badgeholder of FIG. 14;

FIG. 16 is a bottom perspective view of the retractable badgeholder of FIG. 14;

FIG. 17 is a perspective view of the retractable badgeholder device of FIG. 14, in an open state, with cord extended, and photographic sheets or identification information being inserted into windows thereof; and

FIG. 18 is a perspective view similar to FIG. 17 illustrating the photograph viewable through the windows of the retractable badgeholder device, in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As shown in the accompanying drawings, for purposes of illustration, the present invention is concerned with an improved retractable badgeholder device, generally referred to by the reference number 10 in FIGS. 1-3, by the reference number 12 in FIGS. 4-13, and by the reference number 14 in FIGS. 14-18. As will be more fully described herein, the present invention provides a retractable badgeholder incorporating at least one window for removable insertion of a sheet having indicia, such as a photograph. The retractable badgeholder of the present invention can also be formed in a housing having two pivotally connected housing portions, each housing portion may include one or more windows for receipt of photographs or other sheets.

With reference now to FIGS. 1-3, the retractable badgeholder device 10 includes a case or housing 16 having a side wall 18 extending between a front or top surface 10 and a back or bottom surface 22. A length of cord 24 is wound within the housing 16 on a retractable reel (not shown) which is configured so as to permit the extension of the cord 24 with the appropriate pulling force, and which is biased, such as by a coil spring or the like, to automatically retract the cord 24 into the housing 16 once the force is removed. Such retraction mechanisms are well known in the art. The cord 24 is preferably of a sufficient length so as to enable the wearer of the badgeholder 10 to extend the cord 24 away from the wearer such that an identification badge or the like can be viewed by another or swiped by an electronic reader, provide sufficient length for a key to open a door, etc.

At the free end of the cord 24 is attached a bob 26, which is larger than the entry port 28 of the housing 16. In a particularly preferred embodiment, projections 30 extend outwardly from the housing 16 adjacent to the entry/exit port 28 which engage internal surfaces of the bob 26, such that the bob 26 does not rotate or twist when in its closed position against the housing 16. This is desirable so that the badge or other object attached to the bob 26 does not twist and a corner thereof gouge or poke into the wearer, indicia on a face of the badge remains viewable at all times, etc.

Although a number of objects can be attached to the bob 26, usually badges or electronic swipe cards are attached to the bob 26. In such use, a metal or plastic fastener 32 interconnects the bob 26 and a plastic clip or strap 34, which includes snap closures 36, for removable attachment to a slit formed in an identification badge or electronic access card (not shown), as is well known in the art. Of course, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the bob 26 can be attached to a key ring or any other object which is desirably extended and retracted using the retractable badgeholder device 10.

As is known in the art, such retractable badgeholder devices 10 are removably attached to a wearer’s belt, pants, pocket, etc., using any appropriate attachment means, typically a plastic or metal clip fastened to the back surface 22 of the housing 16, as shown in FIGS. 5 and 14. Thus, the front face 20 of the housing 16 is typically facing outwardly and in view of others. In accordance with the present invention, a cut-out or window 38 is formed in the front side 20 of the housing 16 for removable insertion of a sheet 40, typically having indicia 42 such as a company name, logo, or photograph, such as the photograph of the owner of the badge 10. To facilitate removable insertion of the sheet 40 into the cut out 38, an elongated slit 44 is formed in the side wall 18 of the housing 16 in communication with the cut-out void area 38, such that a sheet 40 can be inserted into or removed from the window 38, as illustrated in FIG. 2. This enables the indicia 42 on the sheet 40 to be viewable through the window 38, as illustrated in FIG. 3.

The benefits of such a window 38 in the retractable badgeholder housing 16 will be evident to those skilled in the art. Currently, companies that want to have their company name, logo, or other indicia on the front surface 20 of the housing 16 of the badgeholder 10 must special order such badgeholders 10 such that this information is imprinted onto the plastic surface 20 of the housing 16. Alternatively, such design, logo, etc., is imprinted onto a label or epoxy dome or pad printed which is then adhered onto the top surface 20 of the housing 16, which may be slightly recessed. Of course, this can be expensive, particularly when the company is ordering relatively few badgeholders 10. Moreover, the adhered sheet of paper 10 can become torn or eventually dislodged from the surface 20 of the housing 16. Using the present invention, the sheet 40 can be easily replaced in the event it is damaged, or a different logo, company name, etc., is to be used in association with the badgeholder 10. Moreover, the badgeholder 10 of the present invention need not be specially ordered in association with the printing job. Furthermore, the use of the window 38 of the present invention enables the insertion of a sheet having a photograph depicted thereon, as shown in FIGS. 17 and 18. Such photograph can be of the individual
wearing the badgeholder 10, as an additional layer of security. Alternatively, the photograph can be of a loved one, pet, etc..

[0034] With reference now to FIGS. 4-10, another badgeholder 12 embodying the present invention is shown. In this badgeholder 12, the housing 16 includes two portions 46 and 48 which are pivotally connected to one another by means of hinge 50. The first and second (or top and bottom) portions 46 and 48 can be selectively opened and closed with respect to one another, as shown in FIGS. 7 and 11.

[0035] With reference now to FIGS. 5 and 6, the hinge 50 includes first hinge portion 52 formed integrally with the first or top portion 46 of the housing 16, and second hinge portion 54 formed integrally with the bottom or second portion 48 of the housing 16. A pin 56 extends through aligned apertures of the first and second portions 52 and 54 so as to hold the portions 52 and 54 with respect to one another, and allow pivoting and rotation of the portions 46 and 48 of the housing. A housing 16 with two pivotal portions provides advantages to the badgeholder device 12. For example, the badgeholder device can become a novelty item, such as in the form of a laptop computer or the like. Moreover, additional surfaces are presented for imprinting or attaching sheets with logos or other indicia. As will be more fully described herein with respect to FIGS. 11-13, the two hinged portions 46 and 48 also enable the creation of multiple windows for insertion of sheets of material having different indicia thereon.

[0036] With reference now to FIGS. 6-10, in a particularly preferred embodiment, the top and bottom portions 46 and 48 can be selectively opened and closed in a step-wise manner. This can be accomplished by a catch 58 extending downwardly from the first hinged portion 52 into engagement with spaces or valleys 60 disposed between ridges 62 formed on the periphery or circumferential edge of the second hinge member 54. As is shown in FIGS. 9 and 10, the catch 58 is capable of flexing over ridges 62, and coming at rest within spaces 60 between the ridges 62, so as to retain the position of the top portion 46 at that step position. Thus, the top portion 46 of the housing can be partially or fully opened, and remain in that selected position, per the needs and desires of the wearer of the badgeholder device 12.

[0037] With reference now to FIGS. 11-13, in a particularly preferred embodiment, multiple windows 64 and 66 are formed in the housing 16, typically one in each of the top and bottom portions 46 and 48. It will be understood by those skilled in the art, however, that a single window 64 could be formed in either the top or bottom portions 46 and 48, with windows 64 and 66 could be formed on opposite faces of the top portion 46, or at opposing inner surfaces of the top and bottom portions 46 and 48, as illustrated. Typically, the bottom surface of the bottom portion 48 has a clip 68 fastened thereto for removable attachment to the wearer's clothing, so a window is not formed on that surface.

[0038] Similar to that described above, slits 70 and 72 are formed in the side wall of the housing, typically in the side wall of each of the upper and lower portions 46 and 48, so as to be in communication with the window cavities 64 and 66 to facilitate the removable insertion of the sheet 74 and 76, as shown in FIG. 12. In accordance with the present invention, this sheet may comprise card stock material, paper, photograph paper, plastic, metal, or whatever other material which is insertable through the slits 70 and 72 and into the window cavities 64 and 66, and which includes indicia thereon, in the form of names, logos, artistic renderings, holograms, photographs, etc. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 4-13, the indicia 78 and 80 on the sheets 74 and 76 can be different. For example, one of the sheets 74 and 76 could include indicia relating to the company name, logo, etc. The other sheet 74 and 76 could have a photograph of the person, which would improve security for the company. Of course, these sheets 74 and 76 could include any other form of indicia, such as personal photographs of the badgeholder wearer, which could include their spouse, child, pet, etc.

[0039] With reference now to FIGS. 14-18, it should be understood that the configuration of the housing 16 can be round, square, or any other configuration, and still incorporate the teachings of the present invention. In the illustrated embodiment 14 in FIGS. 14-18, although the housing 16 is circular, it also includes windows 64 and 66 on opposite faces of the upper and lower portions 46 and 48 of the badgeholder 14, as described above. These windows 64 and 66 are shown as having a square configuration, as typically sheets, such as photographs, are cut into small squares or thumbnail images. It should be understood that this is for convenience sake, and the windows 64 and 66 can be round, or have other configurations. For that matter, the sheets 74 and 76 can also be cut into a round shape, or other any configuration as deemed appropriate. Moreover, it will be appreciated, as described above, that the windows 64 and 66 can comprise a single window, can be formed on opposite surfaces of the upper portion 46 (such as the badgeholder 14 includes either two or three windows), etc. The important aspects of the present invention are that the window or cavity is formed in the housing so as to removably receive a sheet having indicia thereon. Another aspect of the present invention is the two pivoting portions of the housing, as described above.

[0040] Although several embodiments have been described in detail for purposes of illustration, various modifications may be made to each without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not to be limited, except as by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:
1. A retractable badge holder device, comprising:
a housing having a side wall;
a cord retractably disposed within the housing and
attached to an object at a free end thereof;
a window formed in the housing; and
a slit formed in the housing in communication with
the window for insertion of a sheet therethrough so as to be
viewable through the window.
2. The device of claim 1, wherein the side wall of the
housing extends upwardly from a back face to a front face
of the housing, and wherein the window is formed in the
front face thereof.
3. The device of claim 1, wherein the sheet includes
identifying indicia.
4. The device of claim 3, wherein the identifier indicia
comprises a photograph.
5. The device of claim 1, wherein the housing comprises
first and second portions pivotally attached to one another.
6. The device of claim 5, wherein the window is formed
in the first portion of the housing.
7. The device of claim 6, wherein the slit is formed in a
side wall of the first portion in communication with the
window for removable insertion of the sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window.
8. The device of claim 5, wherein the first portion includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a sidewall; and wherein the second portion includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a sidewall, the inner faces of the first and second portions facing one another when in the closed positions.
9. The device of claim 8, wherein the window is formed in the inner face of the first portion of the housing.
10. The device of claim 9, including a second window formed in the inner face of the second portion of the housing, and a second slit formed in the sidewall of the second portion in communication with the second window for removable insertion of a sheet therein.
11. The device of claim 5, wherein the first and second portions are pivotally opened and closed to one another in a selective step-wise manner.
12. A retractable badge holder device, comprising:
a housing having a back face, a side wall extending upwardly therefrom to a front face;
a cord retractably disposed within the housing and attached to an object at a free end thereof;
a window formed in the front face of the housing; and
a slit formed in the sidewall of the housing in communication with the window for insertion of a sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window.
13. The device of claim 12, wherein the sheet includes identifying indicia.
14. The device of claim 13, wherein the identifying indicia comprises a photograph.
15. A retractable badge holder device, comprising:
a housing comprising first and second portions pivotally attached to one another, wherein
the first portion includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a sidewall; and
wherein the second portion includes an outer face and an inner face connected by a sidewall, the inner faces of the first and second portions facing one another when in the closed positions; and
a cord retractably disposed within the housing and attached to an object at a free end thereof.
16. The device of claim 15, including a window formed in the housing; and a slit formed in the housing in communication with the window for insertion of a sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window.
17. The device of claim 16, wherein the sheet includes identifying indicia.
18. The device of claim 17, wherein the identifying indicia comprises a photograph.
19. The device of claim 16, wherein the window is formed in the first portion of the housing, and wherein the slit is formed in the side wall of the first portion in communication with the window for removable insertion of the sheet therethrough so as to be viewable through the window.
20. The device of claim 19, wherein the window is formed in the inner face of the first portion of the housing.
21. The device of claim 19, including a second window formed in the inner face of the second portion of the housing, and a second slit formed in the sidewall of the second portion in communication with the second window for removable insertion of a sheet therein.
22. The device of claim 15, wherein the first and second portions are pivotally opened and closed to one another in a selective step-wise manner.

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