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(54) PREPAID INTERNET CD PACKAGE

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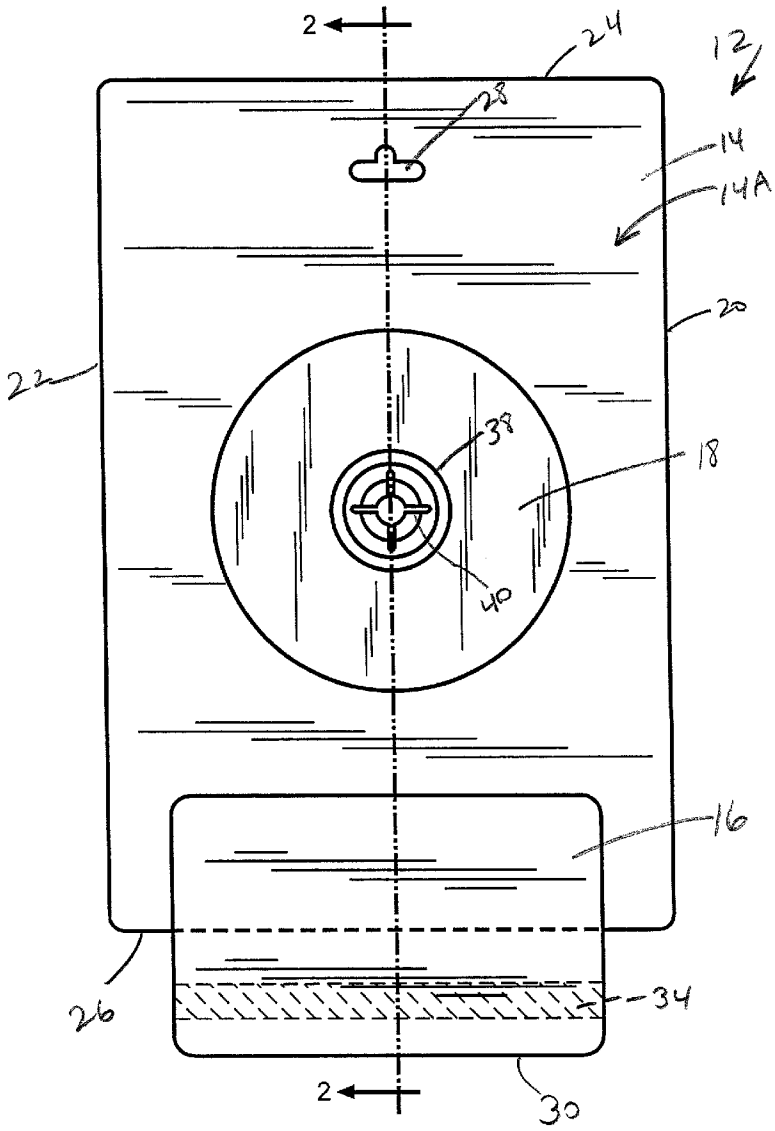
(57) ABSTRACT

The present invention relates to a retail sale package consisting of a main panel card having a compact disc and a point-of-sale card removably attached to the main panel. The CD may be affixed by shrinkwrap, adhesive, plastic insert or other mechanical retainer. The point-of-sale card may be affixed by adhesive or shrinkwrap and may or may not contain a magnetic strip; the strip can be activated at the time of sale or by other means. The combination may be used in conjunction with the Internet to access a website for browsing and to download music or other desired electronic files onto a separate data storage device and to pay for this access with the point-of-sale card or a separate value account. The compact disc is activated by a PIN contained on the point-of-sale card or embedded in the CD itself. Additional value can be added to the point-of-sale card using a credit card, debit card checking account, or the like.



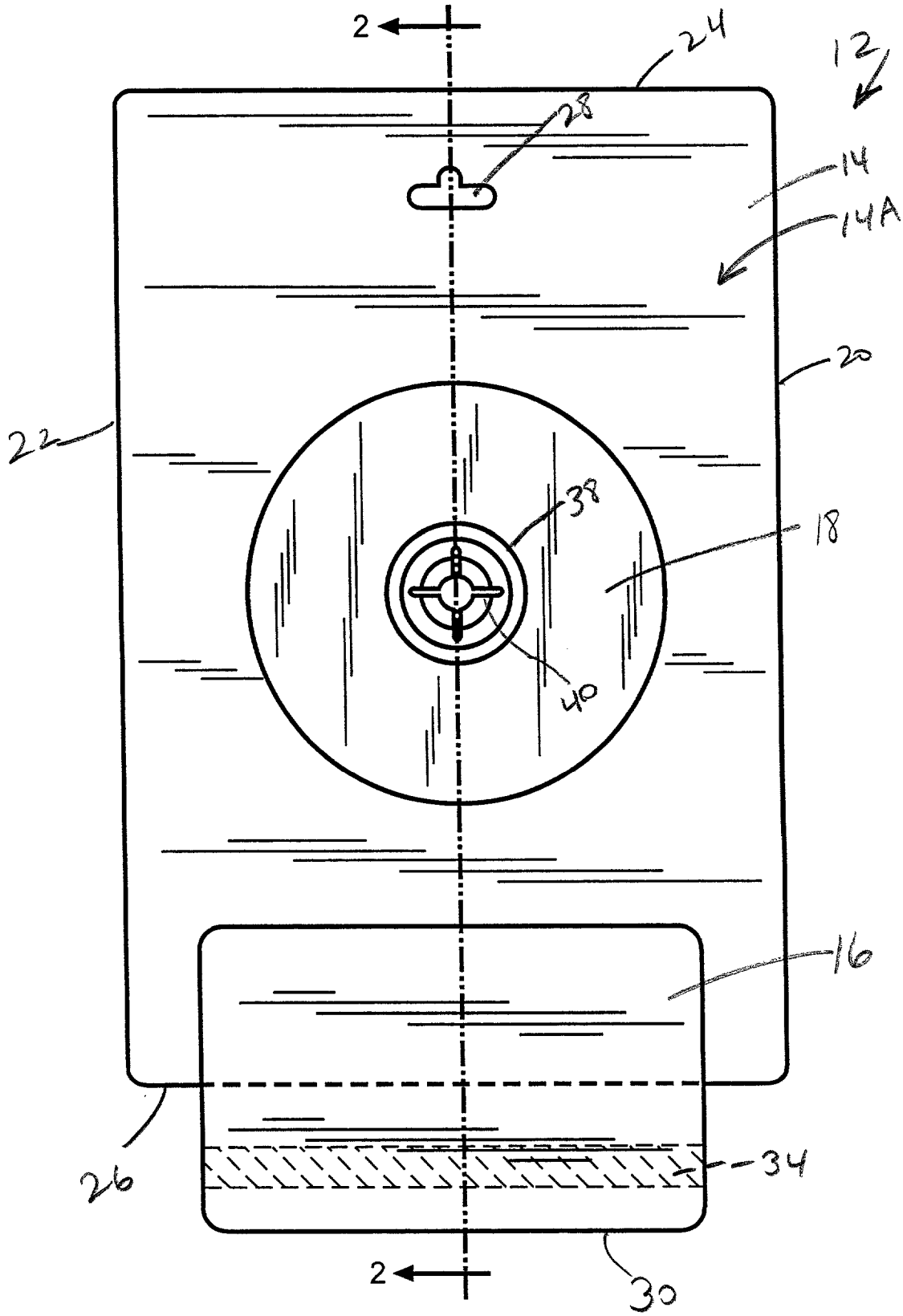


FIG.1

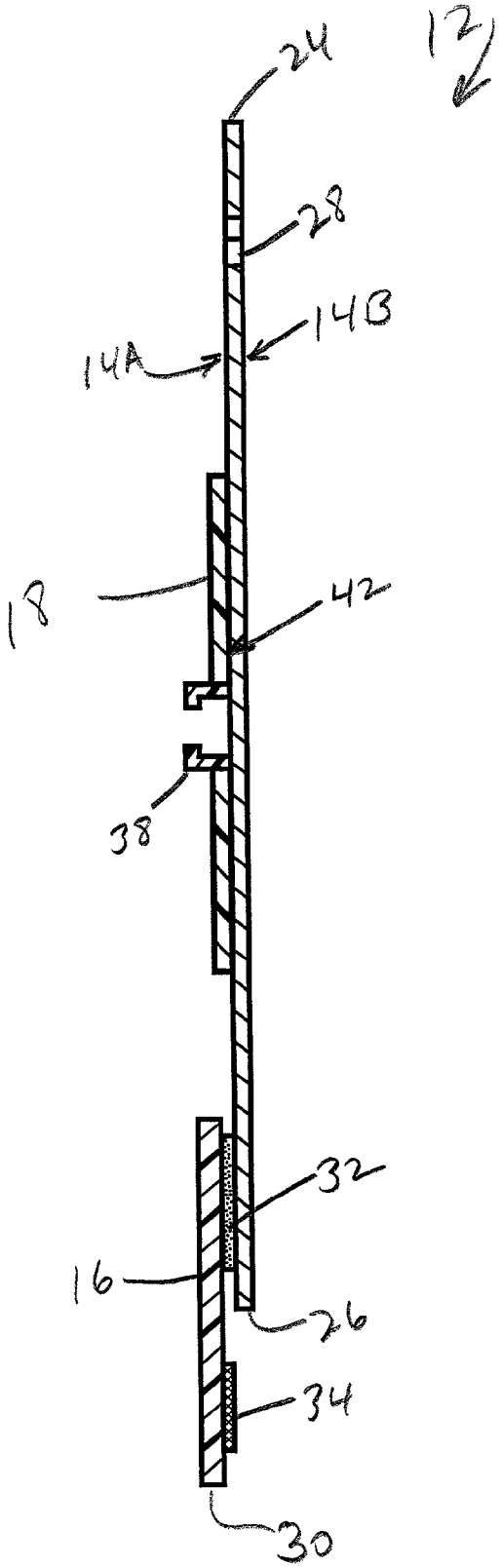


FIG. 2

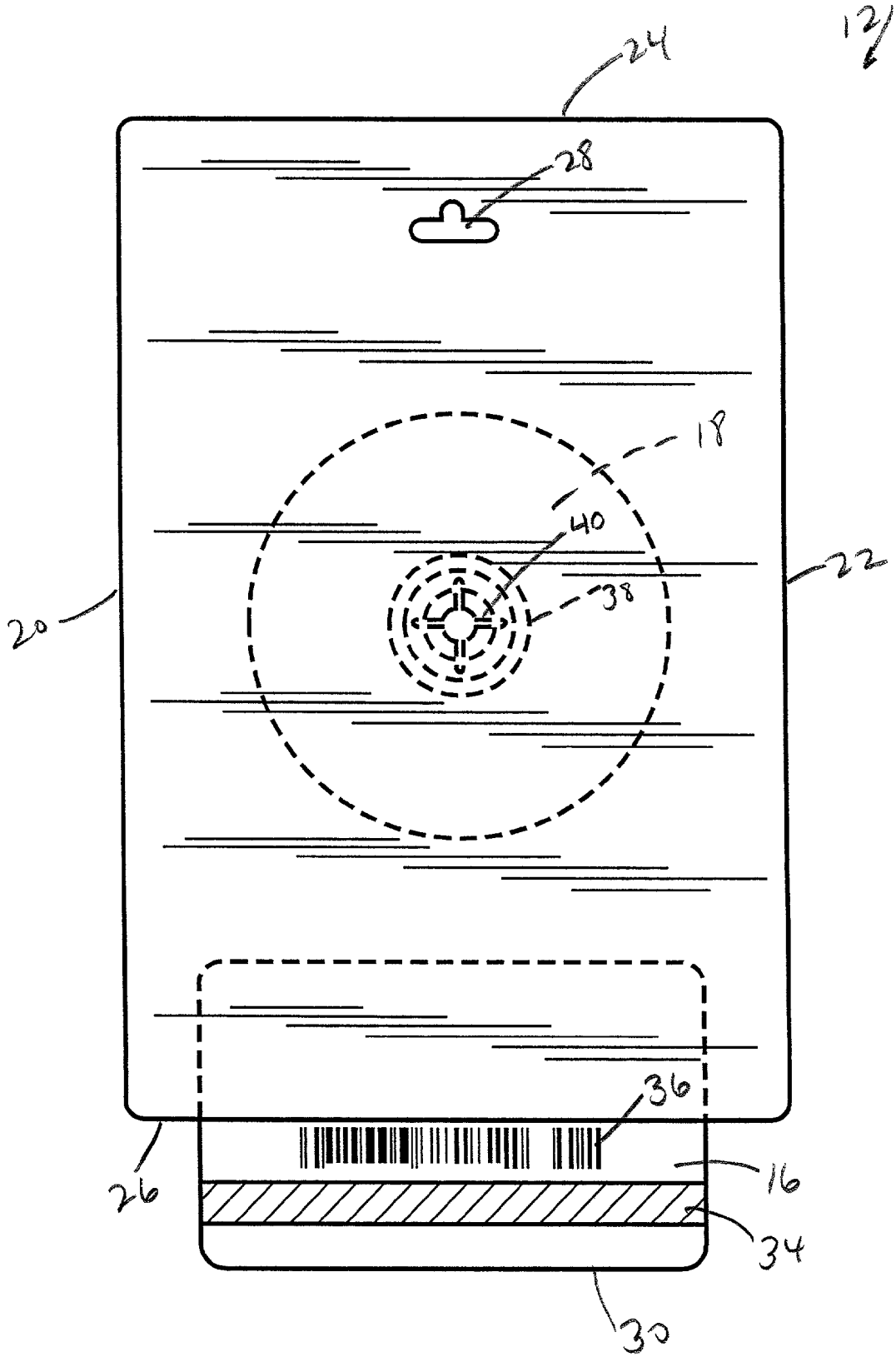


FIG. 3

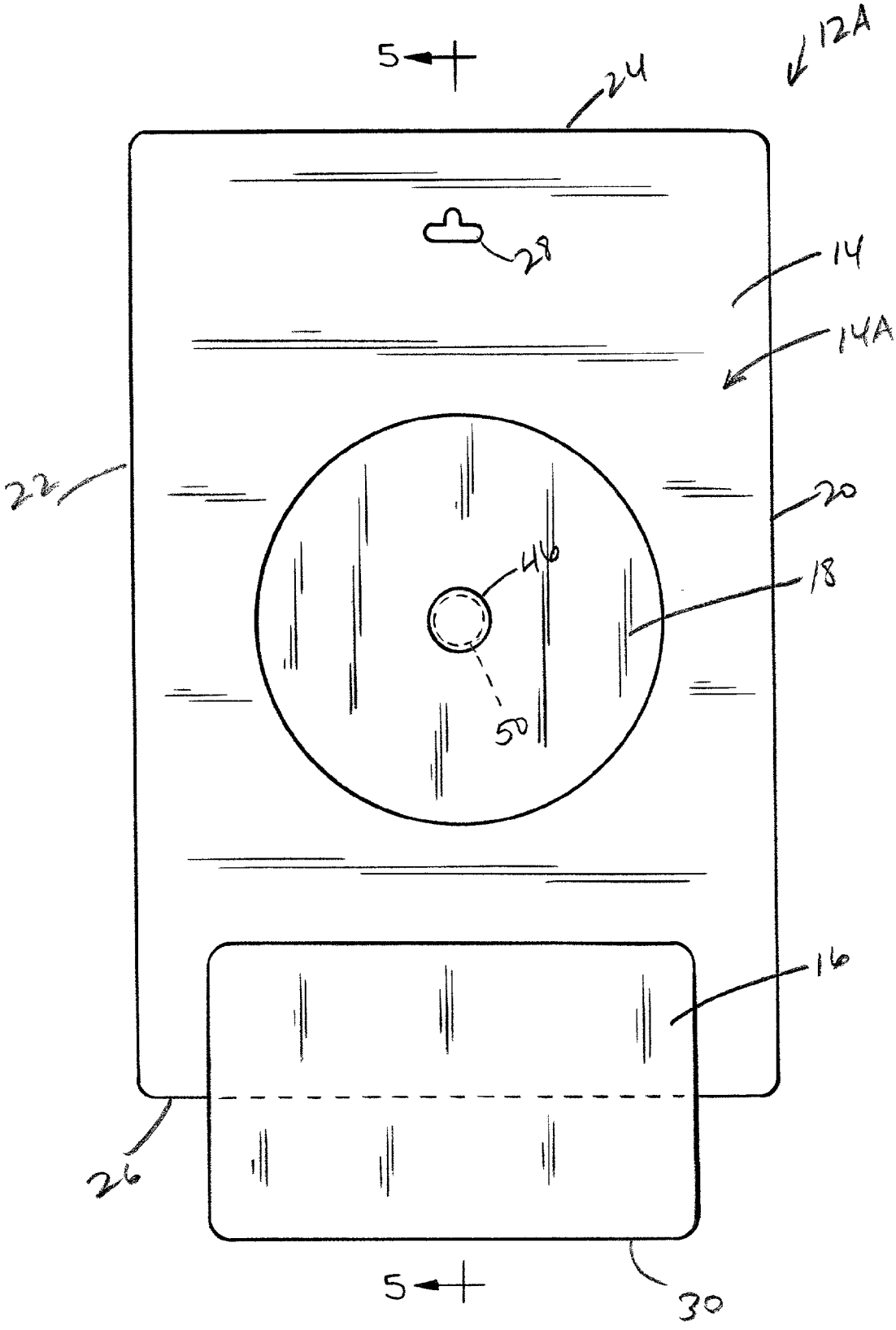


FIG. 4

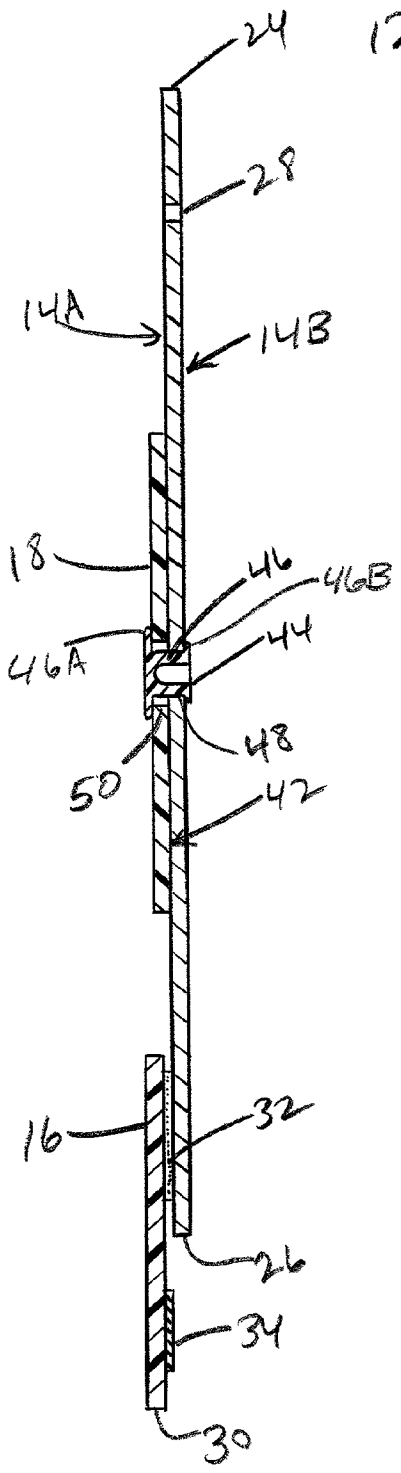


FIG. 5

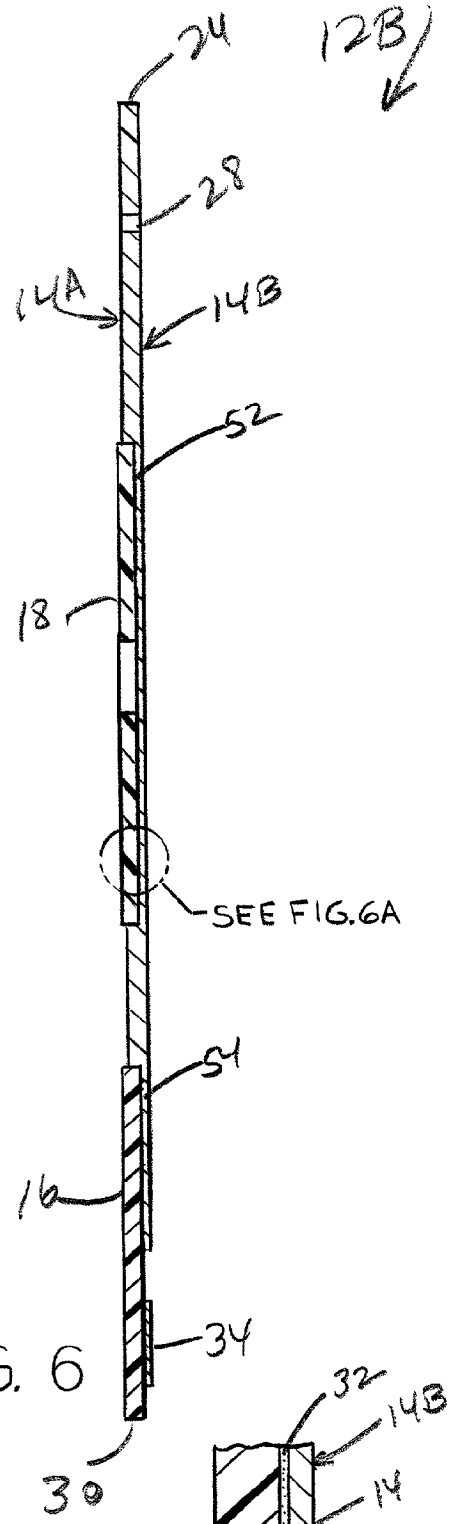


FIG. 6

FIG. 6A

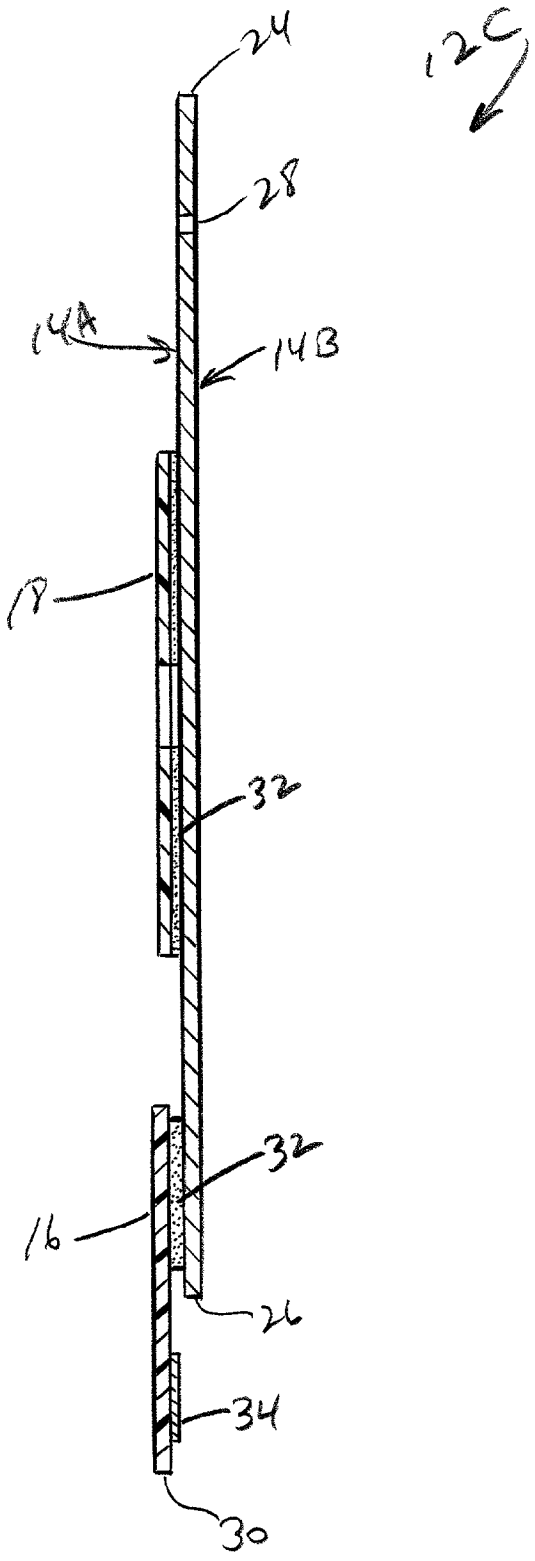

12C
24
28
14A
14B
18
32
32
16
26
34
30

FIG. 7

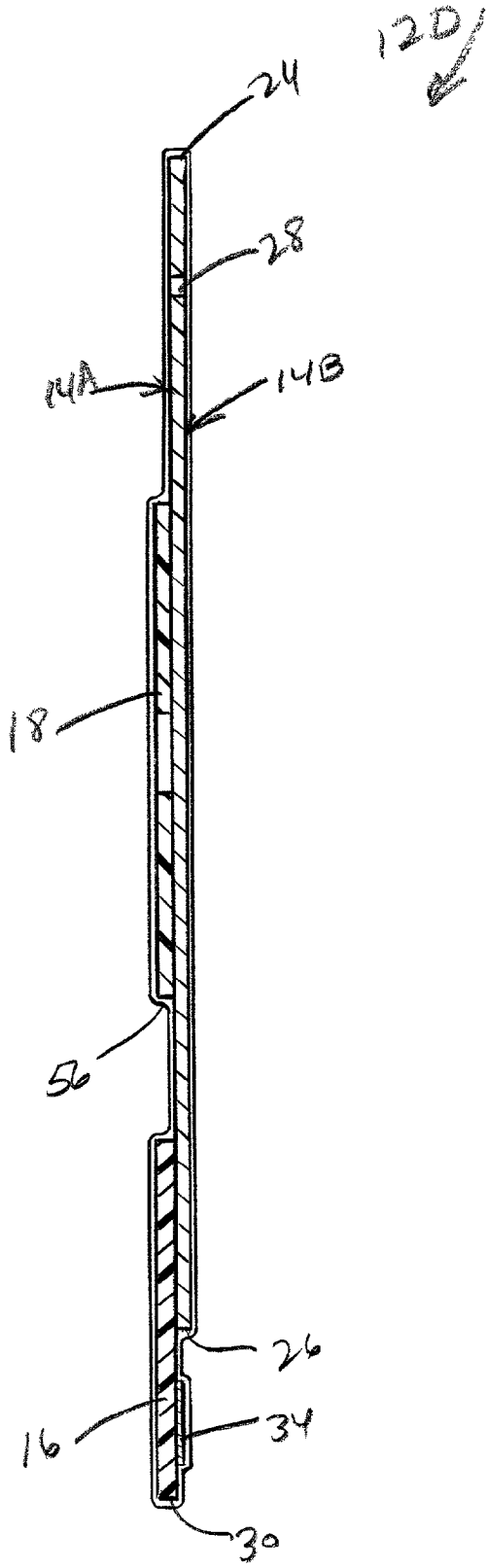

12D
24
28
14A
14B
18
56
26
16
34
30

FIG. 8

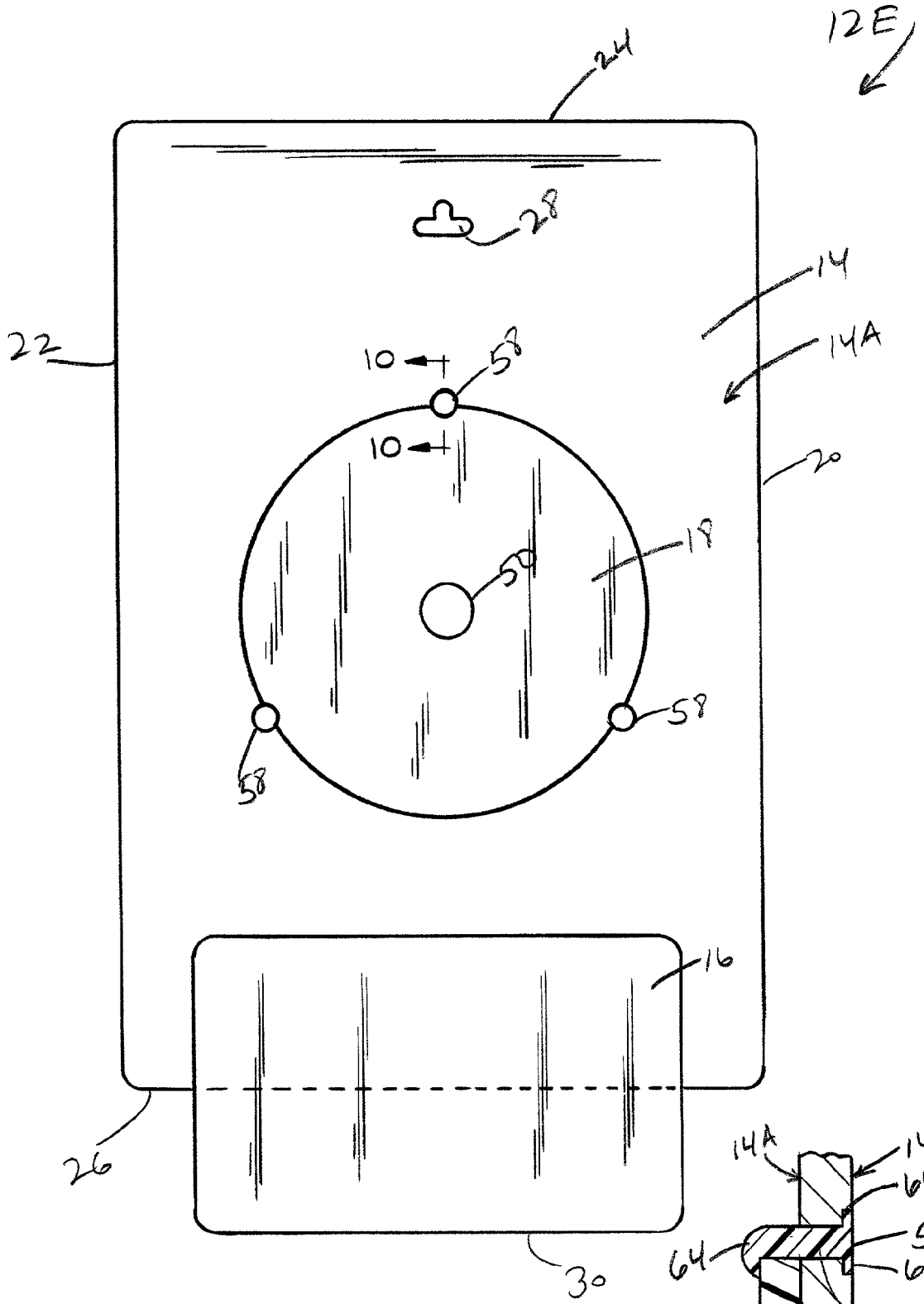

12E
24
28
14
14A
22
10
58
10
20
18
50
58
58
16
26
30

FIG. 9

14A
14B
66
58
64
62
60
18

FIG. 10

PREPAID INTERNET CD PACKAGE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The current invention relates to a package comprising a panel card having a compact disc (CD) and a point-of-sale card removably secured thereto. The compact disc is programmed to route a user to a chosen website on the Internet that prompts the user to enter a PIN. The PIN may be contained on the point-of-sale card packaged with the compact disc, or the PIN is embedded in the CD itself. The user is then able to access the Internet and, if desired, download files, such as of music and other information, from a website. The unit of measured access may vary by opportunity, by minutes on the Internet, or by digital downloads. For example, when the measure is digital downloads, the user may be on the Internet as long as they want, but as files are downloaded, an accounting is done between files downloaded and the number of files prepaid. The files are downloaded to the user's hard drive or other storage device or media, then sent to any one of a number of output devices, such as CD burners, diskettes, tape, MP3 players and others. In that respect, the point-of-sale card may or may not be a prepaid value card, however, if the PIN is embedded in the CD, the point-of-sale card is preferably a value card.

[0003] 2. Prior Art

[0004] There has been a need to develop a system whereby a person can access the Internet and, if desired, download music or other electronic files from a web site and then pay for the downloaded information from an established account such as a prevalued credit card. Heretofore, the prior art has described various prepaid card assemblies. However, they are not paired with a compact disc programmed to route a user to a data file on the Internet.

[0005] For example, U.S. Pat. No. 5,650,209 to Ramsburg et al. teaches a card package assembly in which a web of cardstock is imaged on opposed first and second faces and the faces are spot coated with plastic at spaced locations. In this manner, a card is formed out of each of the spot coated locations. This technology contrasts the current invention where the prevalued card is not integral to the cardstock, but is removably attached to the panel by adhesive or other means.

[0006] Also, U.S. Pat. No. 5,667,247 to Ramsburg et al. describes a card package assembly in which a package for a prevalued card is formed by folding a sheet of material into three portions. However, with this construction the card is not visible to a potential purchaser. Moreover, the current invention includes a compact disc with the prevalued card, and the two are used in tandem rather than the card being used alone.

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 5,740,915 to Williams describes a package for a prepaid calling card. The package comprises a pair of panels which are foldably joined and disposed in a flat face contacting relation with the calling card partially housed therein and partially disposed beyond the periphery of the folded panels. This positioning facilitates manipulation of the exposed calling card in an activation process.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 5,918,909 to Fiala et al. describes a package for a credit card having an exposed data-encoded strip displaced externally remote from a main panel supporting the credit card. However, the Fiala et al. patent does not disclose the use of the credit card in conjunction with a compact disc.

[0009] Thus, as previously stated, there is a need for a package combining a point-of-sale card and a compact disc. This package is used in conjunction with the Internet to access a website and, if desired, download music and/or other electronic files onto a data storage device and to pay for them from a separate account, which can be the point-of-sale card or other payment method.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The package of the present invention consists of a unitary panel card having a compact disc and a point-of-sale card removably attached to the panel. The CD may be affixed by shrinkwrap, a repositionable adhesive, plastic insert or other mechanical retainer. The associated card may or may not contain a magnetic strip and/or a barcode, and is activated at the time of purchase as a point-of-sale card. In one embodiment of the present invention, the point-of-sale card contains a PIN and is used, in turn, for activating the CD. In another embodiment, the PIN is embedded in the CD itself. In either case, the point-of-sale card may or may not be a value card used to pay for Internet access and possibly downloaded data files. In that respect, the CD is then used in conjunction with the Internet to access a website and, if desired, download music or other desired electronic files onto a separate data storage device. If the point-of-sale card is a value card, preferably additional value can be added to the card, or a separate payment account is used to pay for the Internet access and downloaded data files.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] **FIG. 1** is a plan view of the package of the present invention containing a point-of-sale card and compact disc, and showing the compact disc attached by a retaining hub.

[0012] **FIG. 2** is a cross-sectional view along line **2-2** of **FIG. 1**.

[0013] **FIG. 3** is a rear view of the package depicting a magnetic strip and bar code on the back of the point-of-sale card.

[0014] **FIG. 4** is a plan view of the package showing the compact disc removably attached to the main card by a plastic rivet.

[0015] **FIG. 5** is a cross-sectional view along line **5-5** of **FIG. 4**.

[0016] **FIG. 6** is a detailed sectional view showing the compact disc and point-of-sale card recessed into the main panel.

[0017] **FIG. 6A** is an enlarged view of the indicated section in **FIG. 6**.

[0018] **FIG. 7** is a detailed sectional view showing the compact disc removably attached to the card by adhesive.

[0019] **FIG. 8** is a detailed sectional view showing the compact disc and point-of-sale card removably attached to the main panel by shrinkwrap.

[0020] **FIG. 9** is a plan view of the main panel having the compact disc thereto attached by mechanical clasps.

[0021] **FIG. 10** is a cross-sectional view along line **10-10** of **FIG. 9**.

BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0022] Turning now to the drawings, **FIGS. 1 through 3** show one embodiment of the prepaid Internet CD package **12** of the present invention comprising a main panel **14** of a card stock paper or plastic material having opposed face and back surfaces **14**A and **14**B providing the panel with a thickness. While not shown in the drawings, the face and back surfaces **14**A, **14**B may be provided with printed text and graphics, as desired. A point-of-sale card **16** and a compact disc **18** are supported on the face **14**A of the main panel **14**. The main panel **14** further consists of spaced apart side edges **20** and **22** extending to and meeting with an upper edges **24** and a lower edge **26**. Upper edge **24** is parallel to lower edge **26** and both edges **24** and **26** are perpendicular to side edges **20** and **22**. An opening **28** is located proximate to the upper edge **24** at the midpoint between side edges **20** and **22**. The opening **24** is used to facilitate display of the cards on sales racks and the like.

[0023] As further shown in **FIG. 1**, the main panel **14** supports the point-of-sale card **16** overlaying the lower edge **26** and centered between the side edges **20**, **22**. The point-of-sale card **16** has a lower edge **30** parallel to and spaced somewhat below the lower edge **26** of the main panel **14**. The point-of-sale card **16** is removably secured to the face surface **14**A of the main panel **14** by an adhesive **32** (**FIG. 2**). Preferably, the adhesive **32** is a repositionable/ultraremovable tape, as described in U.S. application Ser. No. 09/811,902, filed Mar. 19, 2001, the disclosure of which is assigned to the assignee of the present invention and incorporated herein by reference. This type of tape is of a double sided construction having a first side of a relatively low tack adhesive and a second side of a relatively aggressive adhesive. The aggressive adhesive side contacts the main panel **14** where the contact is intended to be permanent. The point-of-sale card contacts the low tack adhesive so that the card is readily removed from the main panel **14** for use. The point-of-sale card **16** may or may not contain a magnetic strip **34** (**FIG. 3**) and a barcode **36**.

[0024] The magnetic strip **34** and the barcode **36** are used for activating the card **16** at the point-of-sale or by other means. The point-of-sale card **16** is used in conjunction with the compact disc **18** for accessing the Internet and, if desired, downloading music and/or other electronic information from a website onto a separate information storage device (not shown), such as a CD burner, a diskette, a tape, MP3 player, and the like. In one embodiment of the present invention, the card **16** contains a PIN which the user enters into a website. Once the system recognizes the PIN, the compact disc **18** provides measured access to the Internet or to a restricted site for a defined period of time, typically measured in minutes, or until a prepaid number of measured digital files are downloaded. In the latter case, the user may be on the Internet as long as they want, but they are only charged for actual downloads. If digital downloads are the unit of measure, the system can be constructed so that the user is limited to one website, or a grouping of websites. The downloaded files may be measured in dollars or file downloads as purchase decrements from the original or remaining monetary balance or file download credits on the card or from a separate account. Additional value can be added to the card **16** using a credit card, debt card, checking account, and the like, or payment for Internet access and downloads is from a separate account.

[0025] In another embodiment of the present invention, the point-of-sale card is a value card devoid of a PIN. Instead, the PIN is embedded in the compact disc **18**, and when the CD is loaded into a computer, the PIN is recognized as a valid number and the compact disc **18** is activated for Internet access.

[0026] The compact disc **18** is attached to the main panel **14** at about the midpoint of the panel. In that respect, the compact disc **18** is removably secured to the face surface **14**A of the panel **14** at a position about half way between the side edges **20**, **22** and about half way between the upper and lower edges **24**, **26** using a retaining hub **38**. Retaining hub **38** is an annular member permanently secured to the main panel **14** and having a cross pattern of slits **40**. The outer perimeter of the hub **38** is sized somewhat greater than a central opening in the compact disc. The slits **40** enable the hub **38** to flex inwardly as the compact disc is being moved over and down the hub towards the face surface **14** of the panel **14**. Once the compact disc has cleared the outer perimeter of the hub, the hub returns to its relaxed position with the compact disc secured in place. In this position, a bottom surface **42** of the CD **18** is parallel to the upper surface **14**A of the main panel **14** and in a closely spaced relationship therewith.

[0027] In a further embodiment of the prepaid Internet CD package **12**A shown in **FIGS. 4 and 5**, the compact disc **18** is removably secured to the main panel **14** using a deformable rivet **44**. In that manner, the bottom surface **42** of the CD **18** is parallel to the upper surface edge **14**A of the main panel **14** and in a closely spaced relationship therewith. The rivet **44** has a central shaft **46** connecting to first and second heads **46**A and **46**B. The shaft **46** is received in the coaxial central openings **48** and **50** of the respective main panel **14** and CD **18**. The first head **46**A of the rivet **44** is sized somewhat greater than the diameter of the main panel opening **50** while the second head **46**B is sized somewhat greater than the diameter of compact disc opening **48**. In that respect, the rivet **46** is made of a material such as plastic which is readily deformed at the heads **46**A and **46**B or at the shaft **46** to enable a user to separate the CD **18** from the main panel without damaging the CD. The point-of-sale card **16** is removably secured to the main panel **14** by an adhesive **32**, such as the previously described repositional/ultraremovable tape.

[0028] Another embodiment of the prepaid Internet CD package **12**B is shown in **FIGS. 6 and 6**A. In this embodiment, the main panel **14** is provided with a first recess **52** and a second recess **54**, both extending into the thickness of the panel from the face surface **14**A thereof. The first recess **52** is contained within the perimeter of the main panel **14** bounded by the side edges **20**, **22** and the upper and lower edges **24**, **26**, and centered at about the mid-point of the respective edge pairs. The second recess **54** is provided at the lower edge **26** centered between the side edges **20**, **22**. Both recesses **52** and **54** are provided into the thickness of

the main panel **14** by a calendering process if the stock material is of paper board, and the like, or by molding if the stock material is of plastic. In any event, the first recess **52** is sized to receive the compact disc **18** while the second recess **54** is sized to receive the point-of-sale card **16**. In both cases, the compact disc **18** and the point-of-sale card **16** are secured in their respective recesses **52** and **54** by an adhesive **32**, such as the previously described repositionable/ultraremovable tape.

[**0029**] A further embodiment of the present prepaid Internet CD package **12**C is shown in **FIG. 7**. In this embodiment, both the point-of-sale card **16** and the compact disc **18** are removably secured to the main panel **14** by means of an adhesive **32**. Again, a preferred adhesive is the previously described repositionable/ultraremovable tape. In that respect, this embodiment is somewhat similar to that described in **FIGS. 4 and 5** in that the point-of-sale card **16** is removably secured to the main panel **14** by an adhesive. This embodiment, however, differs from the prepaid Internet CD package **12**A in that the compact disc **18** is not attached to the main panel **14** by a rivet **46**, but by an adhesive **32**, such as the previously described repositionable/ultraremovable tape. For that reason, there is no need for the main panel **14** to have an opening, such as opening **48**A.

[**0030**] Still a further embodiment of the prepaid Internet CD package **12**D is shown in **FIG. 8**. In this embodiment, the point-of-sale card **16** and the compact disc **18** are secured to the main panel **14** by shrinkwrap **56**. The shrinkwrap material **56** is of a plastic material which is draped completely about the perimeter of the main panel **14** including the face and back surfaces **14**A, **14**B, the card **16** and the compact disc **18** to seal the package **12**D therein. Those skilled in the art will readily recognize materials useful for the shrinkwrap.

[**0031**] Another embodiment of the prepaid Internet CD package **12**E is shown in **FIGS. 9 and 10**. In this embodiment, the point-of-sale card **16** is removably secured to the main panel **14** by any suitable means previously described in accord with this invention. The compact disc **18** is secured to the main panel **14** by a plurality of retainers **58**. While **FIG. 9** shows three retainers **58** spaced equidistant about the perimeter of the compact disc **18**, the present invention contemplates a greater number of retainers, if desired. Each retainer **58** comprises a shaft **60** connected to an enlarged head **62** and a hook **64** opposite the head **62**. The shaft **60** and enlarged head **62** are received in an opening **66** in the main panel **14** such that the head **62** is flush with the back surface **14**B thereof and prevents the retainer **58** from being pulled through the panel **14**. The hook **64** extends beyond the face surface **14**A of the panel **14** a distance corresponding to the thickness of the compact disc **18** such that the compact disc is held firmly against the panel. As with the deformable rivet **46** of the embodiment shown in **FIG. 5**, the retainers **58** are preferably of a plastic material which is readily deformed to enable a user to remove the compact disc **18** from the main panel **14**. In the alternative, the retainers **58** are rotatable to remove the hook **64** from the capturing relationship with respect to the compact disc **18**.

[**0032**] Thus, it can be seen that the present invention is directed to a package intended to be sold at retail to a person desiring to access the Internet and, if desired, download music and other data files from a website. The package includes a compact disc and point-of-sale card. The compact disc is loaded into a machine electronically connected to the Internet. In one embodiment, the point-of-sale card contains a PIN which then lets the user have measured access to the Internet. In another embodiment, the PIN is embedded in the CD itself. Internet access can simply be for browsing for a period of time or for the purpose of downloading information files to a separate data capture device, such as the user's hard drive. The point-of-sale card can also be a value card, or the user can have monetary credits at a separate account. The point-of-sale card preferably enables additional money or download credits to be added as desired. In the case where the point-of -sale card does not contain a PIN, it is preferably a value card.

[**0033**] While the preferred embodiment of the present invention has been disclosed, it will be appreciated that it is not limited thereto, but may be embodied within the scope of the following claims.

I claim:

1. A package, which comprises:

a) a main panel having a face surface and a back surface providing the main panel with a thickness;

b) a compact disc removably secured to the main panel; and

c) a point-of-sale card removably secured to the main panel.

2. The package of claim 1 wherein the main panel removably supports the compact disc laying against the face surface thereof and within a perimeter of the main panel.

3. The package of claim 2 wherein the compact disc is removably supported on the main panel by one of the group consisting of an adhesive tape, a deformable rivet, shrinkwrap, hook-shaped retainers and a retaining hub.

4. The package of claim 1 wherein the main panel removably supports the compact disc nested in a recess into the thickness of the main panel from the face surface thereof and within a perimeter of the main panel.

5. The package of claim 1 wherein the main panel removably supports the point-of-sale card laying against the face surface thereof.

6. The package of claim 1 wherein the point-of-sale card is removably supported on the main panel by an adhesive tape or shrinkwrap.

7. The package of claim 3 wherein a portion of the point-of-sale card extends beyond a perimeter of the main panel.

8. The package of claim 1 wherein the main panel removably supports the point-of-sale card nested in a recess into the thickness of the main panel from the face surface thereof.

9. The package of claim 8 wherein a portion of the point-of-sale card extends beyond a perimeter of the main panel.

10. The package of claim 1 wherein the main panel is of a paper stock or of a plastic material.

11. The package of claim 1 further comprising an opening in the main panel for hanging the package on a display device.

12. The package of claim 1 wherein the point-of-sale card contains a magnetic strip.

13. The package of claim 1 wherein the point-of-sale card contains a bar code.

14. The package of claim 1 wherein the point-of-sale card is either a credit card or a debit card.

15. The package of claim 1 wherein the point-of-sale card has a PIN.

16. The package of claim 1 wherein the compact disc contains a PIN.

17. A method for accessing the Internet, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a package comprising a main panel having a face surface and a back surface providing the main panel with a thickness, a compact disc removably secured to the main panel, and a point-of-sale card removably secured to the main panel;

b) removing the compact disc from the main panel and inserting the compact disc into a computer;

c) removing the point-of-sale card from the main panel, wherein at least one of the point-of-sale card and the compact disc contains a PIN, and entering the PIN into the computer to activate the compact disc; and

d) using the compact disc to access the Internet.

18. The method of claim 17 including providing the point-of-sale card as either a credit card or a debit card.

19. The method of claim 17 including downloading a data file from the Internet onto a data storage device.

20. The method of claim 19 including downloading the data file to one of the group consisting of a computer hard drive, a CD burner, a diskette, a tape and a MP3 player.

* * * * *