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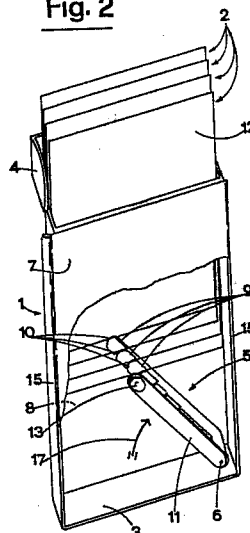
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54 Container for cards, in particular, credit cards and similar items.

57 In the container (1) disclosed, which serves to accommodate credit cards or similar items, cards of substantially uniform dimensions are accommodated by a box, parallelepiped in shape and provided with a lid (4) uppermost, from which they can be extracted singly in simple and convenient fashion. The box is provided internally with a device that incorporates an elongated element (5) exhibiting a plurality of steps (9) which, when operated from the outside, causes the cards to emerge partially and in varying degrees from the open top in a tiered array.

**Fig. 2**



## Description

The invention relates to a container for cards, and in particular, for credit cards and similar items.

Conventional holders utilized for the safekeeping of cards, such as credit cards, are variously embodied; nearly all present the common feature of having one or more pockets, the dimensions of which are such as to permit of accommodating the single credit cards. In effect, such holders constitute special wallets in which to keep cards, and are fashioned in a wide variety of materials, from leathers to plastics. If designed to carry a substantial number of cards, in particular, these conventional wallets are beset by a number of limitations which render their use somewhat less than convenient. In many instances, in fact, users will experience a certain difficulty in extracting the card from the pocket in which it is inserted, and from which it tends to be inseparable. Moreover, where the wallet has a number of pockets arranged parallel and side by side, the drawback arises of not being able to identify and extract the required card with sufficient ease, especially when the card in question occupies one of the middle pockets and is therefore obscured by other cards.

In an attempt to overcome such drawbacks and provide a card holder that will take up the least possible space, one has seen the appearance of concertina type wallets consisting in a set of pockets, each one of which designed to accommodate one card, that are connected one to the next in the manner of a bellows and thus fold flat one against the other, gathering up into a pack.

The object of the invention is that of overcoming those drawbacks and inconveniences encountered with the use of conventional card wallets, achieved by adoption of a card container which features compact dimensions and is simple and practical to use. The stated objects and other objects besides are realized in a container according to the invention, which serves to hold cards, in particular, credit cards and similar items, and is characterized in that it comprises a box, parallelepiped in shape with an open top and a lid, of dimensions such that the space internally encompassed will accept a plurality of substantially identical cards stacked together in orderly fashion side by side, to an exact fit, and a manually operated device, located near the bottom of the box and accessible from the outside, by which the single cards are caused to emerge partially from the open top to different respective degrees by sliding in relation to one another in a direction parallel to their mutually breasted surfaces; in that the manually operated device comprises an elongated element, hinged about an axis disposed perpendicular to the front and back of the box, with which the breasted surfaces of the cards lie parallel, and shaped in such a way as to afford a succession of steps equal in number to the number of cards accommodated by the container; in that the steps exhibit respective surfaces, lying at different respective distances from the hinge axis, each one of which

is designed to enter into contact with the lower edge of a single card, and possessed of a dimension parallel to the hinge axis that is substantially equal to the overall thickness of a single card; and in that the manually operated device comprises an element for manipulation of the device, positioned on the outside of the box, that is associated and rotatable as one with the hinged element.

The invention will now be described in detail, by way of example, with the aid of the accompanying drawings, in which:

fig 1 is the schematic representation of a first embodiment of the container, viewed in perspective and in the closed configuration;

fig 2 is a perspective of the embodiment of fig 1 viewed in the open configuration;

fig 3 is the schematic representation of a second embodiment of the container, illustrated in cutaway and viewed in section through IV-IV of fig 4;

fig 4 shows part of a section taken through III-III in fig 3;

fig 5 is the same section as that of fig 4, showing the container in a different configuration;

fig 6 shows part of a section taken through VII-VII in fig 7, viewed in enlarged scale;

fig 7 is the section through VI-VI in fig 6.

With reference to the above drawings, 1 denotes a container, in its entirety, serving to accommodate cards 2, in particular credit cards or similar items of the general type.

The container 1 comprises a box of parallelepiped shape, the dimensions of which are such that the space internally encompassed will accept a plurality of substantially identical cards 2, stacked together in orderly fashion side by side, in an exact fit; 3 denotes the bottom of the box, located opposite an open top that is provided with a flip-up lid 4. The bottom end of the box incorporates a hand-operated device, accessible from outside, by means of which the cards 2 are made to emerge partly from the open top in a tiered formation, as shown in fig 2.

Operation of the device causes the cards 2 to emerge from the container 1 by sliding in relation to one another, moving in a direction parallel to their mutually breasted surfaces 12.

The device in question comprises a hinged element 5 of elongated form, associated with and rotatable about the axis of a pivot denoted 6; the axis in question lies perpendicular to the front 7 and the back 8 of the container, with which the surfaces 12 of the inserted cards 2 will be disposed parallel. The hinged element 5 is embodied in such a way as to afford a succession of steps 9, provided in number to match the number of cards 2 that can be held by the container 1. Each step 9 exhibits a surface 10, embodied as the segment of a cylinder with straight line generators that lie parallel to the axis of the pivot 6, that is designed to come into contact with the bottom edge of a single relative card 2; the width of

the surface 10, i.e. the dimension parallel to the axis of the pivot 6, is substantially equal to the overall thickness of a conventional credit card 2. In the embodiment illustrated, the distance between the surfaces 10 of any two adjacent steps 9, considered in a direction perpendicular to the axis of the pivot 6, remains constant.

11 denotes a lever, accommodated internally of a cavity formed in the front 7 of the container 1, which is disposed substantially parallel with the hinged element 5 and fastened thereto by one end, concurrently with the pivot 6 by which the element is hinged to the box. The remaining end of the lever 11 is shaped such as to offer an easily accessible appendage 13. The appendage 13 moves along a slot, created in the external wall of the hollow front 7 of the container and exhibiting the shape of arc to a circle, and is of dimensions such that it will not project beyond the outer surface of the front 7. The axis of rotation of the pivot 6, hence of the hinged element 5, is located near to one of the two corners of the box created between the bottom 3 and the two opposite upright sides 15; with the hinge axis thus positioned, it becomes possible to gain the maximum obtainable distance between the surfaces 10 offered by successive steps 9, hence maximum separation of the two adjacent cards 2 resting with their lower edges on the two successive surfaces, when sliding out vertically in relation to one another.

In the closed configuration (fig 1), the open top of the container 1 is covered by the lid 4, the hinged element 5 lies horizontal across the bottom 3, and the lower edges of the cards 2 therefore rest on the side of the element 5. The lid 4 is fastened by way of flexible catch components 16, one associated with the lid, the other with the container near to the relative top edge, that can be snapped together and separated by virtue of their elastic properties. Once having opened up the lid 4, the cards 2 carried by the container 1 can be made to emerge simply by applying manual pressure to the appendage 13 and rotating the hinged element 5 about the axis of the pivot 6 in the direction of the arrow denoted 17, the effect of which is that the surfaces 10 of the single steps 9 enter into contact with the lower edges of the relative cards 2 and urge them upwards. The arrangement of the surfaces 10 along the hinged element 5 is such as to dictate that the cards 2 are displaced vertically through dissimilar distances, and presented ultimately in a tiered array; thus, the card 2 effectively required can be singled out from the rest of the stack with considerable ease. Maximum extension of the cards 2 is obtained with the hinged element 5 disposed upright, or rather, when the appendage 13 occupies position B.

The cards are replaced, allowed to drop back into the box under their own weight, by returning the appendage 13 from position B to position A, in which the hinged element 5 lies parallel to the bottom 3. In keeping the lid 4 securely fastened, the catch components 16 prevent unwarranted emergence of the cards 2 in the container 1, as any departure from the horizontal position A of the hinged element 5, hence of the appendage 13, is disallowed.

In a second embodiment of the container illus-

trated in figs 3...7, unwarranted emergence of the cards 2 is also prevented with the lid open, by providing flexible strips 20 applied in symmetrical fashion to the inside faces of the two sides 15 of the box. Each strip 20 is embodied with two bulges 21, the convex sides of which are directed toward the inside of the box and proportioned so as to ensure that contact is made with the side edges of the cards 2; more exactly, the dimensions and shape of the two strips 20 are such that the distance separating the inward-facing convex sides of each symmetrically disposed pair of bulges is marginally less than the transverse dimensions of the cards 2.

Insertion and retention of the cards 2 are rendered possible by the elastic properties of the strips 20, which will flex when impinged up by the cards, and thereafter exert a degree of pressure on the edges of the cards sufficient to prevent their unwarranted withdrawal from the container when open.

The retaining action produced by the strips 20 will allow the cards 2 to extend in the characteristic tiered formation described above, regardless of the position assumed by the container.

In this embodiment, the cards 2 are replaced simply by applying gentle pressure to their top edges, the result of which is that the hinged element 5 will be pushed downward by the lower edges of the cards and returned to its initial position parallel with the bottom 3 of the container.

Any danger of jamming is forestalled by virtue of the fact that, when rotated to its maximum travel and occupying position B, the hinged element 5 lies at an angle of less than 90° from position A.

The strips 20 are fixed to the sides 15 of the box at their bottom ends, and provided at their top ends with angled appendages 22 that function as springs, flexing in such a way as to urge against the lid 4 and hold it in the open position. More exactly, each appendage 22 is flexible, capable of bending within a plane parallel to the side 15 of the box against which the strip 20 is breasted, and positioned with its uppermost extremity in contact with the top of the lid 4. The lid is hinged about an axis located at the top edge of the box, and provided with a fastening device that comprises a socket 23, formed in the front edge of the lid itself, and an element 24 in the form of a hook, capable of movement in a direction parallel to the axis about which the lid is hinged. The hook element 24 exhibits a catch 25 which engages in the socket 23 and is held therein by a spring 26. The top of the catch 25 is embodied with an angled surface 27 that interacts with the lip of the underside of the socket 23; accordingly, with gentle pressure applied to the lid when brought down onto the box, the hook element 24 will be drawn back, allowing the lid to register against the top edge of the front 7 and shut completely, the catch 25 being urged into the socket 23 by the spring 26.

#### Claims

- 1) A container for cards, in particular, credit

cards and similar items, characterized:

-in that it comprises a box, parallelepiped in shape with an open top and a lid (4), of dimensions such that the space internally encompassed will accept a plurality of substantially identical cards (2) stacked together in orderly fashion side by side, to an exact fit, and a manually operated device, located near the bottom (3) of the box and accessible from the outside, by which the single cards are caused to emerge partially from the open top to different respective degrees by sliding in relation to one another in a direction parallel to their mutually breasted surfaces (12);

-in that the manually operated device comprises an elongated element (5), hinged about an axis disposed perpendicular to the front (7) and back (8) of the box, with which the breasted surfaces of the cards lie parallel, and shaped in such a way as to afford a succession of steps (9) equal in number to the number of cards (2) accommodated by the container;

-in that the steps exhibit respective surfaces (10), lying at different respective distances from the hinge axis, each one of which is designed to enter into contact with the lower edge of a single card, and possessed of a dimension parallel to the hinge axis that is substantially equal to the overall thickness of a single card; and

-in that the manually operated device comprises an element for manipulation purposes, positioned on the outside of the box, that is associated and rotatable as one with the hinged element (5).

2) Container as in claim 1, wherein the surface (10) of the step (9) designed to enter into contact with the lower edge of the single card consists in a segment of a cylindrical surface the straight line generators of which lie parallel with the axis of rotation of the hinged element (5).

3) Container as in claim 1, wherein the hinged element (5) is anchored to the box about an axis located a short distance from the bottom (3) and from one of two sides (15) which, together with the front (7) and back (8), constitute the four upright walls of the container.

4) Container as in claim 1, wherein the element by which the manually operated device is manipulated consists in a lever (11) disposed substantially parallel with the hinged element (5), one end of which is fastened to the hinged element concurrently with the pivot (6) by which the element is hinged to the box, and the remaining end embodied in such a way as to offer an easily accessible appendage (13).

5) Container as in claim 4, wherein the lever (11) is accommodated internally of a cavity formed in the front (7) of the box, and the appendage (13) moves along a slot exhibiting the shape of arc to a circle, and is of dimensions such that it will not project beyond the outer surface of the front (7).

6) Container as in claim 1, comprising a flip-up lid (4) that is hinged about an axis located at the top edge of the box and fastened or unfastened by way of flexible catch components (16), one associated with the lid (4), the other with the box near to the relative top edge, that can be snapped together and separated by virtue of their elastic properties.

7) Container as in claim 1, comprising retaining means, applied to the inside faces of the two sides (15) which together with the front (7) and back (8) constitute the four upright walls of the container, that are designed to interact with the side edges of the cards (2), thereby holding the cards in position and preventing their unwarranted emergence from the container.

8) Container as in claim 7, wherein the retaining means comprise at least one elastically deformable element in the form of a flexible strip (20) breasted with the inside face of the side wall (15) and embodied with at least one bulge (21) the convex side of which is directed toward the inside of the container and proportioned so as to ensure that contact is made with the side edges of the cards (2).

9) Container as in claim 8, comprising a flip-up lid (4) that is hinged about an axis located at the top edge of the box, wherein the top end of the strip (20) affords a flexible angled appendage (22) the uppermost extremity of which makes contact with the lid (4) and is capable of bending within a plane parallel to the side (15) of the box against which the strip (20) is breasted, thereby functioning as a spring and flexing in such a way as to urge against the lid (4) and hold it in the open position.

10) Container as in claim 1, comprising a flip-open lid (4) that is hinged about an axis located at the top edge of the box and fastened or unfastened by way of a fastening device consisting in:

-a socket (23), formed in the front edge of the lid;

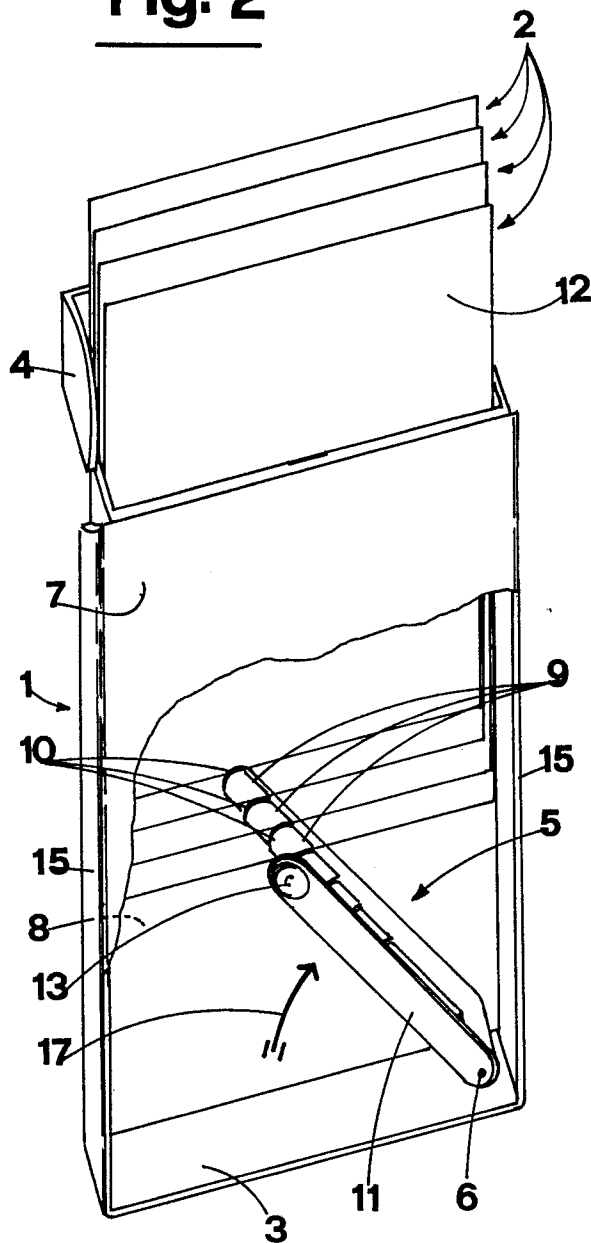
-an element (24) in the form of a hook, capable of movement in a direction parallel to the axis about which the lid is hinged, and affording a catch (25) that engages in the socket (23);

-spring means (26), by which the element (24) is urged toward the socket;

wherein the top of the catch (25) is embodied with an angled surface (27) that interacts with the lip of the underside of the socket (23) in such a way that the element (24) will be drawn back when gentle pressure is applied to close the lid.

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**Fig. 2**



**Fig. 1**

