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21.04.93 Bulletin 93/16(71) Applicant: **BELL & HOWELL PHILLIPSBURG****COMPANY**

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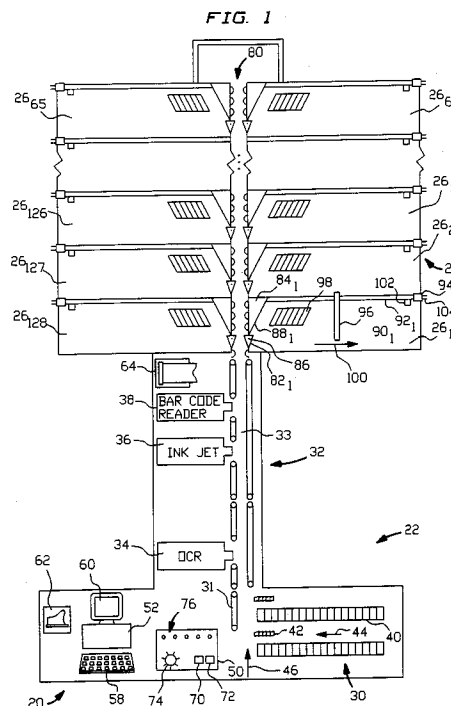
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(54) **Mail sorting apparatus and method.**

(57) A mail sorting machine (20) includes an input hopper (30); a mailpiece reading and processing section (22); and, a sorting bin section (24) comprising a plurality of bins (26₁ - 26₁₂₈). The reading and processing section (22) includes a CPU (54) which executes a program ANALYZE_MAIL for sorting third class mailpieces. The program ANALYZE_MAIL sorts the mailpieces included in a batch into packages, and then associates the packages into sacks or bags. The program ANALYZE_MAIL constructs the packages and sacks to obtain maximum postage discounts. Upon an initial pass of all mailpieces of a batch through the sorting machine (20), the program ANALYZE_MAIL generates output (TABLE 1) advising how the bins (26) are to be grouped for subsequent passes. The program ANALYZE_MAIL also generates output (TABLES 2A - 2E) advising, for each group, which bins (26) are to have their packages associated together for insertion into the same bag or sack. Advantageously, the mailpieces are sorted so that the bins (26) to be associated together are physically adjacent one another in the sorting machine (20). Bag tags are generated to tell an operator which bins are to be collected together to form a sack or bag, as well as the sack number and group number. The program ANALYZE_MAIL also includes an accounting capability for billing postage to

a possible plurality of clients having mailstreams included in the batch, and for allocating postage costs in accordance with whether the client's mailpieces qualify for postage discounts.





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 91 20 2690

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
Y	US-A-4 167 476 (JACKSON,D.H) * the whole document * ---	1-4,7-10	B07C3/00
Y	FR-A-2 302 150 (BERTIN ET CIE) * the whole document * ---	1-4,7-10	
A	EP-A-0 227 569 (SADAS SARL) * the whole document * -----	5,6,11, 12	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			B07C
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 09 FEBRUARY 1993	Examiner HERSKOVIC M.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			