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(54) **Automated portering system**

(57) In a mail processing centre, each mail item passes successive stations, travelling from one station to the next on a selected one of a number of available routes. Each route has associated therewith a number of mail carriers. The mail carriers are capable of independent and unconstrained movement between the two mail processing stations defining the end points of the relevant route. Each mail carrier has a wheeled base part, which includes drive means, and one of a plurality of exchangeable mail carrying devices.

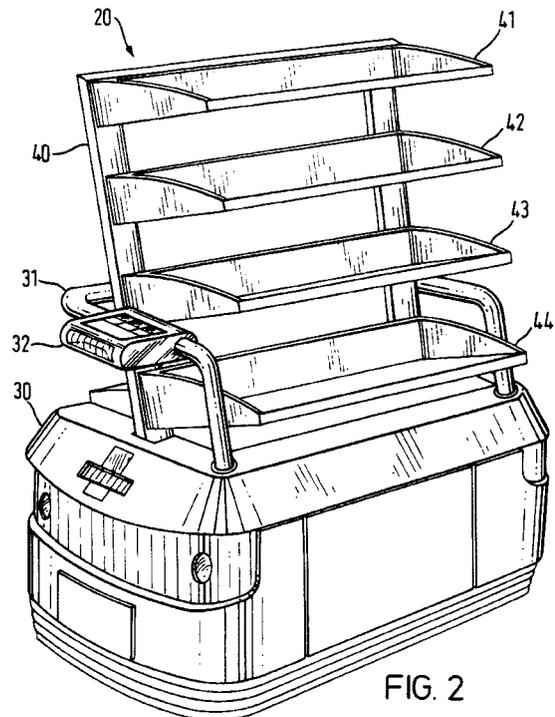


FIG. 2

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 97 30 4165

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.6)
Y	US 4 379 497 A (HAINSWORTH THOMAS E ET AL) 12 April 1983	1-4,7, 10-12, 16,17	B07C1/00 B07C3/02
A	* column 4, line 6 - column 5, line 54; figures 1,2 * * column 1, line 23 - line 29 * ---	5,6,8,9, 13,14	
Y	EP 0 618 523 A (SHINKO ELECTRIC CO LTD) 5 October 1994 * abstract; figure 15 * ---	1-4,7	
Y	US 4 020 918 A (HOUSKAMP ROBERT W ET AL) 3 May 1977	10-12, 16,17	
A	* the whole document * ---	15	
A	GB 2 129 161 A (INDUSTRY THE SECRETARY OF STAT) 10 May 1984 * the whole document * ---	1,2,4,7, 10,17	
A	EP 0 176 158 A (ALFA ROMEO SPA) 2 April 1986 * abstract; figure 1 * * page 5, line 13 - page 6, line 9; figure 2 * ---	1,2,4,7, 10,17	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) B07C G05B G05D
A	US 4 802 096 A (HAINSWORTH THOMAS E ET AL) 31 January 1989 * the whole document * -----	10,16	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 26 February 1999	Examiner Forlen, G
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>			

EPO FORM 1503 03.92 (P04/C01)

**CLAIMS INCURRING FEES**

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:



The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-9

Mail processing with transporting carriers

2. Claims: 10-17

automated mail carrier

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 97 30 4165

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

26-02-1999

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