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(71) Applicants:
- **2f2 (V.o.f.)**
  2261 DK Leidschendam (NL)
- **Bogers, Freddy**
  2261 DK Leidschendam (NL)
- **Wensing, Franciscus Egidius Bernardus**
  3123 RP Schiedam (NL)

(72) Inventor: **Wensing, Franciscus Egidius Bernardus**
3123 RP Schiedam (NL)

(74) Representative: **Assendelft, Jacobus H.W.**
Maartensweer 13
2265 DH Leidschendam (NL)

(54) Envelope

(57) The invention concerns an envelope and a broadsheet for it, whereby the envelope is suited to be used a second time and for that purpose contains a second seal flap (12). The second seal flap (12) can be part of the front panel (1) of the envelope. The envelope can consequently be torn in two along a tear-off perforation (5, 5') and may contain two address windows (14).

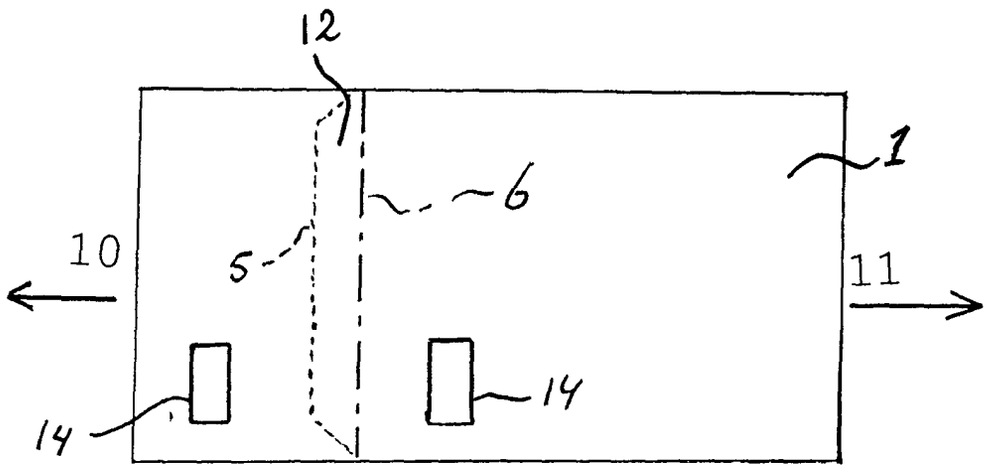

Fig 2

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Description

[0001] The invention concerns an envelope that is meant, in particular, to dispatch flat mail, such as one or more sheets of paper or any other material in sheets. It also concerns a broadsheet for the production of an envelope and a postal item with return envelope.

[0002] Certain postal items require the recipient to send a reply by mail, for instance a proof of recorded delivery or a reply card. With the increase of so-called mailings the phenomenon of send-and-reply takes on enormous proportions. In order to get a greater response it was found necessary to facilitate the use of reply cards. Today, it is common practice, to enclose a separate (stamped and) addressed envelope in the sender envelope.

[0003] Enclosing such envelopes shows (among others) the following disadvantages; the weight increases and hence postage charges are increased; materials are wasted and consequently this leads to greater costs and more pollution; separate production of different envelopes is unavoidable; inserting return envelopes in the sender envelopes adds logistic problems.

[0004] The invention aims to eliminate one or more of the disadvantages that result from the familiar postal items that demand a reply.

[0005] Thereto in one aspect an envelope was developed of which part can be used as return envelope. In general this part is smaller than the original envelope. On the envelope a pattern may be printed along which the recipient must cut to obtain a single broadsheet for the return envelope; this broadsheet is first folded along lines that, by preference, have been pre-folded and then sealed with adhesive strips. Or inside the envelope, against the back of it, a broadsheet for the return envelope may be included of which adhesive strips, necessary for sealing the return envelope, are part. It is possible that the envelope includes several such parts from which the return envelope must be construed.

[0006] By preference, this is an integral part of the envelope, i.e. the front and/or the back of it are (at least partly) determined by it. It should be easy to separate this part from the envelope; this may be done along one or more lines that have been applied in an appropriate pattern to weaken the paper, such as perforation lines or partly weakened tissue of other materials for the production of envelopes, or by applying a suitable glue that allows separation without damage. In this way part of the original envelope can be re-used as a next envelope.

[0007] By preference, this part is construed in such a way that it forms a return envelope that, once it has been separated from the original envelope, only has to be filled and sealed along one single side. In this case this part, when still part of the original envelope, already has at least one, more preferably two and most preferably three sides along which the front and back of the envelope are stuck together.

[0008] In another aspect a single broadsheet for the production of an envelope, such as the one described above, was developed with at least one part that is meant to serve as return envelope, for which this broadsheet should show a suitable pattern, such as a dotted line along which this part should be cut out or a line along which the paper has been weakened in order to separate this part. As an alternative this part can be separate from this broadsheet and, for instance, bonded onto it to be used as the contents of the envelope that was thus folded from and adhered to the broadsheet. The broadsheet contains the usual provisions necessary for the production of envelopes, such as a front- and back panel, one or more flaps to link the front and back panels and consequently close the envelope on all sides, and also one or more preshaped folding lines.

[0009] In another aspect, a postal item was developed with a return envelope, in which one or more informative sheets are enclosed, of which at least one sheet contains a part that can serve as return envelope, whereto this sheet preferably shows a suitable pattern, such as a dotted line, along which this part should be cut out or a line along which the paper has been weakened in order to separate this part. . As an alternative this part can be separate from this sheet and, for instance, stuck onto it.

[0010] Moreover, `return mail' also implies the forwarding to any other address than that of the original sender of this postal item. As such the phrase 'return mail' covers any further use as an envelope.

[0011] Below, the invention is further explained through a number of non-restricting examples, referring to the enclosed drawings, in which

Figure 1 is a top view of a broadsheet in accordance with the invention;
Figure 2 is a top view of an envelope in accordance with the invention;
Figure 3 is a bottom view of an envelope in accordance with the invention;
Figure 4 is a top view of the part that forms the return envelope of an envelope in accordance with the invention;
Figure 5 is a top view of the closed return envelope of figure 4.

[0012] The single broadsheet of figure 1 consists of a front panel 1, a flap 2 to seal the top of the envelope connected to it by a folding line, two closing flaps 3 on either side of the front panel connected to it by two respective folding lines, and a back panel 4 connected to it by a folding line at the bottom. A parting line 5, 5', drawn as a dotted line, along which the paper should be weakened to produce a tear-off perforation, runs through the entire back panel 4, the front panel 1 and the seal flap 2. In the front panel 1 this perforation line 5 staggers, for the main part, from the remainder of this line 5' in the back panel 4 and seal flap 2, whereby these latter two are (for the main part) aligned. As a result of

the staggering path of the line 5, 5' a provision is made to form of a seal flap for a return envelope, which through this line 5, 5' is prepared in the envelope that is to be made from the broadsheet.

[0013] By first folding from the broadsheet of figure 1 the seal flaps 3 onto the front panel 1 and then the back panel 4 onto the front panel 1 and gluing them to the seal flaps 3, an envelope is produced with an integrated return envelope. The order of folding can, as a matter of course, be altered to obtain a similar result, as will be obvious to any expert.

[0014] Besides, it is also possible to manufacture an envelope without using the seal flaps 3, for instance by directly mutually connecting their, in broadsheet, free edges. The envelope may also be produced from more than one single broadsheet. Furthermore it is imaginable that the back panel 4 is replaced by a seal flap 3, while one or both seal flaps shown in the drawing are so enlarged that their edges overlap when folded onto the front panel, with which these edges are then mutually connected. Next, for instance, the seal flap substituting back panel 4 is folded and fastened.

[0015] After the envelope has been filled with, for instance, one or more sheets of paper, the seal flap 2 can be folded onto the back panel 4 and sealed to close the envelope completely. This envelope, closed on all sides, resembles figure 2 when viewed from the front and resembles figure 3 when viewed from the back. It should be obvious that the main part of the line 5, in which the paper was weakened, staggers in the front of the envelope from the line 5' on the back, over a distance in accordance with the height of the seal flap of the return envelope.

[0016] Preferably, in the front panel (figure 2) of the envelope a line that is, at least substantially, aligned with, and more preferably somewhat staggered in the direction of the weakened line 5 in the front panel (figure 2) compared to this line 5' in the back panel (figure 3), an (also in figure 1) drawn as a dotted and striped folding line 6 is made, to facilitate folding the seal flap 12.

[0017] By preference glue has been applied to the inside of the front panel (figures 1 and 2) in the area between the lines 5 and 6 to make it easy to seal the return envelope. Indeed, some glue may be applied to the outside of the back panel (figures 1 and 3) along the edge of the parting line 5' on the opposite side of parting line 5, i.e. the area where the seal flap 12 of the return envelope will be folded. Any glue that is used to seal envelopes, such as the glues that are made effective by moistening or heating can be used, but also peel-off strips for self-adhesive glues that need to be pressed close. It is also possible to use a type of glue that only sticks properly to itself or a specially prepared surface, for which also the outside of the back panel (figures 1 and 3) must be prepared in the area where the seal flap 12 of the return envelope is folded. Besides, apart from glue any other adhesive, such as barbed tape or Velcro, can be used.

[0018] By simultaneously pulling the short sides in the direction of the arrows 10 and 11, the envelope is parted along the line 5, 5' in two - not necessarily equal - parts. The return envelope thus obtained from the part on the right in the drawing of figure 2 is shown in top view in figure 4. It shows, on the left side of the drawing, the seal flap 12 and is only open on that side. Sealing this flap 12 produces a return envelope that is closed on all sides. Consequently, after pulling off the return envelope, only flap 12 must be sealed to close the return envelope completely. The part on the left of figure 2 may, for instance, be thrown away.

[0019] The envelope can also be torn by hand along the line 5, 5' starting from one of the edges. Jerking it offers the opportunity to open the envelope without damaging its contents. By preference the envelope is prepared to be jerked open, for which, for instance, a suitable design of the parting line 5, 5' is chosen. When torn open the envelope will, in general, have to be emptied first to avoid damaging the contents. Tearing it, however, is easier.

[0020] As shown in figure 2, the envelope can, for instance, have two windows 14 in the front panel, which are usually closed with a transparent material, such as foil. One window can be used by the first sender, the other by the addressee to return the return envelope. The return envelope only has one window. For easier administration the envelope, in the part of the return envelope, can be furnished with, for instance, pre-printed data, such as the address of the addressee or a code, such as a bar code. These data may, for instance, first be hidden under an easily removable label with the address data of the first addressee. Consequently, there is no further need for one or more windows.

[0021] As another alternative, the envelope can, in effect, have one window in the back panel, which is, for instance, part of the return envelope. In a design with one return envelope the envelope may have one window in its front and one in the back. In a design with more return envelopes the envelope may have one window in its front and one window for each return envelope in the back. Thus the data presented in the latter window (s) cannot be an obstacle in, for instance, automatic handling of mail, such as sorting, in which the front is scanned to read the proper address. To avoid such obstacles in other designs, the window(s) of the return envelope(s) may, for instance, be temporarily untransparent or covered. By preference, the window of the return envelope is placed in the same side (either front or back) of the envelope as seal flap 12.

[0022] The type of envelope shown in the figures has its seal flap on the long side. The envelope may also be designed differently, with the seal flap 2 on the short side. By preference, the return envelope is formed by that part of the envelope directly connected to the edge on the opposite side of the seal flap. It must be clear that the parting line 5, for the main part, either runs parallel with or perpendicular to the side on which the seal flap

2 is found.

[0023] Another type of envelope to which the invention is applicable is a so-called `expanding' or `accordion' envelope, with provisions on one or more of its edges to create extra space to allow the front and back of the envelope to move away from each other, so that the envelope may contain contents of substantial volume, such as a book. For that purpose, for instance, the folding line on the edges of the flat envelope that link the front and back panels is turned inwards from the respective edges, so that the envelope material, folded back onto itself, can be stretched from the folding lines on the edges of the front and back of the envelope, for instance by way of a respective folding line that lies, for the greater part, on the side of the envelope and nearer the middle. By preference, the parting line 5 also stretches through the parts that are folded onto each other. The bottom edge of the envelope can be designed in the same way, or as a conventional envelope, or it may have a strip, strengthened with, for instance, cardboard, of which the edges are linked with the front and back of the envelope by way of a fold, thus keeping the front and back at some distance from each other, whereby, in a flat envelope, this strip can lie level with the envelope, to which purpose there must be an extra fold in either the back or front of the envelope that runs parallel with this strip. For instance, this strip may consist of more than one flaps that, at least partly, overlap and are fastened to the respective front and back panel of the envelope.

[0024] Although described and shown here that the seal flap 12 of the return envelope is to be found in the front panel 1, it is also possible to place this seal flap 12 in the back panel 4.

[0025] Moreover, it is imaginable that both parts that result from parting the envelope along parting line 5 may be used as return envelopes. In this case the parting line 5 may be entirely straight in the front panel whilst the front and back of the envelope are not linked at the edges of the envelope where the distance between the parting lines 5 and 5' is bridged. This leads to two return envelopes with similarly shaped seal flaps.

[0026] The invention also comprises any new design that follows from combining a design as described above or shown in one of the drawings with one or more other designs as described above or shown in any of the drawings.

[0027] The following is a description of a further variant of the invention, in which the return envelope entirely determines the front and back of the original envelope. This design is shown in the following drawings (not to scale):

Figure 6 a top view of the broadsheet for the original envelope;
Figure 7 s top view of the original, unused envelope; and
Figure 8 a top view of the unused return envelope.

[0028] Figure 6 shows how one of the seal flaps 3, by means of a tear-off perforation 5, is connected to the front panel 1, and that seal flap 12 for the return envelope is connected, by means of a folding line, to the back panel 4. On the reverse of the side viewed in figure 6, seal flap 12 can be furnished with an adhesive.

[0029] When folding the envelope pictured in figure 7 from the broadsheet pictured in figure 6, first seal flap 12 is folded onto the side of the back panel 4 which in the envelope will be facing front panel 1. Then, front panel 1 and back panel 4 are folded onto each other. Thus seal flap 12 lies sandwiched between front panel 1 and back panel 4. Folding seal flaps 3 onto the outside of back panel 4 and affixing them with an adhesive completes the envelope. After the envelope has been filled, it is closed by sealing flap 2 onto the outside of back panel 4 with an adhesive.

[0030] The recipient is to open the sealed envelope along the tear-off perforation 5 on the short side of the envelope on the right hand side in the drawing. Seal flap 12 can now be folded outwards and stuck onto the outside of front panel 1. Hence, the back panel 4 has become the front side of the return envelope.

[0031] To open the envelope correctly in order to reuse it as return envelope, the outside may carry one or more relevant hints. The envelope may be opened by means of a cutting instrument, such as a pair of scissors or a knife, for which it need not be provided with a weakening in the material of which the envelope is made; the envelope may, however, be fitted with a cutting pattern. This cutting pattern (for instance, a printed dotted line) may already be part of the broadsheet.

[0032] It goes without saying that the parting lines 5, 5' need not, for the greater part, run straight. They may run like the top and bottom edge of the broadsheet of figure 1, or in such a way that a, for instance, a triangular seal flap results.

[0033] The invention also comprises a design that follows from combining one or more designs as described above or shown in one of the drawings with one or more other designs as described above or shown in any of the drawings.

[0034] The invention also comprises a postal item, such as one or more data carriers enclosed in an envelope, such as sheets, whereby a part of, at least, one sheet is designed to be used as a separate return envelope.

Claims

1. Envelope, of which at least one part is designed to be used as a separate envelope, for instance, as return envelope.

2. Envelope, in accordance with claim 1, fitted with a first and a second seal flap.

3. Envelope, in accordance with claims 1 and 2, fitted with a first and second seal flap which are perpendicular to each other.

4. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-3, fitted with the second seal flap in one panel of the envelope, preferably as an integral part of it.

5. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-4, fitted with, at least, one panel containing a weakening device, such as a perforation line, along which this panel can easily be parted, and/or fitted with this panel containing a parting pattern along which it should be parted, for instance, by cutting it, to make the envelop suitable to be re-used as a return envelope.

6. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-5, fitted with a first and second seal flap that, at least partly, overlap.

7. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-6, fitted with a first panel containing a first weakening device or parting pattern and a second panel containing a second weakening device or parting pattern contiguous to this similar provision in the first panel.

8. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-7, fitted with a first panel containing a weakening device or parting pattern and a second panel containing a weakening device or parting pattern and a contiguous folding line, or folding pattern for it, which, between them determine the seal flap for the return envelope and in which, preferably, the weakening device or pattern in the first panel, at least mainly, links up with the folding line, or folding pattern for it, in the second panel.

9. Envelope, in accordance with one of the claims 1-8, fitted with the second seal flap sandwiched between two panels of the envelope.

10. Broadsheet suited to make an envelope in accordance with one of the claims 1-9.

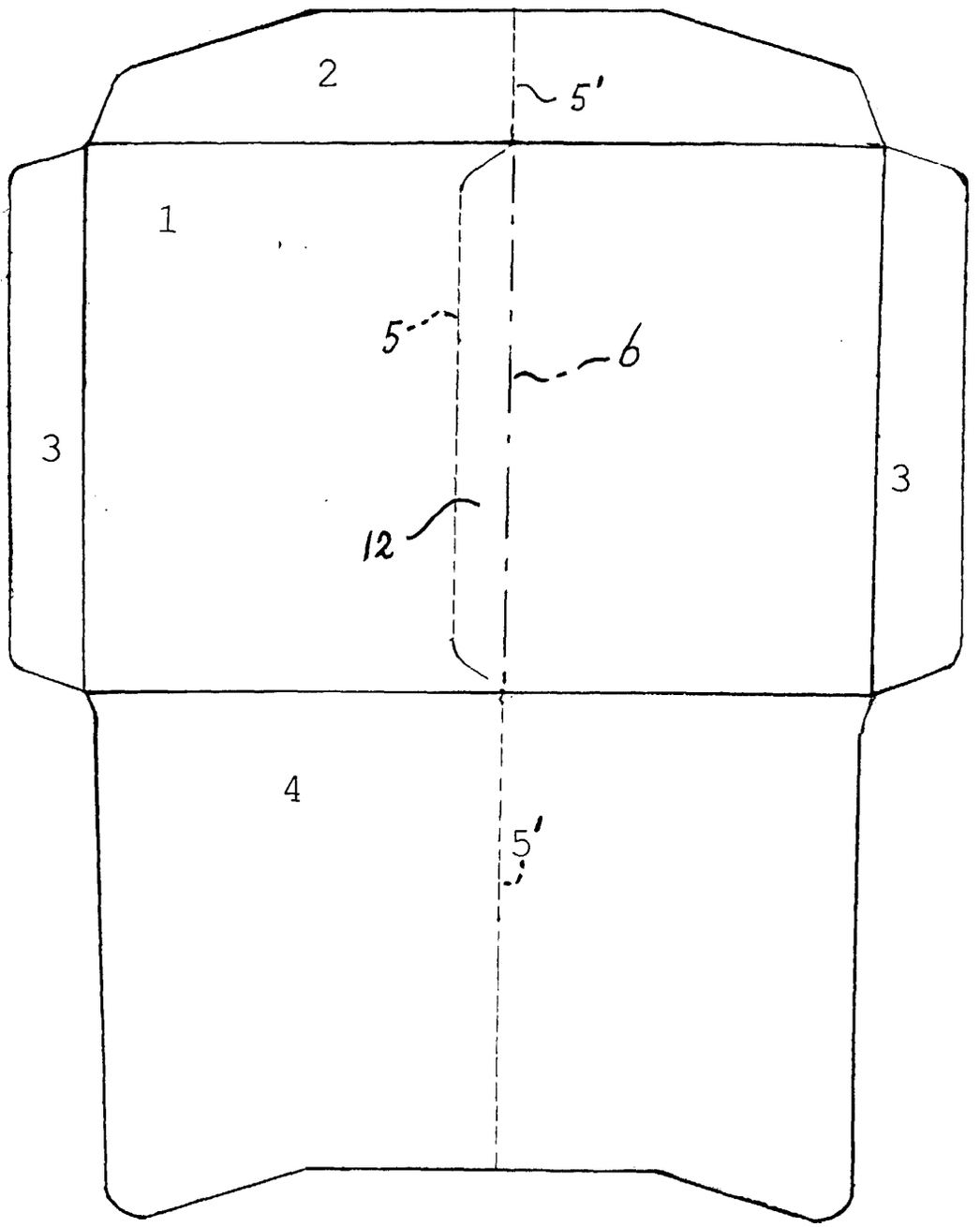

Fig 1

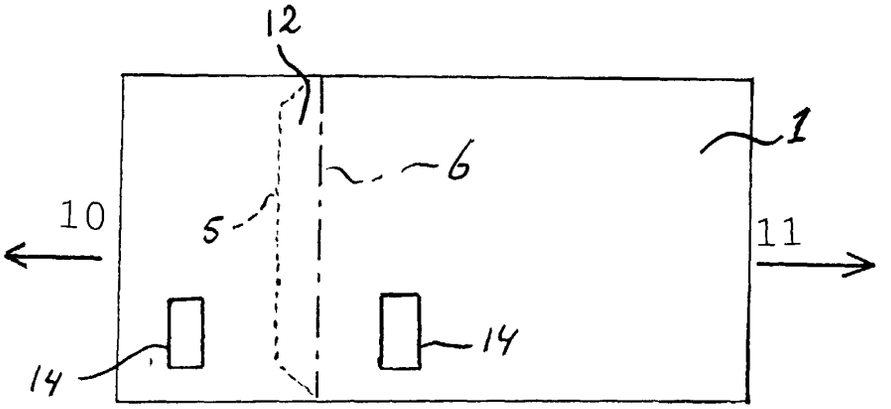

Fig 2

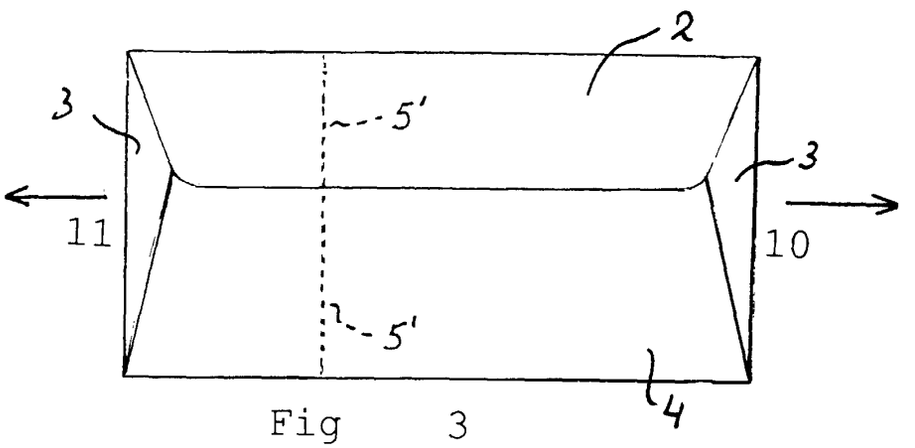

Fig 3

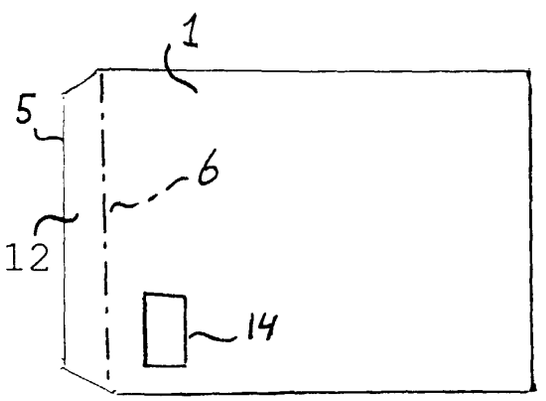

Fig 4

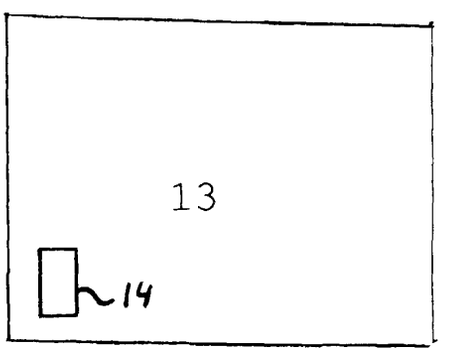

Fig 5

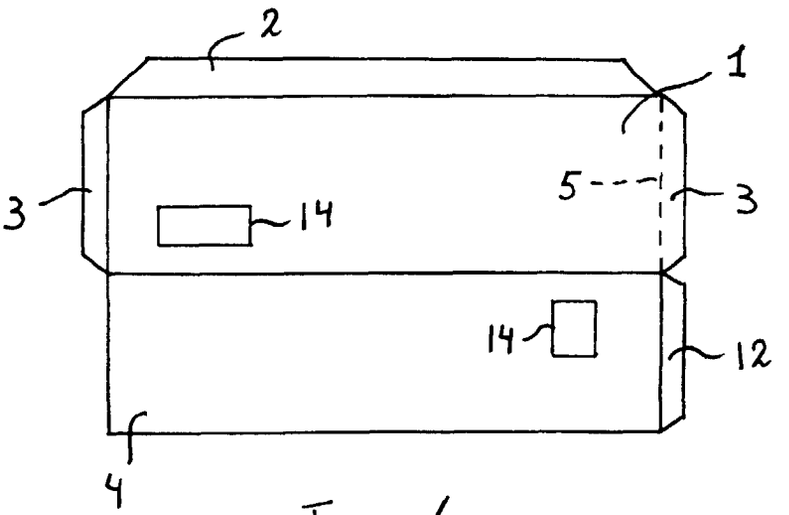

Fig. 6

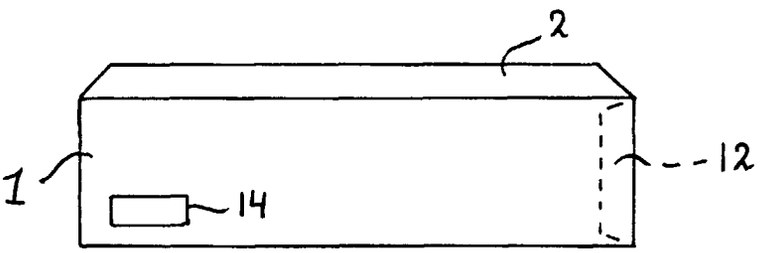

Fig. 7

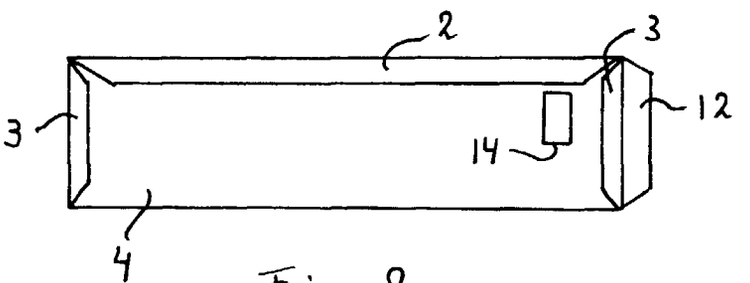

Fig. 8