



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(88) Date of publication A3:
20.12.2000 Bulletin 2000/51

(51) Int. Cl.⁷: **G07B 17/00**

(43) Date of publication A2:
13.09.2000 Bulletin 2000/37

(21) Application number: **00104519.4**

(22) Date of filing: **10.03.2000**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE**

Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(30) Priority: **11.03.1999 US 266304**

(71) Applicant: **PITNEY BOWES INC.**
Stamford, Connecticut 06926-0700 (US)

(72) Inventors:

- **Sasone, Ronald P.**
Weston, CT 06883 (US)
- **Auslander, Judith A.**
Westport, CT 06880 (US)

(74) Representative: **HOFFMANN - EITLE**
Patent- und Rechtsanwälte
Arabellastrasse 4
81925 München (DE)

(54) **Postal stamp and method of vertying the validity thereof**

(57) A method of verifying the validity of a postal stamp to determine whether the stamp is produced legitimately and whether it has been canceled in a previous use. The method includes the steps of producing a special code on the stamp of interest and creating a record relating to the special code in a database. When the mailpiece collected by a post office has a stamp bearing a special code, the special code is reported to the database for verification. If the records in the data-

base indicate that the reported special code does exist, then the stamp is considered legitimate. The mailpiece is accepted and the stamp is canceled before delivery, and a request is sent to the database to effect the alteration of the record relating to the "canceled" special code. An altered record will no longer provide a proof of validity if the database is later consulted with respect to the specific special code.

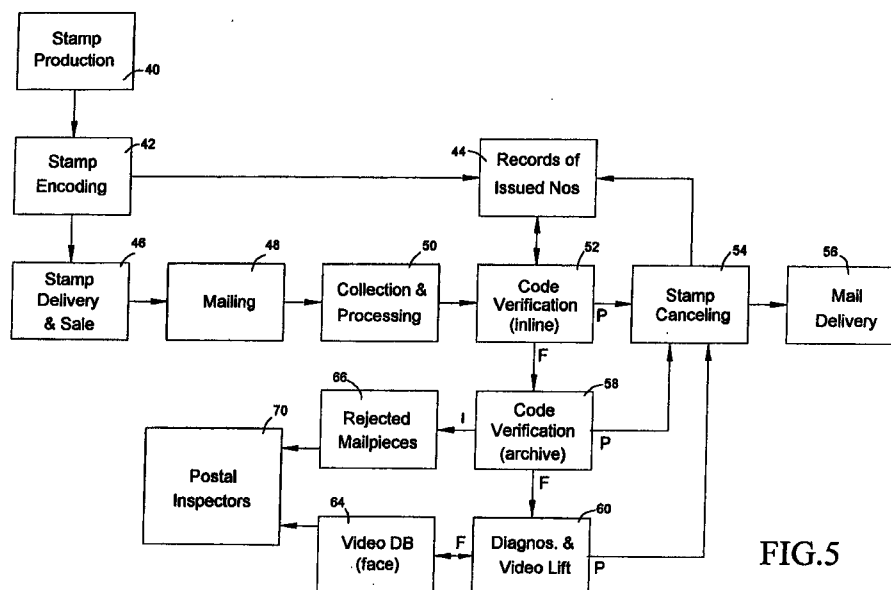


FIG.5



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 10 4519

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.7)
X	DE 197 37 232 A (OBERLAENDER MATTHIAS) 4 March 1999 (1999-03-04) * the whole document *	1-18	G07B17/00
A	US 5 768 384 A (BERSON WILLIAM) 16 June 1998 (1998-06-16) * abstract * * column 3, line 10 - column 5, line 7 * * figures 1-3 *	1-18	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			G07B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 30 October 2000	Examiner Van Dop, E
<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</p> <p>& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)

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

EP 00 10 4519

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.

30-10-2000

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
DE 19737232 A	04-03-1999	NONE	
US 5768384 A	16-06-1998	NONE	

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82