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(54) **Apparatus for managing money and playing accessories in games halls, in particular intended for Bingo**

(57) An apparatus for managing money and playing accessories in games halls, in particular intended for bingo, comprises at least one money sorter (1), in which two separate paths (2, 3) for coins and banknotes are distinguishable, in such a way as to transfer separately coins and banknotes from a first seat (2a, 3a), where they are deposited by a single vendor, to a second seat (2a, 3b), where they are available for the cashier. The second seat (2b) of the path (2) for the coins is provided

with a sliding base (8) for allowing the coins to pass through a channel (7) and reach a coin counter (6) which can be activated by the cashier. An electronic control device (9), which is particularly useful when several money sorters are present, performs at least the operations consisting in management of the movement of the sliding bases (8) and repeated activation of the coin counter (6), so as to obtain separate calculation of the coins supplied from each vendor.

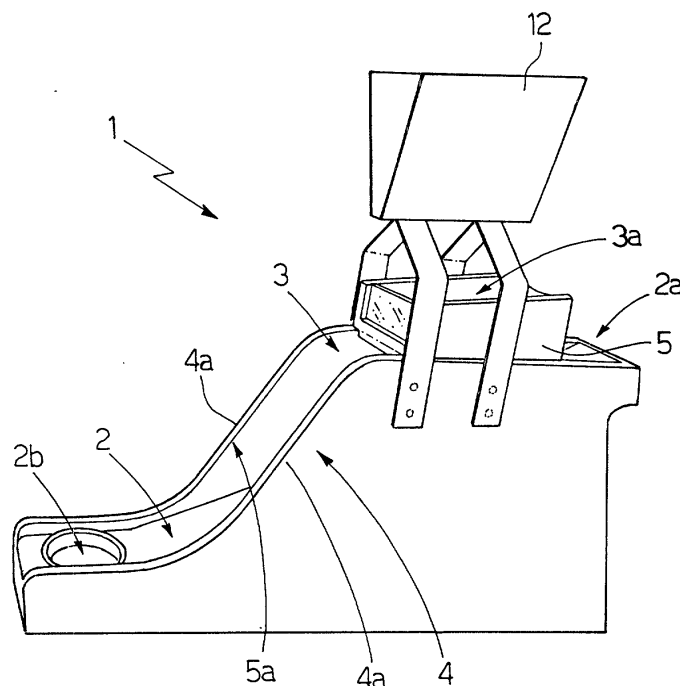


Fig.1

Description

[0001] The introduction of regulations for several types of games, from betting to gambling, also outside of casinos, has generated a considerable amount of commercial interest, with the development of apparatus and systems designed to make this activity - which is new for Italy - as profitable as possible.

[0002] With particular reference to games halls intended for bingo, which is basically equivalent to the more familiar tombola in Italy, one of the key elements for making the management of this game as profitable as possible consists in playing the greatest possible number of games in a predetermined period of time.

[0003] Bingo games are basically conducted in the following manner: in the hall, several vendors of cards offer these for sale to players after removing them, during the previous draw, from a fixed collection device which is attached to the cashier's desk and inside which they deposit the proceeds for the game being played.

[0004] The collection devices known hitherto are divided into compartments, where each compartment corresponds to a single vendor and constitutes the sole point of exchange of money and cards between vendor and cashier.

[0005] The cashier, during a draw, removes the money deposited by each vendor, counts it and prepares the prizes which will be distributed at the same time as the cards for the next game.

[0006] Any remaining money will then be allocated to the general fund.

[0007] In some cases, the cashier also deals with handling of the cards, in the sense that he/she ensures that they are ready for distribution in the associated compartment of each vendor when the latter deposits the money received for the sale of the cards for the game being played.

[0008] The main drawback encountered in the procedure described above consists in the time required to count the coins: in fact, both the use of the Euro and the price of the individual cards (normally 1.50 € or 3.00 € for special games) results in the preponderant use, by players, of coins instead of banknotes, which could be counted much more rapidly.

[0009] Moreover, the same compartment stores together, for each vendor, coins and banknotes which are then removed, together, by the cashier, separated and counted separately.

[0010] This results in the considerable risk of error since, during the minimum amount of time available, unexpected events may occur, such as, for example, the presence of several winners for each prize - and hence the need to prepare several hand-outs - or objections of varying nature which may be raised.

[0011] Finally, the distribution of the cards together with the collection of the money results in a considerable amount of space used by each vendor, which determines the large dimensions of the abovementioned col-

lection devices, the extension of which is totally in the horizontal direction.

[0012] The object of the present invention is therefore that of eliminating the abovementioned drawbacks.

[0013] This is achieved by means of an apparatus which keeps separate from each other coins, banknotes and cards to be distributed.

[0014] The main advantage obtained by means of the present invention consists essentially in the fact that coins and banknotes are transferred from the vendor to the cashier in a non-static manner: in particular the coins may be collected in a special space so that they can then be counted automatically, thus relieving the cashier of this duty.

[0015] Moreover, it is avoided that the money deposited by each vendor is situated in the same compartment together with any change handed out by the cashier or together with the cards.

[0016] In this way, the risks of incorrect calculations are reduced practically to zero and the procedures for counting the collected money are accelerated as far as possible.

[0017] Finally, part of the structure used extends in the vertical direction, thereby reducing the overall dimensions of the collection device.

[0018] Further advantages and characteristic features of the invention will emerge more clearly from the detailed description which follows, with reference to the accompanying drawings which show a non-limiting example of embodiment thereof in which:

- Figures 1 and 2 show a perspective view of the invention, in its simplest embodiment;
- Figure 3 shows a detail of the invention, with some parts removed so that other parts are more clearly visible;
- Figure 4 shows a schematic overall view of the invention, in a more complex embodiment.

[0019] As can be seen from the figures, the invention concerns an apparatus for managing money and playing accessories in games hall, in particular intended for bingo. The apparatus comprises at least one money sorter (1) in which two separate paths (2, 3) for coins and banknotes are distinguishable, in such a way as to transfer separately coins and banknotes from a first seat (2a, 3a), where they deposited by an individual vendor, to a second seat (2b, 3b), where they are available for the cashier.

[0020] The path (2) intended for the coins comprises a slide (4) with sidewalls (4a), in which the second seat (2b) mentioned above consists of a tray in which the coins are collected. The path (3) intended for banknotes comprises a carriage (5) movable on guides (5a) and able to contain and displace the banknotes.

[0021] Since in every games hall of this kind several vendors operate simultaneously, the apparatus in question is composed of a multiplicity of money sorters (1)

arranged alongside each other, so as to have the possibility of transferring coins and banknotes from all the vendors to the cashier simultaneously.

[0022] In a preferred embodiment, illustrated here, a further advantage of this apparatus consists in the fact that, along the path (2) intended for the coins, downstream of the second seat (2b) of each money sorter (1), there is a coin counter (6) which can be activated by the cashier and which is able to count the coins automatically, thus relieving the cashier of this duty.

[0023] In order to allow transfer of the coins, the second seats (2b) have a sliding base (8) which opens up into a corresponding connecting channel (7) allowing the coins to reach the coin counter (6).

[0024] As for the coins, likewise for the banknotes the apparatus may be equipped with at least one banknote counter (6a) which can be activated by the cashier and is able to count automatically the banknotes supplied from each of the second seats (3b) of the path (3) intended for the banknotes.

[0025] In particular in very crowded rooms in which a large number of vendors may be present at the same time, it is important that the apparatus described here should not be excessively bulky: for this reason it comprises a card container (12) arranged on top of each corresponding money sorter (1). Said container, which is shown here with a winged V shape, is filled by the cashier and emptied by the vendor who then, if necessary, puts back there any unsold cards, which will be destroyed.

[0026] The maximum efficiency of this apparatus is achieved by equipping it with an electronic control device (9) which can be activated by the cashier and is able to perform at least the operations consisting in managing the movement of each sliding base (8) of the second seats (2b) of the path (2) for the coins, so as to define selectively the base (8) which is opened, and repeatedly activating the coin counter (6) so as to obtain separate counting of the coins supplied from each of these second seats (2b). The electronic control device (9) may for example be activated by the cashier by pressing a pushbutton which causes both operation of mechanical means (13), causing sliding of the base (8) of one of the second seats (2b), and activation of the coin counter (6): in this way, and by repeating the same operation for all the money sorters (1), counting of the coins deposited by each individual vendor is achieved.

[0027] In order to have available the electric power necessary for activating these mechanical means (13), for example consisting of a piston for each sliding base (8), downstream of the electronic control device (9) there is a power interface (14) which amplifies the signal by a suitable factor so as to obtain the desired effect.

[0028] In addition to this, the electronic control device (9) also performs storage, in special memory spaces, of the results of the individual counting operations performed by the coin counter (6), execution of cash-till operations and acquisition of externally input data, such

as, for example, the results of manual counts or other data processed by other computers for statistical purposes.

[0029] The apparatus also comprises means (11) for transmission of the results of the counting operations externally, operation of which is managed by the electronic control device (9).

[0030] These means (11) for transmission of the results may be formed in various ways which are different from each other, but also simultaneously present in the same solution.

[0031] They may in fact take the form of a machine (11a) for issuing receipts relating to the counting operations performed, at least one display (11b) for displaying the results of the said counting operations, at least one line (11c) for connection to a remote electronic processor, or other forms similar to these.

[0032] In the case in question, the apparatus envisages the presence also of a banknote counter (6a). The electronic control device (9) also performs the repeated activation of said device so as to obtain separate counting of the banknotes supplied from each of the second seats (3b) of the corresponding path (3).

[0033] Finally, the electronic control device (9) also manages supplying of the money corresponding to the amount of the prizes for each game.

[0034] The invention thus conceived may be subject to numerous modifications and variants, all falling within the scope of the inventive idea. Moreover, all the details may be replaced by technically equivalent elements.

[0035] In practice modifications and/or improvements are obviously possible, nevertheless falling within the scope of the following claims.

Claims

1. Apparatus for managing money and playing accessories in games halls, in particular intended for bingo, **characterized in that** it comprises at least one money sorter (1), in which two separate paths (2, 3) for coins and banknotes are distinguishable, in such a way as to transfer separately coins and banknotes from a first seat (2a, 3a), inside which they are deposited by a single vendor, to a second seat (2b, 3b), where they are available for the cashier.
2. Apparatus according to Claim 1, **characterized in that** the path (2) intended for coins comprises a slide (4) with sidewalls (4a), said second seat (2b) consisting of a tray in which the coins are collected.
3. Apparatus according to Claim 1, **characterized in that** the path (3) intended for banknotes comprises a carriage (5) movable on guides (5a) and able to contain and displace the banknotes.
4. Apparatus according to Claim 1, **characterized in**

that it comprises a multiplicity of money sorters (1) arranged alongside each other, so as to transfer coins and banknotes from each vendor to the cashier simultaneously.

5. Apparatus according to Claim 1 or 2 or 4, **characterized in that** it comprises, downstream of said second seat (2b), at least one coin counter (6) which can be activated by the cashier and is able to perform automatically counting of the coins.

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6. Apparatus according to Claim 5, **characterized in that** it comprises at least one channel (7) for connecting said second seats (2b) and the coin counter (6).

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7. Apparatus according to Claim 6, **characterized in that** said second seats (2b) have a sliding base (8) able to allow the coins to pass into a corresponding connecting channel (7).

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8. Apparatus according to Claim 1 or 3 or 4, **characterized in that** it comprises at least one banknote counter (6a) which can be activated by the cashier and is able to perform automatically counting of the banknotes supplied from one of said second seats (3b).

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9. Apparatus according to Claim 1 or 4, **characterized in that** it comprises at least one card container (12) arranged above a corresponding money sorter (1), so as to limit the overall dimensions.

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10. Apparatus according to Claim 7 or 8, **characterized in that** it comprises an electronic control device (9) which can be activated by the cashier and is able to perform at least the following operations:

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- management of the movement of the sliding base (8) of said second seats (2b) so as to define selectively the base (8) which is opened so as to allow the coins to pass through;
- repeated activation of the coin counter (6) so as to obtain separate counting of the coins supplied from each of said second seats (2b).

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11. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** the electronic control device (9) also performs storage of the results of the individual counting operations performed by the coin counter (6).

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12. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** the electronic control device (9) also carries out cash-till operations.

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13. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** the electronic control device (9) also performs the acquisition of externally input data.

14. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** it comprises means (11) for transmission of the results of the counting operations externally, where operation of said transmission means (11) is managed by the electronic control device (9).

15. Apparatus according to Claim 14, **characterized in that** said means (11) for transmission of the results comprise a machine (11a) for issuing receipts relating to the counting operations performed.

16. Apparatus according to Claim 14, **characterized in that** said means (11) for transmission of the results comprise at least one display (11b) for displaying the results of the counting operations performed.

17. Apparatus according to Claim 14, **characterized in that** said means (11) for transmission of the results comprise at least one line (11c) for connection to a remote electronic processor.

18. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** the electronic control device (9) also performs repeated activation of the banknote counter (6a) so as to obtain separate counting of the banknotes supplied from each of said second seats (3b).

19. Apparatus according to Claim 10, **characterized in that** the electronic control device (9) also manages supplying of the money corresponding to the amount of the prizes for each game.

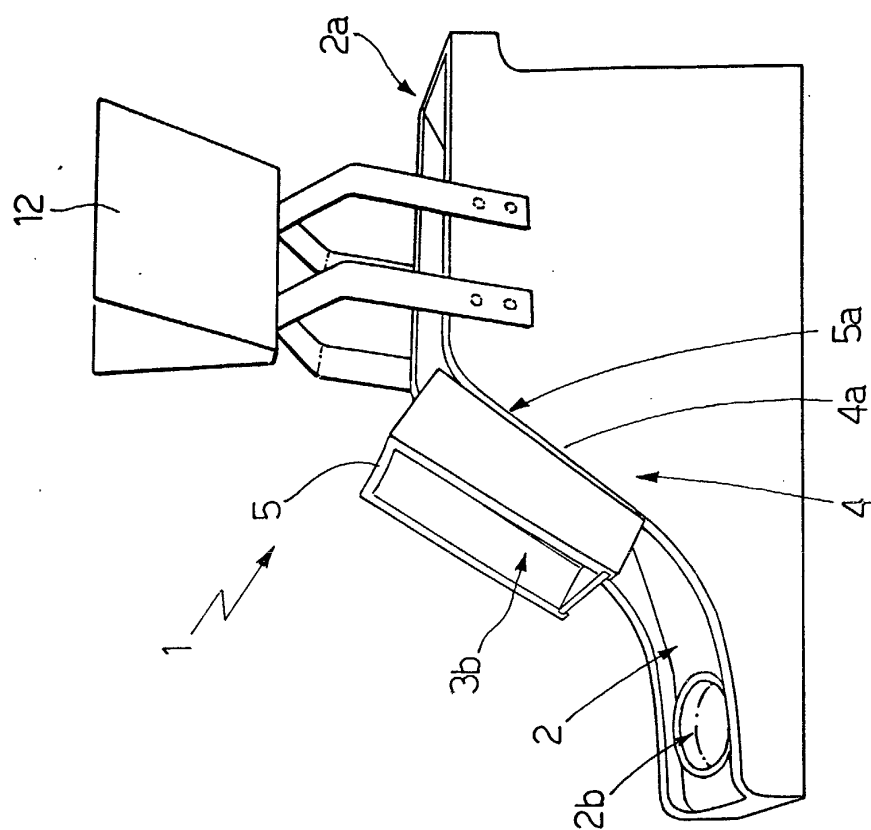


Fig.2

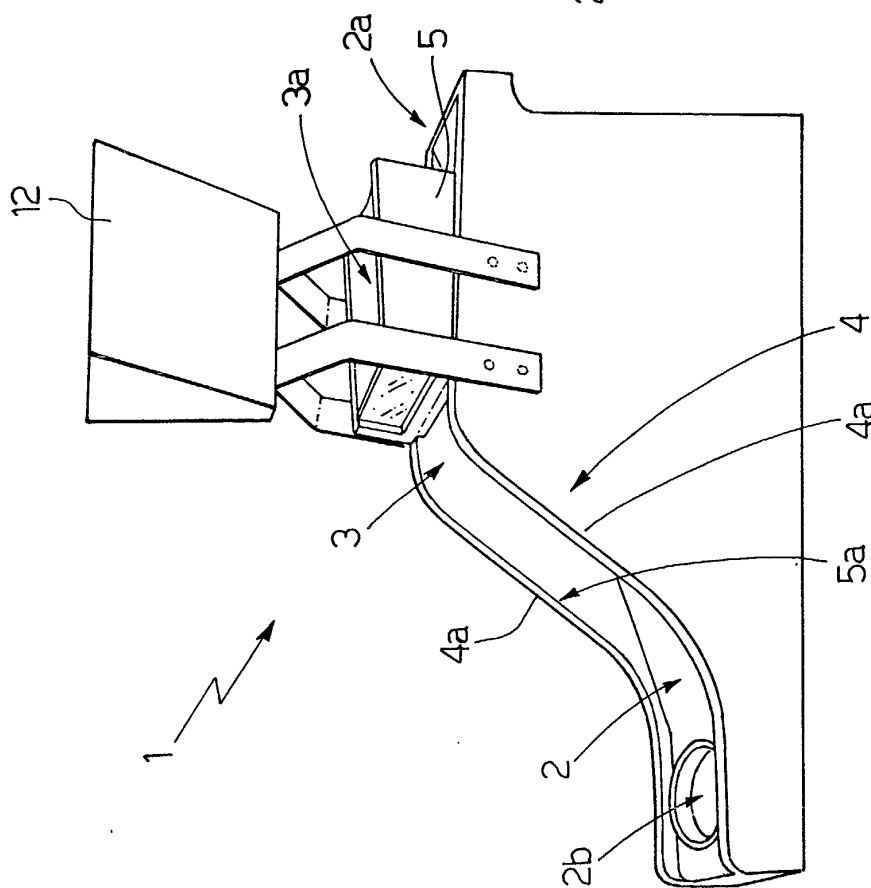


Fig.1

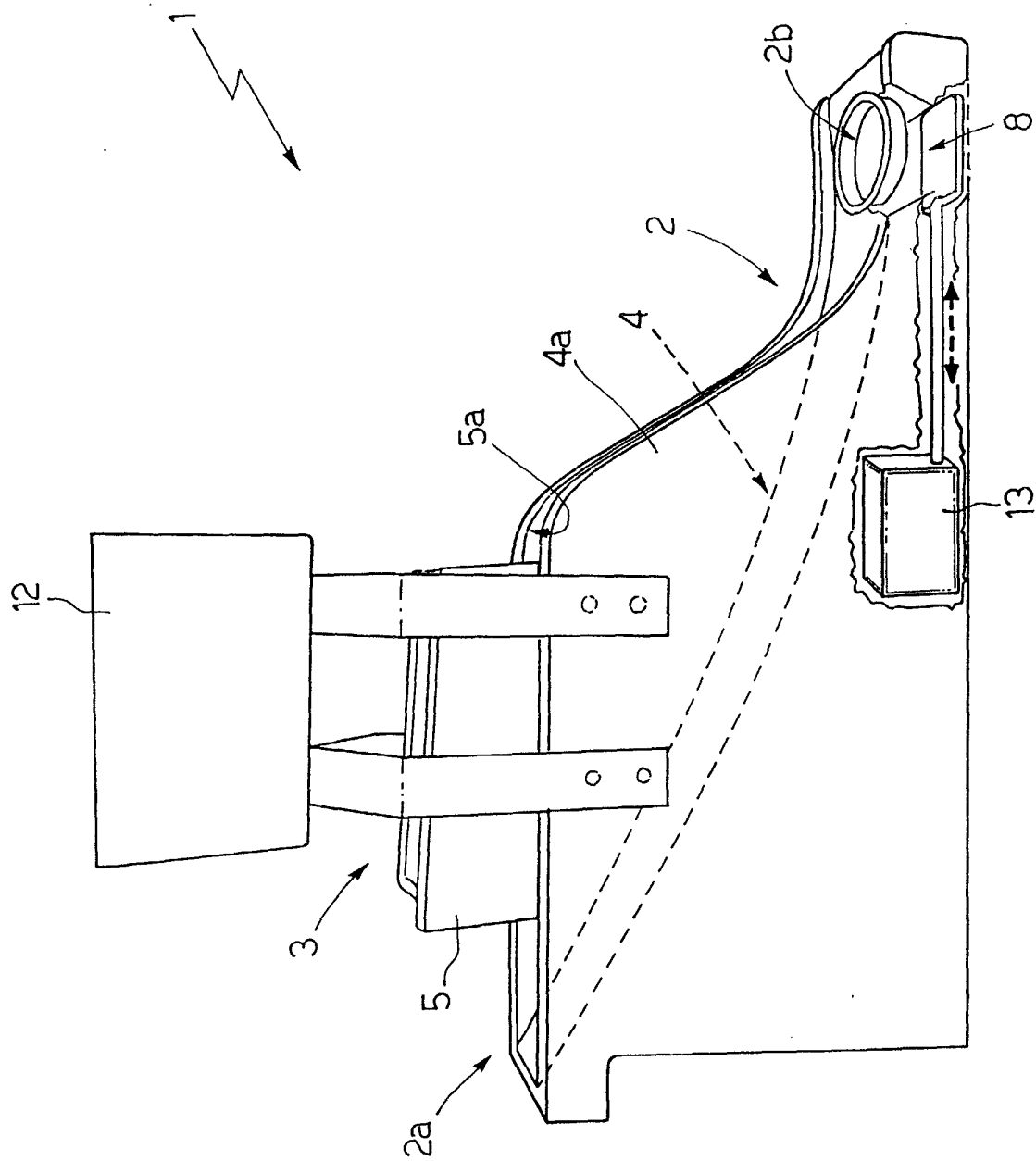


Fig. 3

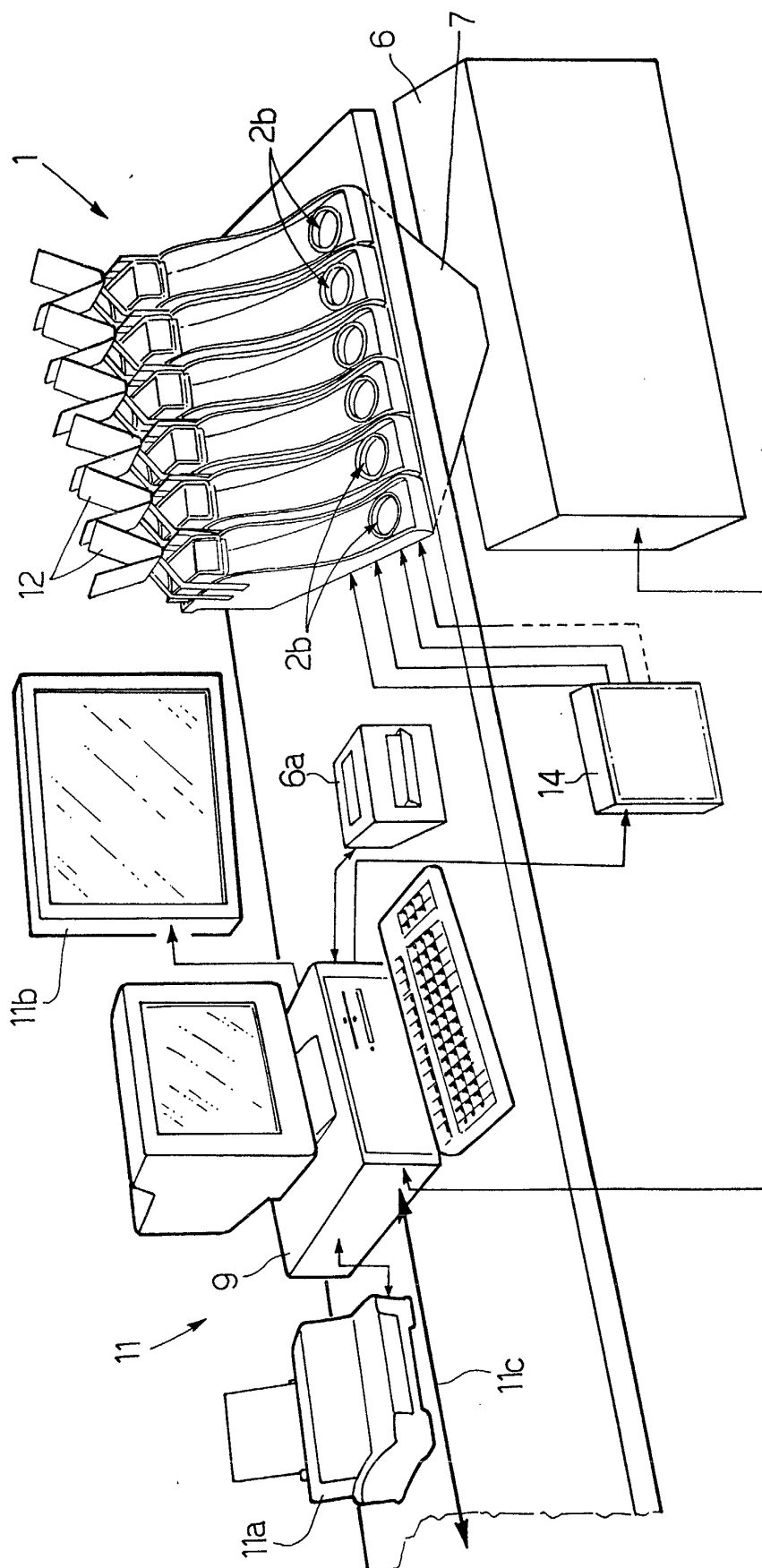


Fig.4



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 02 42 5548

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X	US 5 113 990 A (GABRIUS A J ET AL) 19 May 1992 (1992-05-19)	1	G07F17/32
Y	* abstract * * column 1, line 25 - column 1, line 34 * * column 1, line 45 - column 2, line 25 * * column 8, line 41 - column 8, line 56 * * column 9, line 24 - column 9, line 29; claims 1-13; figures 1-7 *	2-19	
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Y	* column 1, line 36 - column 2, line 58 * * column 6, line 25 - column 6, line 39 * * claims 1-34; figures 3,5,6 *	2-19	
X	DE 195 26 160 A (NOVO INVEST CASINO DEV AG) 25 January 1996 (1996-01-25)	1	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 24 January 2003	Examiner Mennerun, S
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	

EPO FORM 1503 03.02 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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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
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