THE JOINT EXAMINATION BOARD

PAPER P4

Amendment of Specifications for United Kingdom Patents/Applications in Prosecution, Revocation Proceedings or Otherwise

Wednesday 2nd November 2011

10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Please read the following instructions carefully. ***Time Allowed – THREE HOURS***

1. Please note the following:

    a. Start each question (but not necessarily each part of each question) on a fresh sheet of paper;
    b. Enter the Paper Number (P4), the question number and your Examination number in the appropriate boxes at the top of each sheet of paper;
    c. The scripts are photocopied for marking purposes. Please write with a **dark inked pen** on one side of the paper only and within the printed margins, and do not use highlighters in your answer;
    d. Do not state your name anywhere in the answers;
    e. Write clearly, examiners cannot award marks to scripts that cannot be read;
    f. Reasoning should always be given where appropriate.
    g. You must number all the pages of your answer script. Once the exam finishes, an additional 5 minutes will be allowed for you to do this.

2. Under the Examination Regulations **you may be disqualified from the examination and have other disciplinary measures taken against you if**:

    a. you are found with unauthorised printed matter or other unauthorised material in the examination room;
    b. your mobile phone is found to be switched on;
    c. you copy the work of another candidate, use an electronic aid, or communicate with another candidate or with anyone outside the examination;
    d. you continue to write after being told to stop writing by the invigilator(s). **NO WRITING OF ANY KIND IS PERMITTED AFTER THE TIME ALLOTTED TO THIS PAPER HAS EXPIRED.**

3. **At the end of the examination assemble your answer sheets in question number order, number all the pages and put them in the WHITE envelope provided**. Do not staple or join your answer sheets together in any way. Any answer script taken out of the examination room will not be marked.

This paper consists of 18 sheets including this sheet, and comprises:
Question [1 sheet]
Client's letter [1 sheet]
Client's Application GB 0999999.9 [8 sheets]
Official Letter [1 sheet]
Prior art reference GB 1111111 [5 sheets]
Prior art reference ref 2222222 [1 sheet]

Question

A United Kingdom patent application comprising the attached specification (identified as GB 0999999.9) has been filed at the UK Intellectual Property Office without any claim to priority.

The UK Intellectual Property Office has now issued the attached Official Letter. You have received brief comments from your client in a letter, which is also attached.

Your task is to prepare:

1. a full draft response to the UK Intellectual Property Office in response to the Official Letter;
2. a set of amended claims, if considered necessary;
3. an outline memorandum for your client, explaining the actions you have taken and why. You should provide full reasoning for your actions and provide an outline of future actions that your client could take to secure full protection for their commercial interests as outlined by your client, taking into account that further information may be needed. This future advice should only relate to the invention(s) outlined in the client's letter to you. These notes should also be restricted to patent matters and you are NOT required to consider other matters such as copyright or design protection.
4. If the advice to your client includes a suggestion of filing a divisional application(s) you should draft the corresponding independent claim(s) and your memorandum should explain why filing a divisional is advisable. You should NOT draft a description or any dependent claims for a divisional application.

Note the following:

(a) You are NOT required in this examination to make any amendments to the description of the client's patent application.

(b) You should accept the facts given to you and base your answer on those facts. In particular you should NOT make any use of any special knowledge that you may have of the subject-matter concerned, and you must presume that the prior art referred to is exhaustive.

(c) If you submit any amended claim set and/or divisional claims(s) put these at the top of the answer papers when handing in your answer and number the pages accordingly so as to readily identify the claims or claim sets.

Letter from client

Dear Mr Turney:

Thank you for sending this report.

Firstly, sorry I'm a bit late in getting back to you, but I've been very ill for the last two months and I fear that we may be too late to reply. Assuming that you can respond to the report in the next few days, will I need to supply a medical certificate as evidence of my illness to get the application back?

Anyway, getting back to the report, I see that my idea of having the window through which you can see the reusable address block is not new. However, I still think my version is much easier to use than the pocket idea of D1, which needs a separate insert to write the address on. One could lose these inserts, or at least one needs to have a supply of the inserts or the solvent in the alternative arrangement to hand, which isn't particularly convenient. One nice thing about our design, of course, is that the addressee can very easily erase their name from the pouch once they've opened it, so the pouch can be reused straight away and there is no danger of it being resent accidentally. Our marketing materials will probably focus on this aspect.

I don't understand the objection against claim 11, which you said could be useful as a 'last resort', but I'm sure that you'll know how to deal with this objection.

The elongate slot idea for showing more of the contents of the pouch compared to the small circular slots of the prior art is important too. I guess you could say that the window 15 in D1 is an elongate sight slot, but it doesn't allow you to see the main contents of the pouch which are stored in the rear pocket 21, the contents of which can only be determined using the small, circular sight holes 28. I spent all of my money testing the use of aligned elongate sight slots in the front and back faces without the transparent covers and the pouches were just about strong enough. I intend to return to this once I have more money, so please do whatever you can to keep this option open.

Regards,

Ian Venter.

Reusable Routing Pouch

The invention relates generally to reusable routing pouches, and more specifically to a reusable routing pouch with a wipe-clean address block.

Reusable routing pouches, mailers or envelopes are commonly used in organisations that have several offices to deliver written and other material between the offices. Reusing envelopes is convenient, environmentally friendly and saves money.

Reusable routing pouches are typically made of strong paper material and generally share three primary features; multiple address blocks, view holes and a reclosable closure flap.

Multiple address blocks are a series of consecutively arranged spaces, or blocks, for writing in successive destination identifiers, or addresses. In use, the immediately previous address is marked through and the next address block is filled in with the address of the next recipient. The pouch can be continuously reused until all the address blocks have been filled in. To increase the number of times the pouch can be used, address blocks are generally printed on both sides of the pouch.

Small circular view holes in the form of aligned openings can be provided in both of the faces of the pouch so that the recipient can easily determine whether or not the pouch is empty by looking at either face of the pouch and determining that the pouch is not empty if the view through at least some of the aligned view holes is blocked by the contents. The recipient can then open up the pouch to assess any contents.

Reclosable closure flaps seal material inside the pouch and include means for successively attaching and detaching the flap. This can be accomplished by a pair of buttons. One button is riveted on the outside of the flap and the other on the back of the pouch below the bottom edge of the flap when closed. A piece of string is permanently attached to one of the buttons so that it can be wound around the other button to hold the flap closed. More recently, simpler alternatives have appeared such as closure flaps coated with new long-lasting tacky adhesives, which can be repeatedly attached and detached, or hook-and-eye-type fastening fabric such as Velcro ®.

Unfortunately, current reusable routing pouches can only be used until all address blocks have been filled in. They are then generally discarded, even though they are otherwise still usable. This is particularly disadvantageous, and uneconomical, if specialist materials are used for the pouch material, such as high-strength or waterproof materials.

Even the general practice of printing address blocks on both sides of a routing pouch is still limited by the total surface area available on the pouch, and with so many fields, a somewhat scruffy appearance is presented. It is also not always easy to see where the address field identifying the current recipient is amongst all the other fields. This is especially so if, as happens from time to time, the address fields are smudged or defaced by spillage, overwriting and so on, for example during transit between recipients.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a reusable routing pouch with greater address-block capacity.

It is a further object of the present invention to make economical the use of high-strength and water-resistant plastics for reusable routing pouches by increasing the number of times each pouch can be used.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a means for protecting written-in addresses from being smudged or wiped off.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an improved envelope-type receptacle for goods, in particular a reusable routing pouch, with a reusable address block. With the present invention the problem of the limited number of times current reusable routing pouches can be reused is solved by making the address block wipe-clean.

Accordingly, the present invention is directed to a reusable routing pouch, comprising a receptacle having a front, a back and an opening, an address block on the back of the receptacle and a closure flap for covering the opening. The envelope has a transparent material portion for covering the address block. This transparent material portion can be integrated into any convenient part of the envelope, but for accessibility it is preferably in the flap. The address block may comprise a layer of wipe-clean material and there may be a layer of stiffening material below the layer of wipe-clean material.

The reusable routing pouch may further have one or more elongate sight slots through its material. These slots may be covered by transparent material in the manner of a known window envelope, to protect the contents. The sight slots may also be aligned in corresponding pairs of front and back sight slots so that it can be readily determined whether or not the pouch is empty. The routing pouch may be made entirely of wipe-clean and/or tear-resistant material. The pouch may also include a hook-and-loop-type fastener for securing the closure flap to the front of the receptacle.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will be more clearly understood from a reading of the following detailed description of an embodiment in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a prior-art reusable routing envelope; and

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a reusable routing pouch made according to the teachings of the present invention showing the wipe-clean address block, the transparent portion of the closure flap and the elongate sight slots.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to FIG. 1 of the drawings, there is shown a perspective view of a prior-art reusable routing envelope 10. Strong paper material 12 is folded and sealed to form a receptacle in the shape of an envelope for holding papers or other generally flat material, inserted into an opening 20. The front 14 of the envelope 10 is longer than the back 16 so as to form a closure flap 18 which, when folded over, closes the opening 20. Printed on both the front and back of the envelope 10 are address blocks 22 sequentially arranged so that the last-used address block 24 and the next-available address block 26 are readily apparent. Also printed on front and back are instructions and additional details to aid in more accurately describing destination addresses.

Small circular view holes 28, arranged in two aligned vertical columns through the front 14 and back 16 of the envelope 10, make it easy to determine whether or not the envelope 10 is empty.

Fibre material buttons 30 and 32 are fixed, respectively, to the back of the envelope 10 and to the outside of the flap 18. A piece of string 34 is permanently attached to button 30 so that, when flap 18 is closed, the free end of the string 34 can be wound around the button 32 to secure the flap 18.

As noted above, the material of the envelope will generally last longer than the number of uses represented by the fields, and the envelope has to be discarded, which is a waste. The preferred embodiment addresses this problem.

FIG. 2 shows a reusable routing pouch or envelope 36 made according to the preferred embodiment. It is generally similar to that shown in Figure 1, being rectangular with an opening at the top edge and a flap 46 at this edge. However, instead of a series of address blocks printed over the entire outer surface of the envelope, a single address block 38 is indicated on a layer of wipe-clean material 40 laminated over the primary material 42 of the pouch 36. By including only a single address block 38, the

appearance of the pouch 36 can be improved by not having a large number of unsightly written-in and marked-through address blocks on the front and back faces of the pouch 36. The single address block also makes it easier to see who the current recipient is as there is only one address field 38 on the pouch.

The indication of the address field 38 may be by written instructions 41, as shown, by simply printing a heavy outline of a block or by a variety of various means that will occur to those with skill in the art. The wipe-clean material 40 will typically be a polyethylene or polyester plastic, or any suitable material from which marker type ink can be easily wiped off with, for example, a rag or tissue without requiring specialist items such as solvents. Suitable materials are commonly used on whiteboards. A stiffening layer 44 may be laminated between pouch material 42 and the wipe-clean material 40 to make writing easier.

The closure flap 46 includes a window in the form of a transparent material portion 48 which, when the flap 46 is in the closed position, covers the address block 38. The transparent material portion 48 may be made of any suitable transparent material, such as transparent plastic. The transparent material portion 48 both reveals the destination information written in the address block 38 and protects the written information from being smeared or smudged. The transparent material portion 48 is longer, in the vertical direction, than the address block 38, so that, if the pouch 36 bulges as a result of overstuffing, the address block 38 will remain visible.

The reusable routing pouch 36 also includes elongate sight slots 50. These sight slots 50 extend as vertical windows nearly the entire length of the pouch 36. The elongate sight slots 50 reveal more of the interior of the pouch 36 than the conventional small circular view holes discussed above. The sight slots 50 can be covered by transparent material, for example the same material used in closure flap transparent material portion 48, so that the interior of the pouch can still be seen without materially sacrificing strength, as may happen to a degree if conventional small round holes were extended into elongate slots or otherwise made larger. The transparent material would also protect the contents of the pouch 36 from damage, for example during transit between recipients. The sight slots 50 may be reinforced by strips of tape or strong fibres (not shown), comprising flexible plastic, string, rubber, flexible metal bands of aluminium or steel, and so on, laid across the elongate slot at regular intervals. This can for example mitigate the lack of strength if the slots 50 are not covered by any material. Additionally, linear reinforcement structures such as these perpendicular to the slot orientation can

allow longer and/or wider slots to be provided without a loss of pouch integrity. The tape or fibres may be attached on one side of the pouch, on both sides of the pouch, or looping all the way around so as to provide additional reinforcement for the pouch itself. However, this latter, fully looped around, form of reinforcement would only be appropriate for use with very long or very wide elongate sight slots, but could potentially be used with elongate slots on other forms of pouch.

The reusable routing pouch 36 also includes hook-and-loop-type fasteners 52 and 53, such as Velcro® brand, for holding the closure flap 46 closed. The added convenience and ease of use of such typically more expensive fasteners is made affordable because the pouch 36 will be used so many more times than present reusable envelopes. The fastener sections 53 on the back face of the pouch 36 are made longer than the fastener sections 52 on the flap 46, again to accommodate bulging of the pouch 38 from overstuffing.

The use of a separate plastic address block laminated to the pouch material permits the use of less expensive paper for the pouch material. Even though the substantially increased number of times the pouch may now be used makes the use of stronger and more water resistant plastic pouch materials now more economical, paper envelopes may, in a particular environment, last long enough.

Claims

1. A reusable routing pouch, having front and back faces, an opening along one edge for receiving pouch contents, and a closure flap for closing the opening, wherein the pouch includes a reusable address block, the address block in use being viewable through a window.
2. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein the address block is provided on a layer of wipe-clean material.
3. A pouch according to claim 2, wherein the wipe-clean material is a plastics material.
4. A pouch according to any preceding claim, wherein the pouch comprises a layer of stiffening material under the wipe-clean material.
5. A pouch according to any preceding claim, wherein the height of the window is greater than that of the address block.
6. A pouch according to any preceding claim, wherein the closure flap has attachment means to detachably fasten it to the back face of the pouch during use.
7. A pouch according to claim 6, wherein the attachment means comprises a fastener of the hook-and-loop type.
8. A pouch according to any preceding claim, having an elongate sight slot in at least one face of the pouch.
9. A pouch according to any preceding claim, having an elongate sight slot in the front face and an elongate sight slot in the back face that is aligned with the elongate sight slot in the front face.
10. A pouch according to claim 8 or 9, wherein the or each elongate sight slot is covered by transparent material.
11. A pouch substantially as described herein, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Fig.1
Prior Art

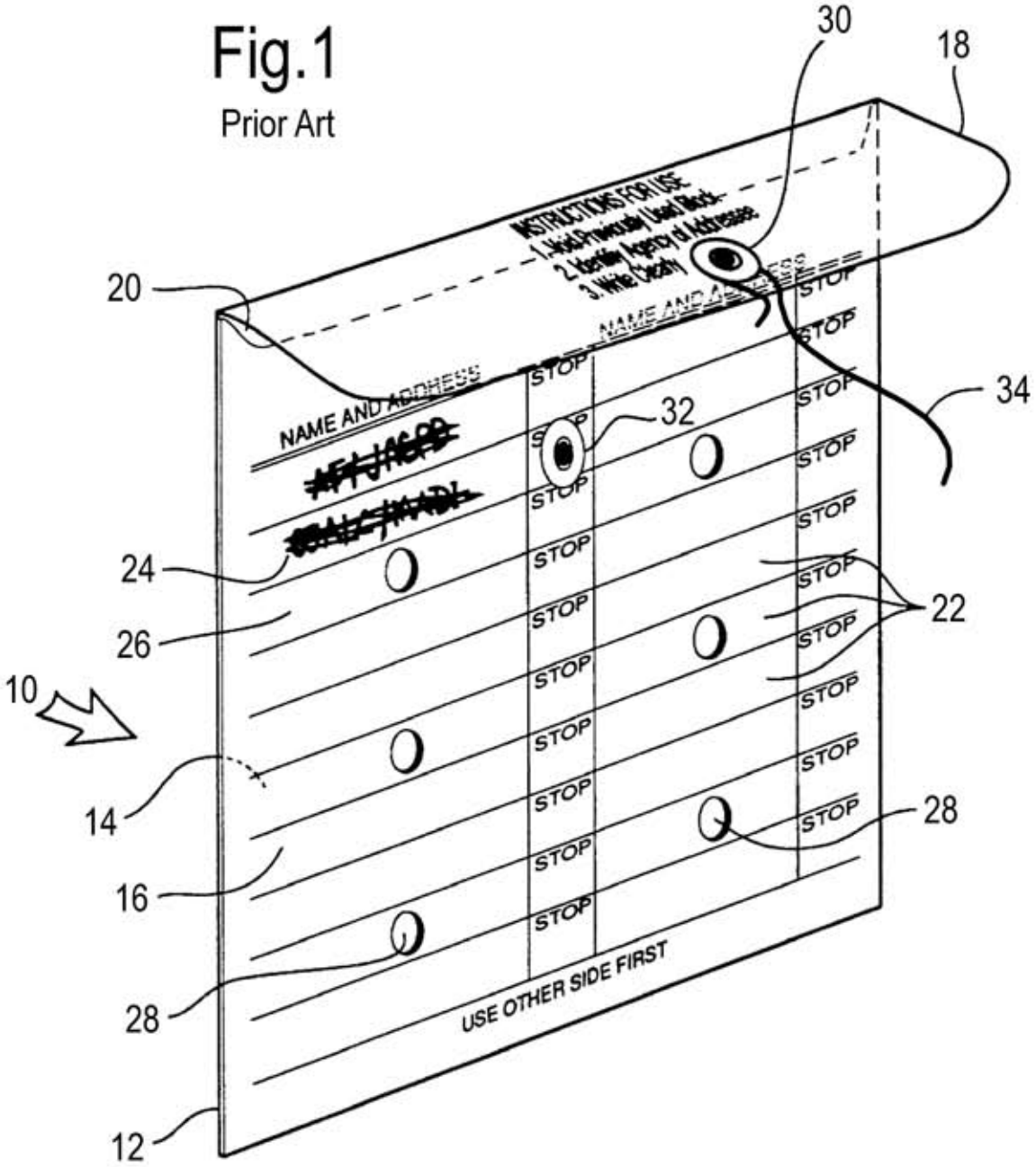
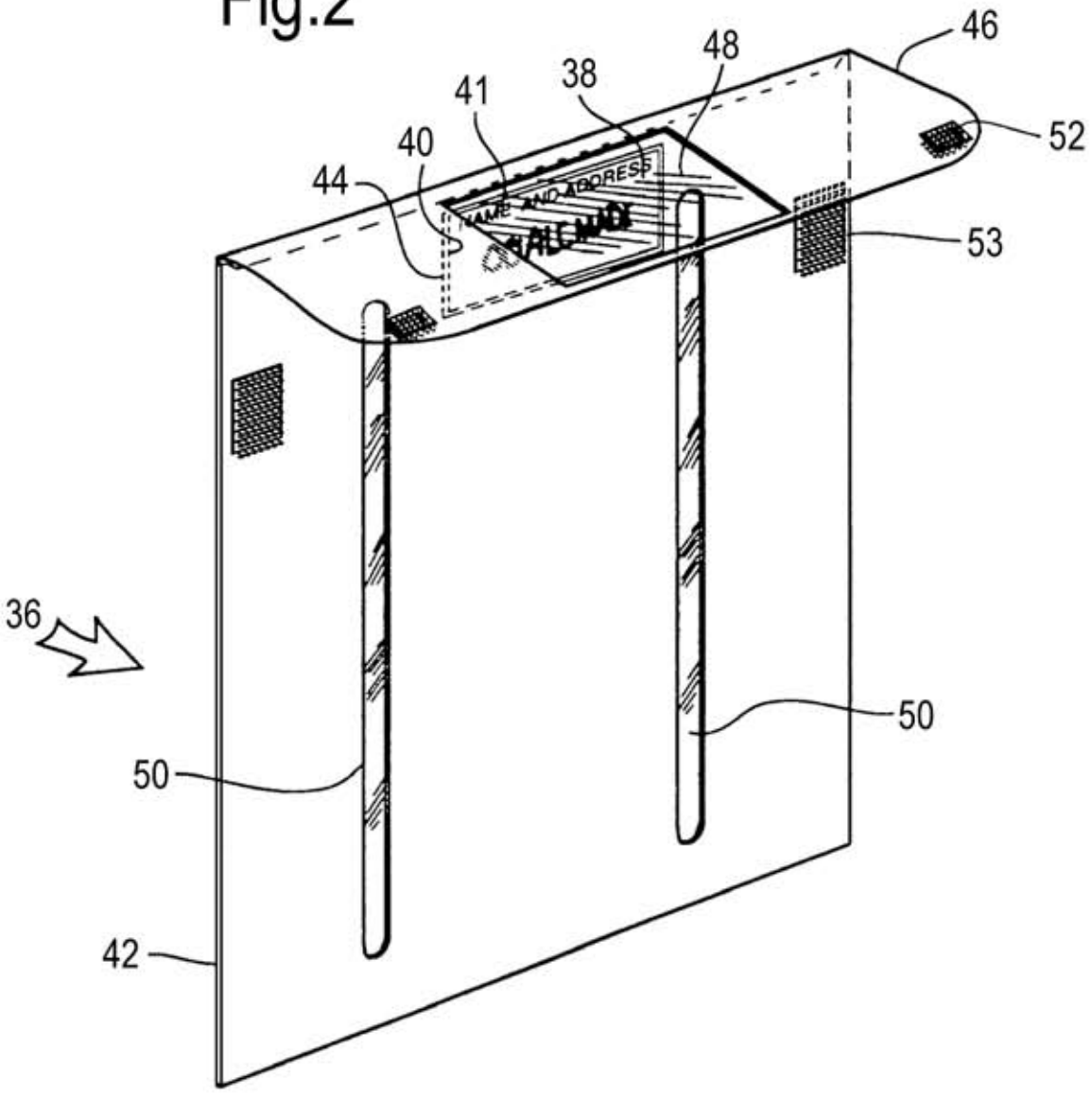


Fig.2



IPO Examination report

15 June 2011

Dear Sirs

Application Number: GB 0999999.9

Patents Act 1977: Examination Report Under Section 18(3)

Latest date for reply: 15 October 2011

Reference is made to D1 = US 1111111 and D2 = catalogue extract no. 2222222, which were published on 16 July 2003 and 6 May 2007 respectively, before the filing date of the application under examination (18 December 2009) and are, therefore, useable for the purposes of both novelty and inventive step.

Novelty and Inventive Step

1. Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 are not new in view of D1:
   a. Claim 1: envelope; front and back faces (of front and back panels 12 and 10 respectively); flap 14; reusable address block (pad 27; Fig. 1); window (opening 15 is a window – see, for example, page 1, line 17 of D1);
   b. Claim 5 – see height of window 15 against height of address fields in Figure 1;
   c. Claim 6 – items 22/23 in Figure 1 (although D1 refers to panel 12 as the 'front' panel, the use of the term 'back face' in claim 6 of the present application does not suitably distinguish claim 6 from D1);
   d. Claim 8 – window 15 is an elongate sight slot;
   e. Claim 10 (when dependent upon claim 8) – see transparent cover on page 2, lines 21 to 22 and page 3, line 2.
2. Claims 2 and 3 appear obvious in view of the catalogue extract, D2.
3. Claim 11 lacks novelty since it covers the prior art.

Clarity

4. The "wipe-clean material" in claim 4 does not have an antecedent when appended directly to claim 1.

Inter-office envelope

The invention relates to an improved envelope and, more particularly, to an improved envelope for inter-office use.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The character of the invention, however, may be best understood by reference to one of its structural forms, as illustrated by the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the inter-office envelope of this invention showing a routing pad in position in the second pocket;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the envelope taken along the lines II--II of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a view of the flat unitary sheet prior to its folding into the envelope of this invention; and

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a routing pad for use in connection with this invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Figure 1 shows a perspective view, and Figure 2 a sectional view, of an envelope with a front panel 12. The envelope is made from a unitary sheet, which is scored to provide fold lines defining a rectangular back panel 10, a rectangular intermediate panel 11, a rectangular front panel 12, a bottom end flap 13 and a top flap 14. The front panel 12 has an elongate window in the form of opening 15, as shown in Figure 3, through which is visible an inserted pad 27 with address fields.

To construct the inter-office envelope, the intermediate panel 11 is folded along a vertical score line 16 so that it overlies the back panel 10. The front panel 12 is folded along a similar score line 17 to overlie the intermediate panel 11. The bottom flap 13 is folded along a bottom horizontal score line 18 to overlie a portion of the front panel 12 and is adhesively secured thereto by adhesive 25. The top flap 14 is folded along a top score line 19 to overlie a portion of the front panel 12.

When the envelope is so folded, two pockets 20, 21 are formed. The first, rear, pocket 20 is the main container space of the envelope and is bounded by the back panel 10 and the intermediate panel 11, and the second, front, pocket 21 is bounded by the intermediate panel 11 and the front

panel 12. The opening 15 in the front panel allows the user to see the contents of the front packet 21.

The limits of the second pocket 21 can be restricted by using adhesive to secure that portion of the front panel 12 which surrounds the opening 15 to the intermediate panel 11, thus defining the limits of the pocket 21. These adhesive securing means can take the form of adhesive strips 24 which can be applied to either the back of the front panel 12 or the corresponding side of the intermediate panel 11.

Securing means are provided on the front panel 12 and the top flap 14 so that when the top flap 14 is secured to the front panel 12, the envelope, including both pockets 20, 21, is closed. The securing means can be in the form of a clip 22 attached to the front panel 12 and a corresponding hole 23 in the top flap 14.

In the use of the envelope, material 26 to be forwarded is placed in the first pocket 20. A routing pad 27 is placed in the second pocket 21. The top flap 14 is secured to the front panel 12 by securing means 22, 23 closing both pockets 20, 21 in one operation. The routing pad 27 consists of a plurality of sheets of paper each being divided into a plurality of spaces for addresses, which are visible through the opening 15. When one sheet has been used up, the pad 27 can be removed from the pocket 21, the top sheet removed and the pad 27 reinserted. Thus, the useful life of the envelope can be extended indefinitely, being limited only by the durability of the materials from which it is constructed.

The surface of the pad 27 can be accessed through the opening 15 in the front panel 12 eliminating the necessity for removal of the pad 27 for each use. Alternatively, the opening 15 can be covered by transparent material, which protects the written addresses on the pad but means that the pad 27 has to be removed each time a new address is to be written since the addresses cannot be written on the pad 27 through the transparent material.

Small circular holes 28 which are in alignment are provided in the back 10, intermediate 11 and front 12 panels so that the recipient of the envelope can readily determine the presence of material therein.

In an alternative version, the pad 27 can be made of a single sheet of plastic made of a material that allows addresses to be written in the fields using a permanent-type marker pen. The ink from permanent-type marker pens is durable and does not smudge easily. Once all of the fields have been used up, the final recipient removes the written-in addresses using solvent and then new addresses can be written into the blank spaces. It is important that the ink is durable

because, if not, addresses written onto the pad 27 in non-durable ink could be readily smudged if the opening 15 is not covered by transparent material and could also be smudged even if the opening 15 is covered with transparent material each time the pad 27 is reinserted into the second pocket 21.

5 In order to facilitate the insertion of the pad 27 into the pocket 21, the leaves of the pad are provided with a cement coating 29 along the bottom edge and one side. In this way, individual pages can be readily removed and, yet, when the pad is re-inserted in the pocket, there is no danger of the top sheets curling, or getting caught, and becoming detached.

Fig.1

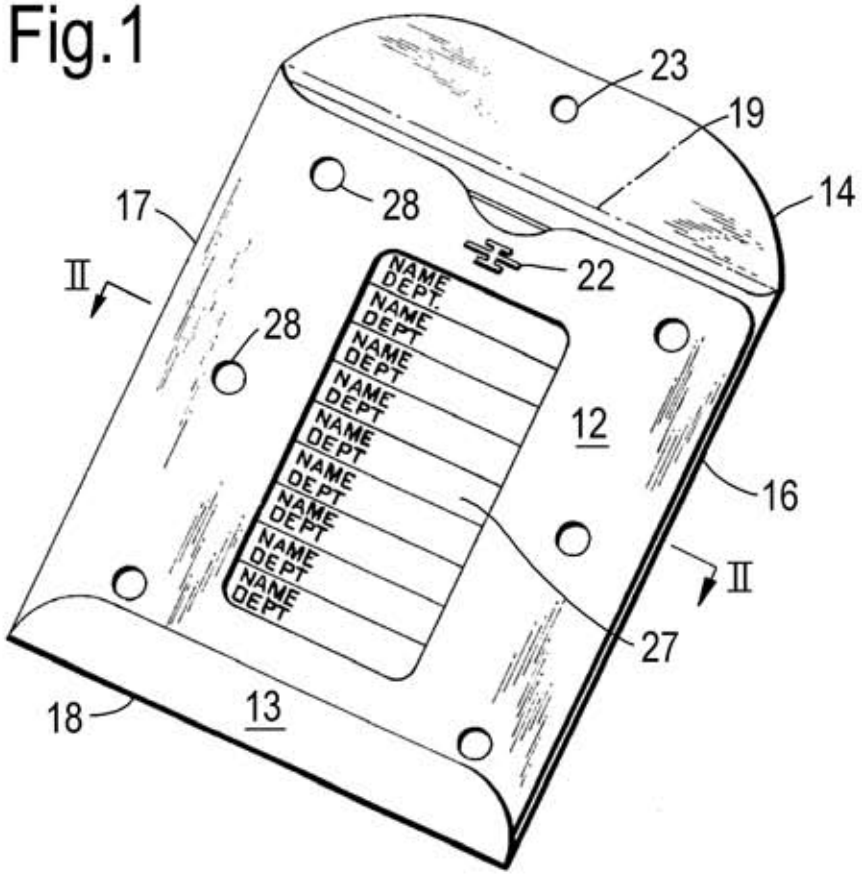


Fig.2

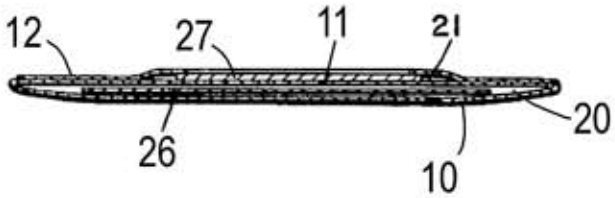


Fig.3

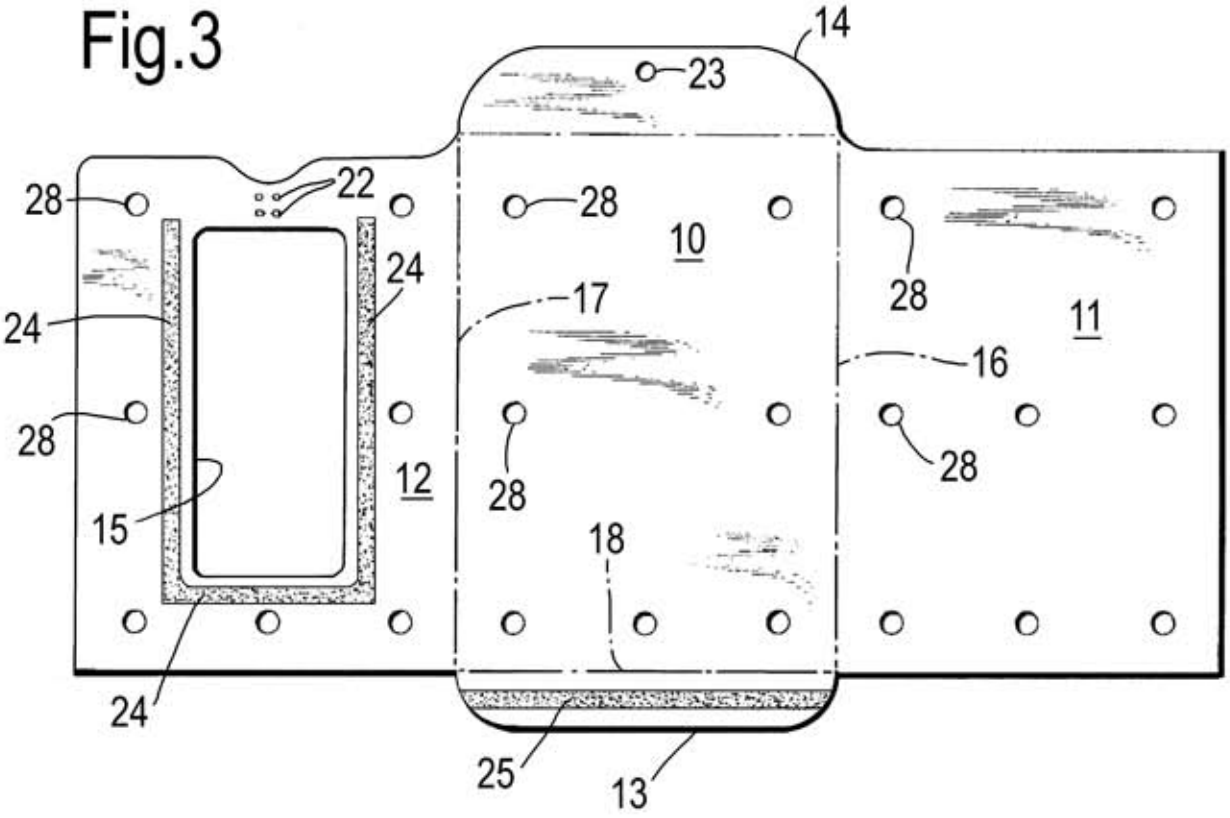
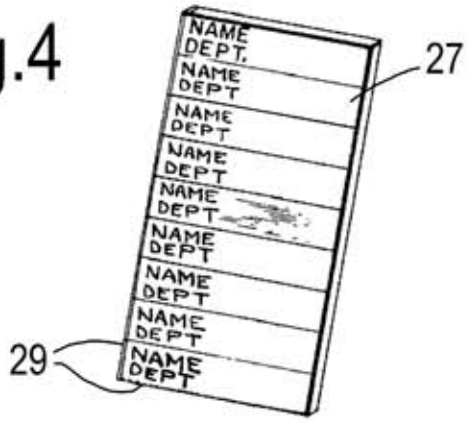


Fig.4



D2 - "Catalogue extract" – ref. 2222222; published 6 May 2007

Routing Envelope

Our inter-office envelopes have many wipe-clean address fields, which are made from wipe-clean plastic. When all of the fields are used up, they can be wiped clean using a cloth or tissue and the addresses can be filled in again. Because the address fields are wipe-clean, the final recipient does not need to use specialist materials such as solvent, adhesive or the like to remove the addresses; a piece of tissue or the like is all that's needed. Please be careful while the envelope is in transit as the addresses can get smudged quite easily. We sell separate transparent plastic covers for the envelopes that provide additional protection for the envelopes and particularly the wipe-clean address fields while the envelope is in transit.