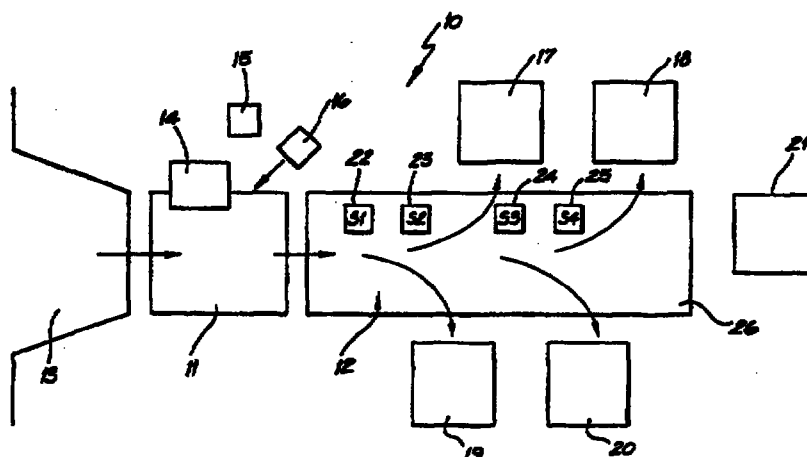


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(54) Title: **SORTING DEVICE AND METHOD**

(57) Abstract

A sorting device for sorting books or other article, for instance, when they are returned to a public library. The books are encoded according to a library classification system, such that, when they are provided in a return chute (13), sensors (15, 22-25) read the codings and determine the desired bin (17-21) within which the book is to be provided. A mechanical sorting means (Fig. 4) sorts the books as they travel along a conveyor. A separating means (Fig. 3) ensures that the books travel separately to the sorting means. The separation apparatus for separating a plurality of discrete articles, comprises a substantially upwardly inclined belt means to transport said articles, said belt having flukes or the like thereon; and a drag means pivotally supported above said belt, to apply a frictional drag to the upper portion of an article placed on said belt, such that any additional article positioned atop said article is prevented from ascending said belt. There may also be a removal apparatus for removing articles from a conveyor belt or the like into discrete locations, comprising: at least one select belt adapted to move in a direction substantially transverse to said conveyor belt and disposed substantially above said conveyor belt; and at least one protrusion extending outwardly of said belt adapted to contact and push an article positioned on said conveyor belt to one of said discrete locations.