position, wherein the storage component is configured to provide a user direct manual access to the items in the storage positions. The system further includes a sensor system configured to track at least one of the user's removal of an item from the associated storage position or replacement of an item to the associated storage position and an identification system for identifying the user. The system also has an authorization database operatively coupled to the identification system for tracking which of the items a particular identified user is authorized to access.

[0005a] In another embodiment, there is provided a method for operating an access and storage system comprising: providing a storage component configured to store items therein or thereon in an associated storage position, wherein said storage component is configured to provide a user direct manual access to said items in said storage positions, wherein said storage component is operatively coupled to an identification system for identifying a user, and wherein said identification system is operatively coupled to an authorization database for tracking which of said items a particular identified user is authorized to access; and tracking, via a sensor system, at least one of said user's removal of an item from the associated storage position or replacement of an item to the associated storage position.

[0005b] In a further embodiment, there is provided an access and storage system comprising: a storage component configured to store items therein or thereon in an associated storage position, wherein said storage component includes a secure storage area in which at least some of said items are positioned, and wherein said items positioned in said secure storage area are not accessible to a user who is not granted access thereto and are directly manually accessible in their storage positions by a user who is granted access thereto; a sensor system configured to track at least one of said user's removal of an item from the associated storage position or replacement of an item to the associated storage position; and an identification system for identifying said user and an authorization database operatively coupled to said identification system for tracking which of said items a particular identified user is authorized to access.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Fig. 1 is a front perspective view of one embodiment of a storage and dispensing cabinet;

[0007] Fig. 2 is a front perspective view of an alternate storage and dispensing cabinet;

[0008] Fig. 3 is a front perspective view of another storage and dispensing cabinet;

[0009] Fig. 4 is a front perspective view of yet another alternate storage and dispensing cabinet;

[0010] Fig. 5 is a front perspective view of empty aperture-based dispenser, shown in its empty condition;

[0011] Fig. 6 is a front perspective view of the aperture-based dispenser of Fig. 5, with an item positioned therein;

[0012] Fig. 7 is a front perspective view of another aperture-based dispenser;

[0013] Fig. 8 is a front perspective view an array of aperture-based dispensers;

[0014] Fig. 9 is a front perspective view of a pair of tiered dispensers;

[0015] Fig. 10 is a front perspective view of a tiered dispenser of Fig. 9, showing the internal shelves thereof;

[0016] Fig. 11 is a front perspective view of a plurality of weight-based dispensers;

[0017] Fig. 12 is a front perspective cut-away view of a distance-based dispenser with two items positioned therein;

[0018] Fig. 13 is a front perspective view of the distance-based dispenser of Fig. 12, after an item has been removed therefrom;

[0019] Fig. 14 is a front perspective view of a ramp-style dispenser;

[0020] Fig. 15 is a front perspective view of a bulk item dispenser;

[0021] Fig. 16 is a front perspective view of a cut-out dispenser with an item positioned therein;