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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR HANDLING INSERTS FOR PRINTED MATERIALS**

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Publication Classification

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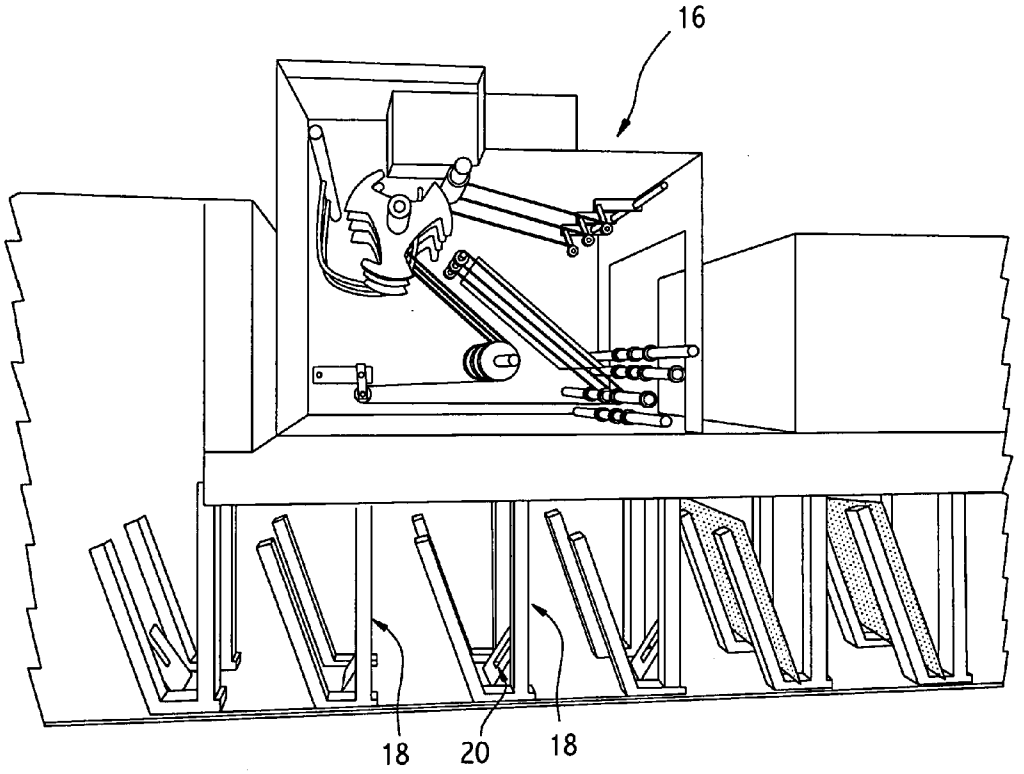
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **270/52.14**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus for handling inserts for printed materials has been developed. The apparatus includes a printed material conveyor that includes a support post and a gripper. The conveyor receives and supports the printed material from below. After an insert has been placed inside the printed material, it is delivered to a stacker and jackets with insert errors are automatically returned to the conveyor.



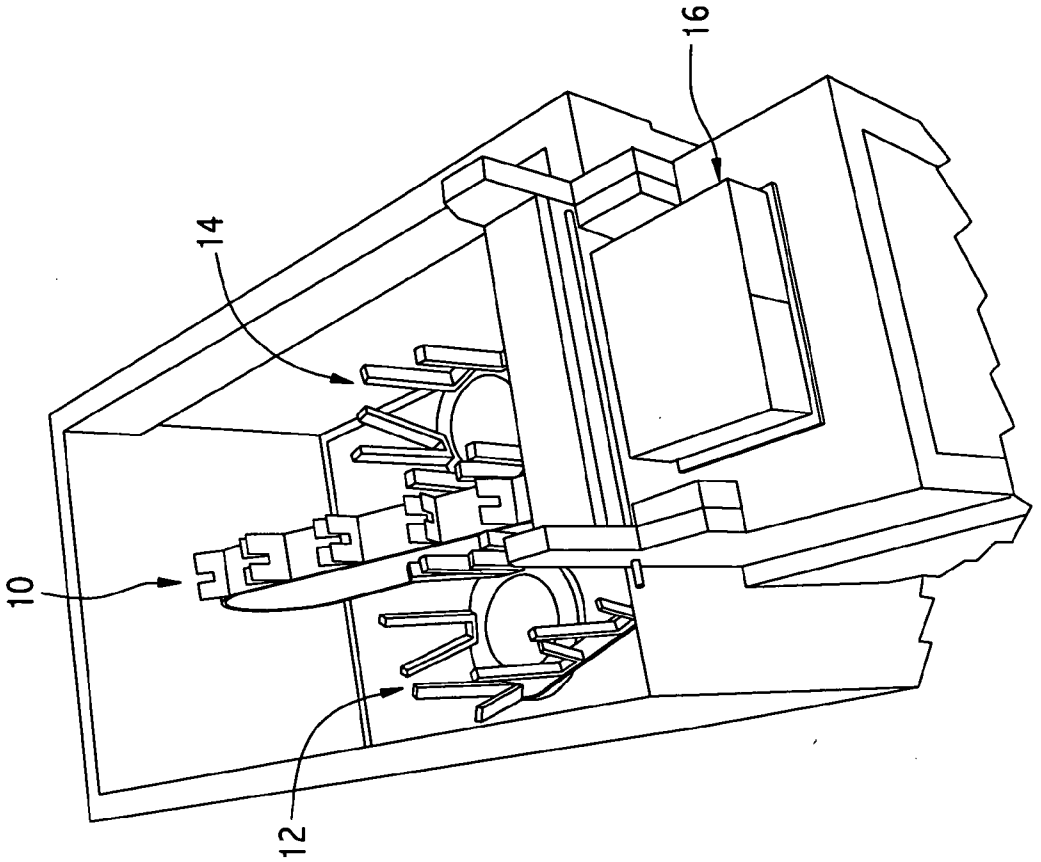


FIG. 1

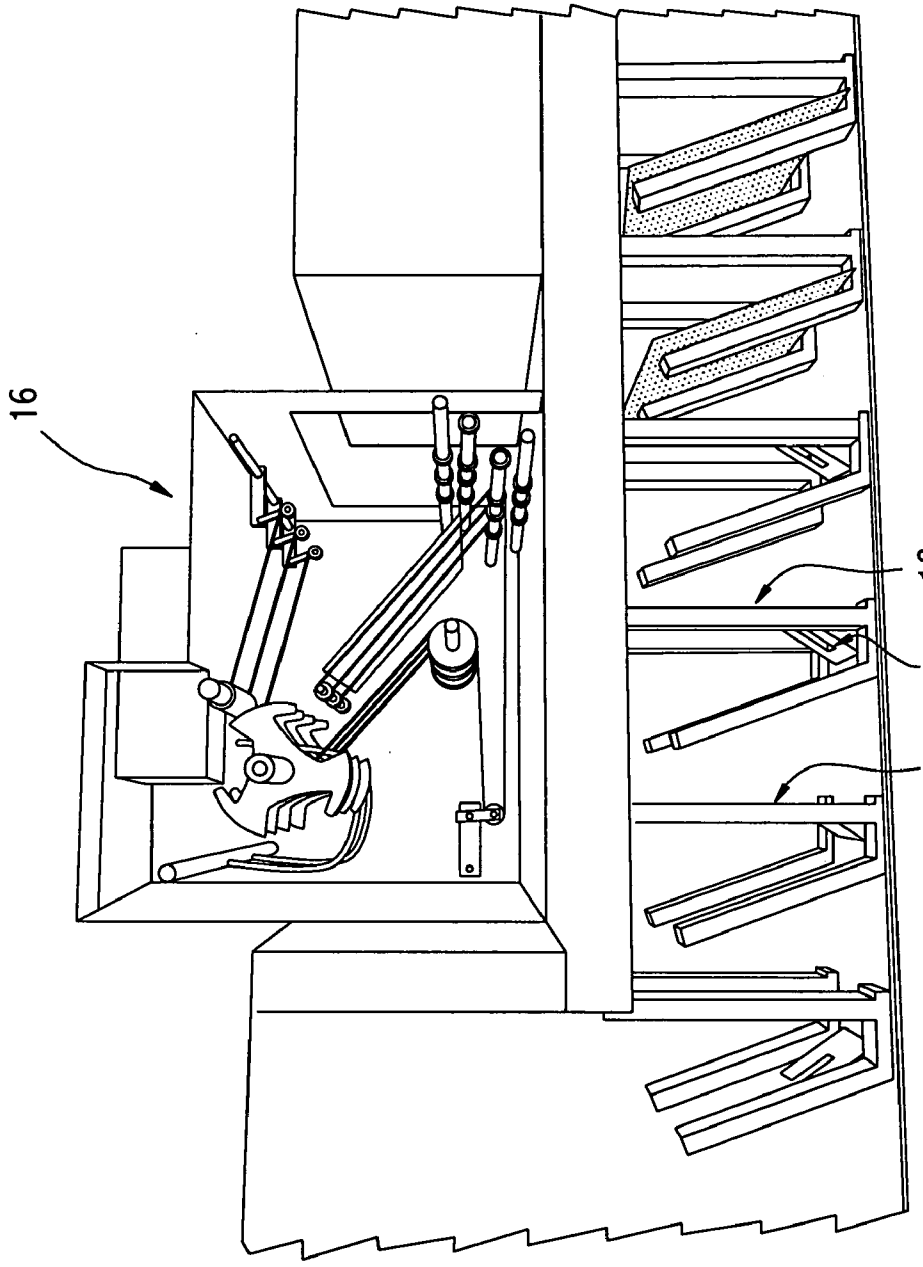


FIG. 2

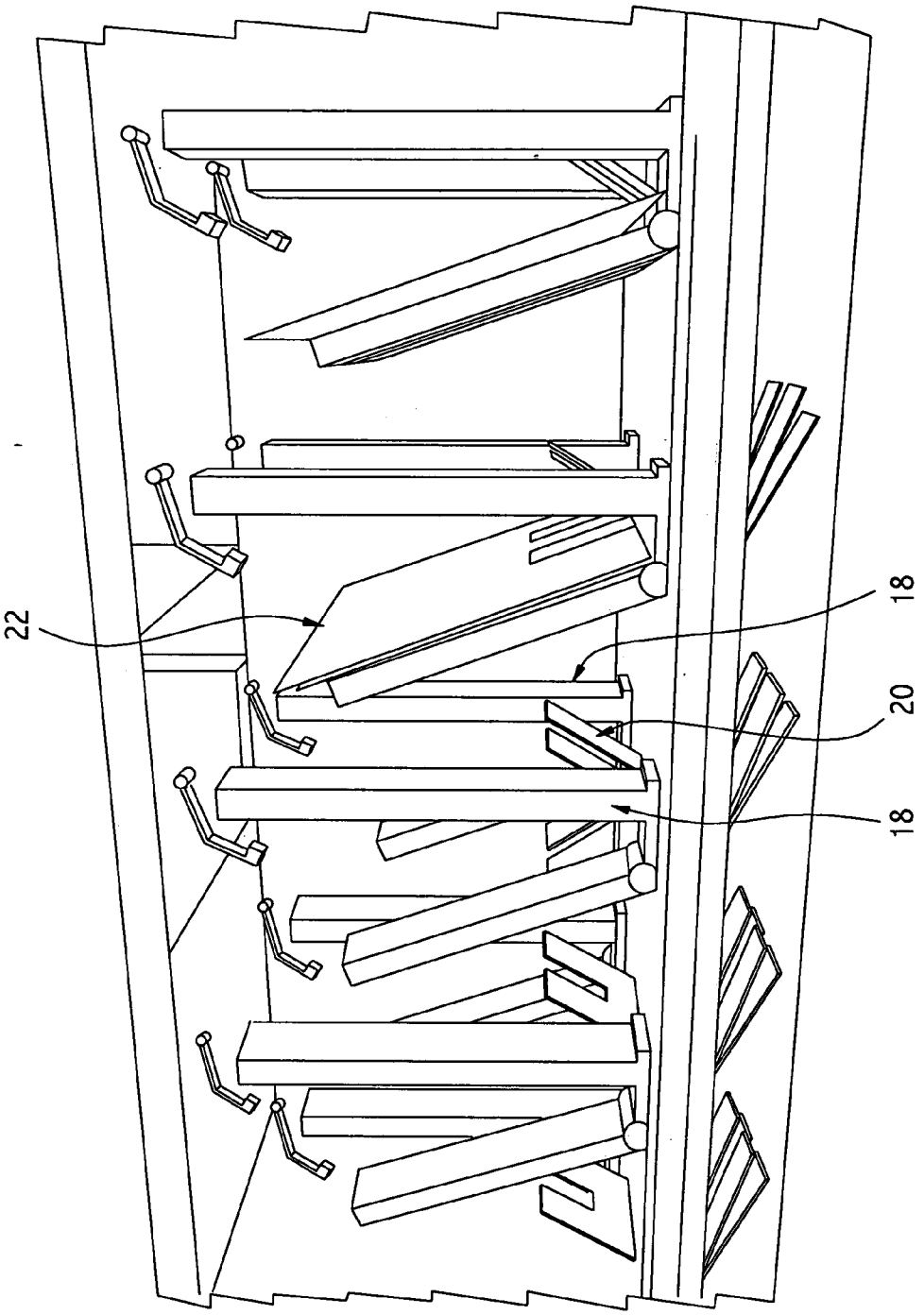


FIG. 3

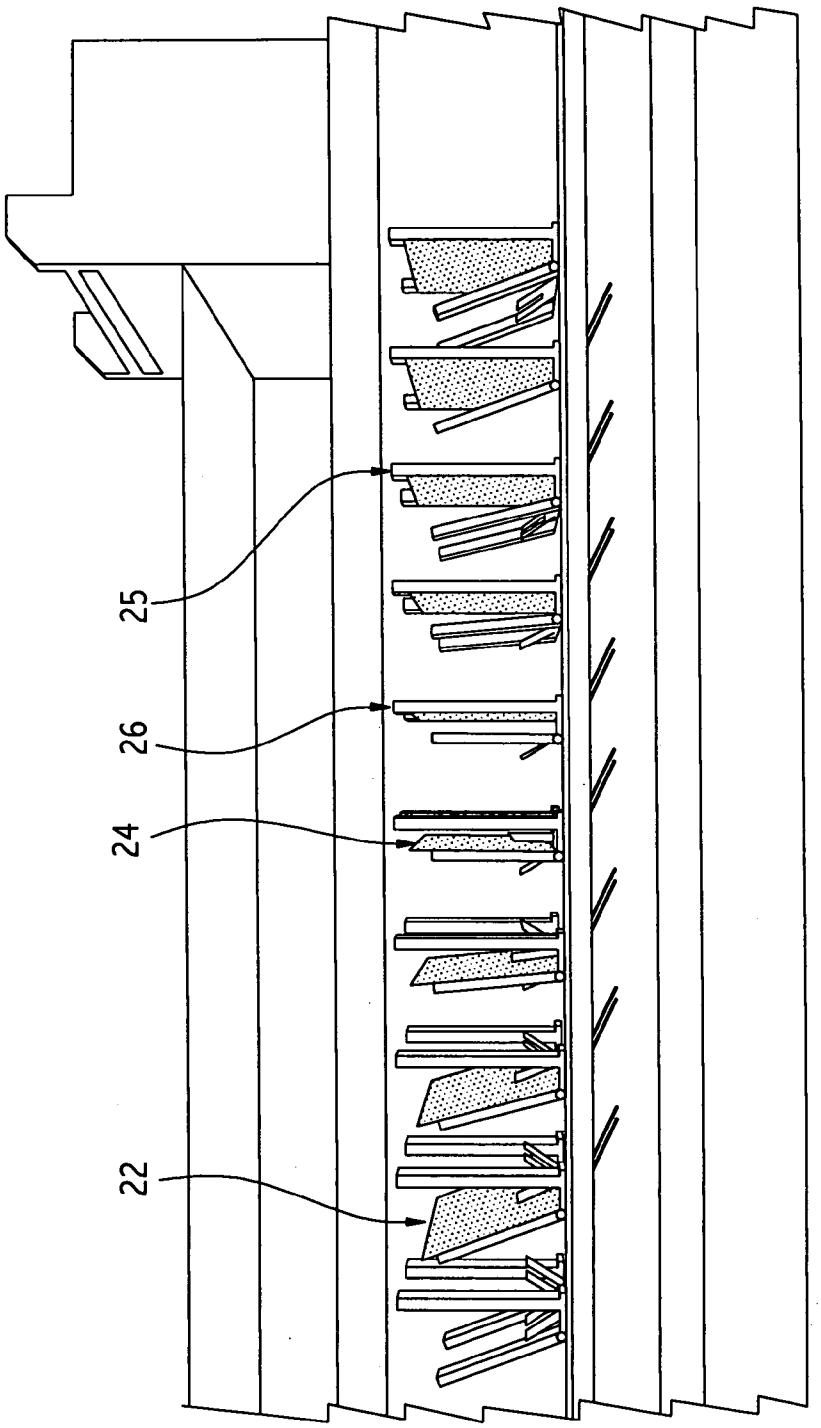


FIG. 4

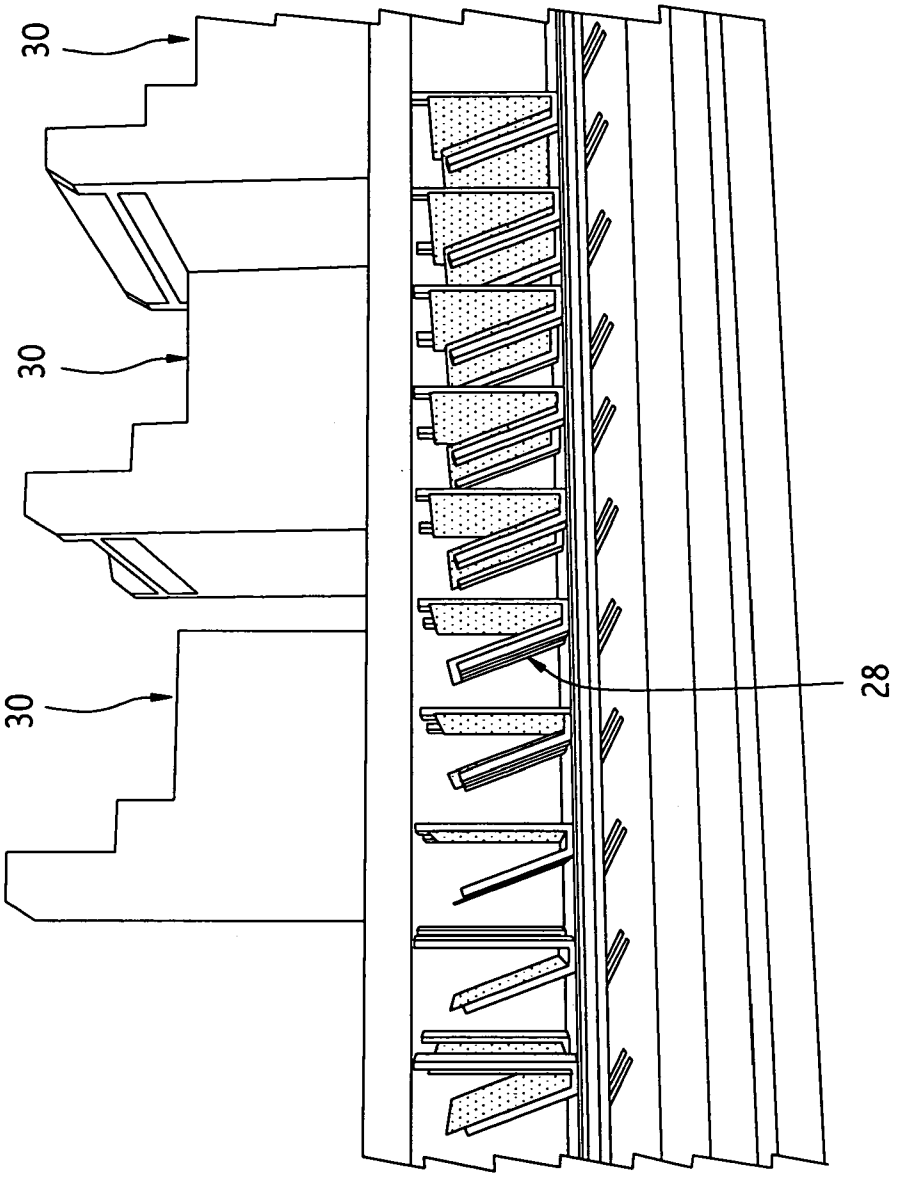


FIG. 5

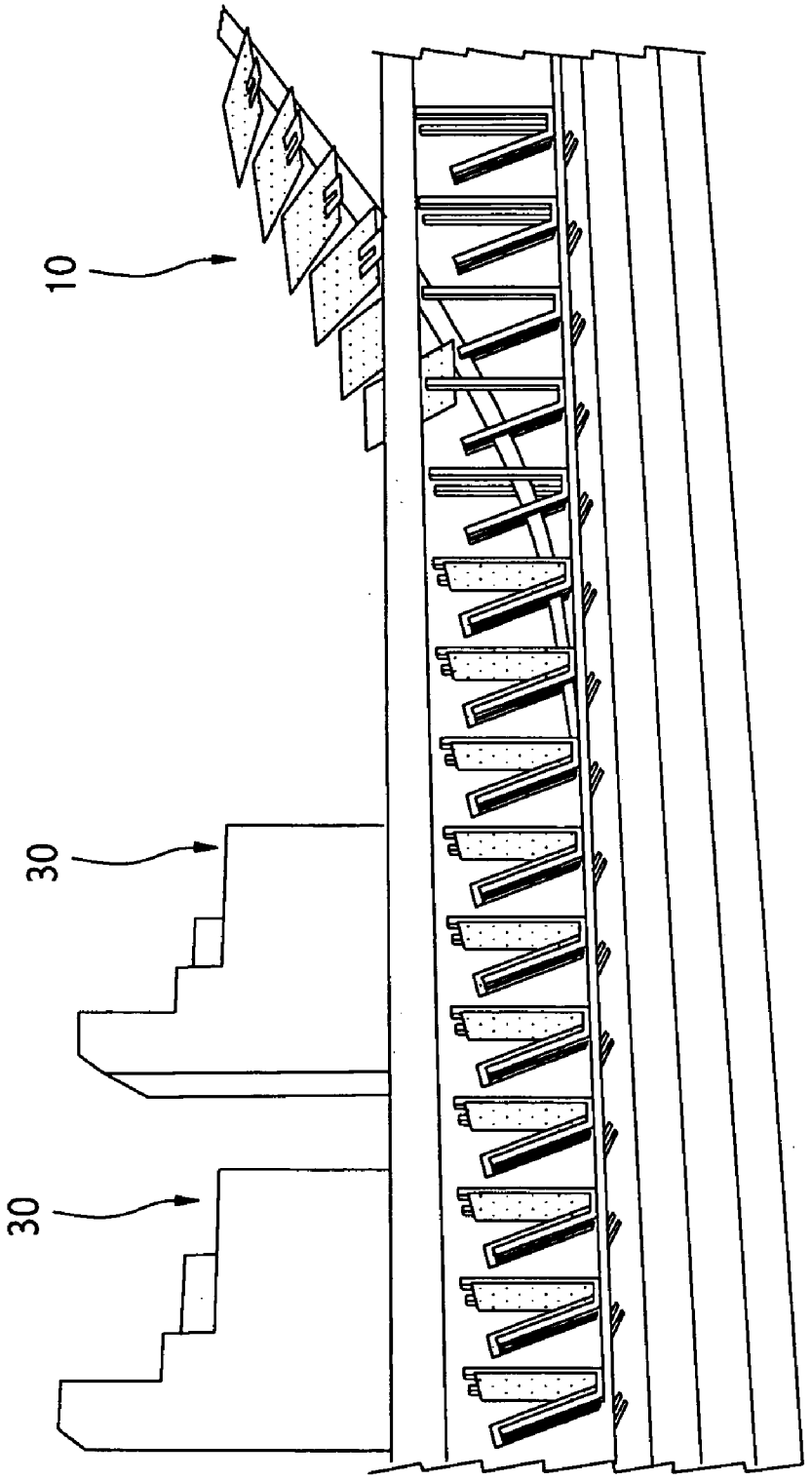


FIG. 6

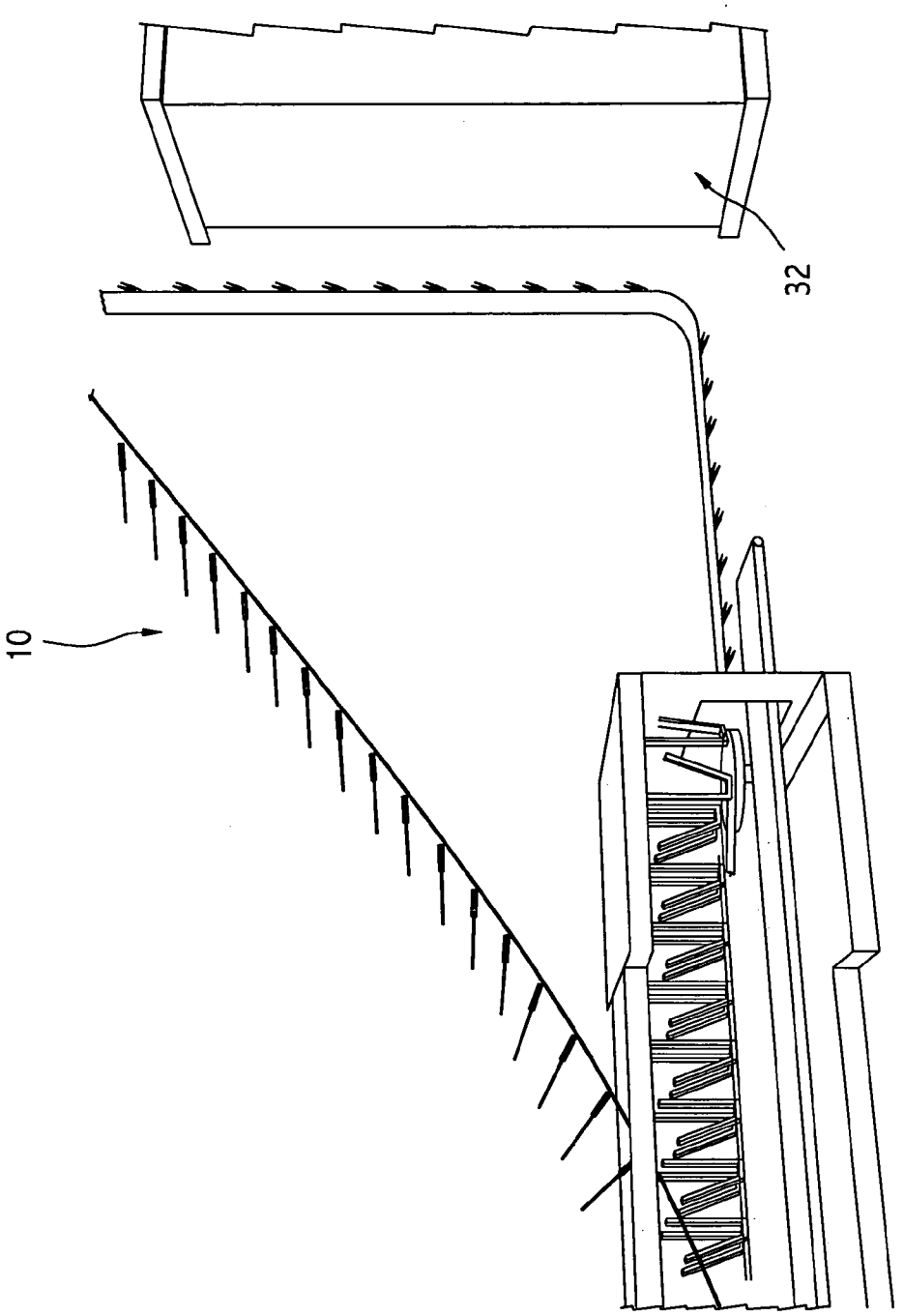


FIG. 7

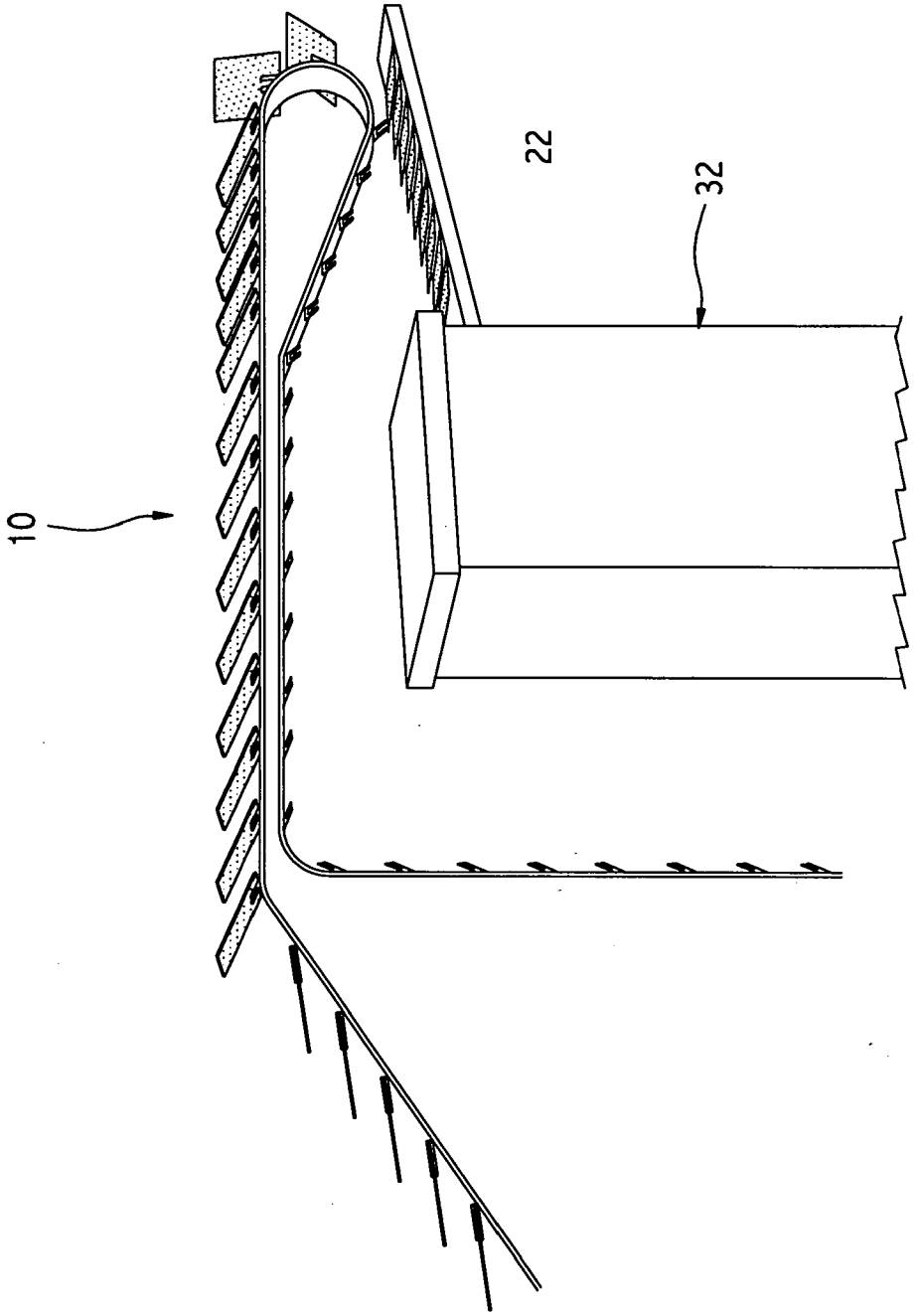


FIG. 8

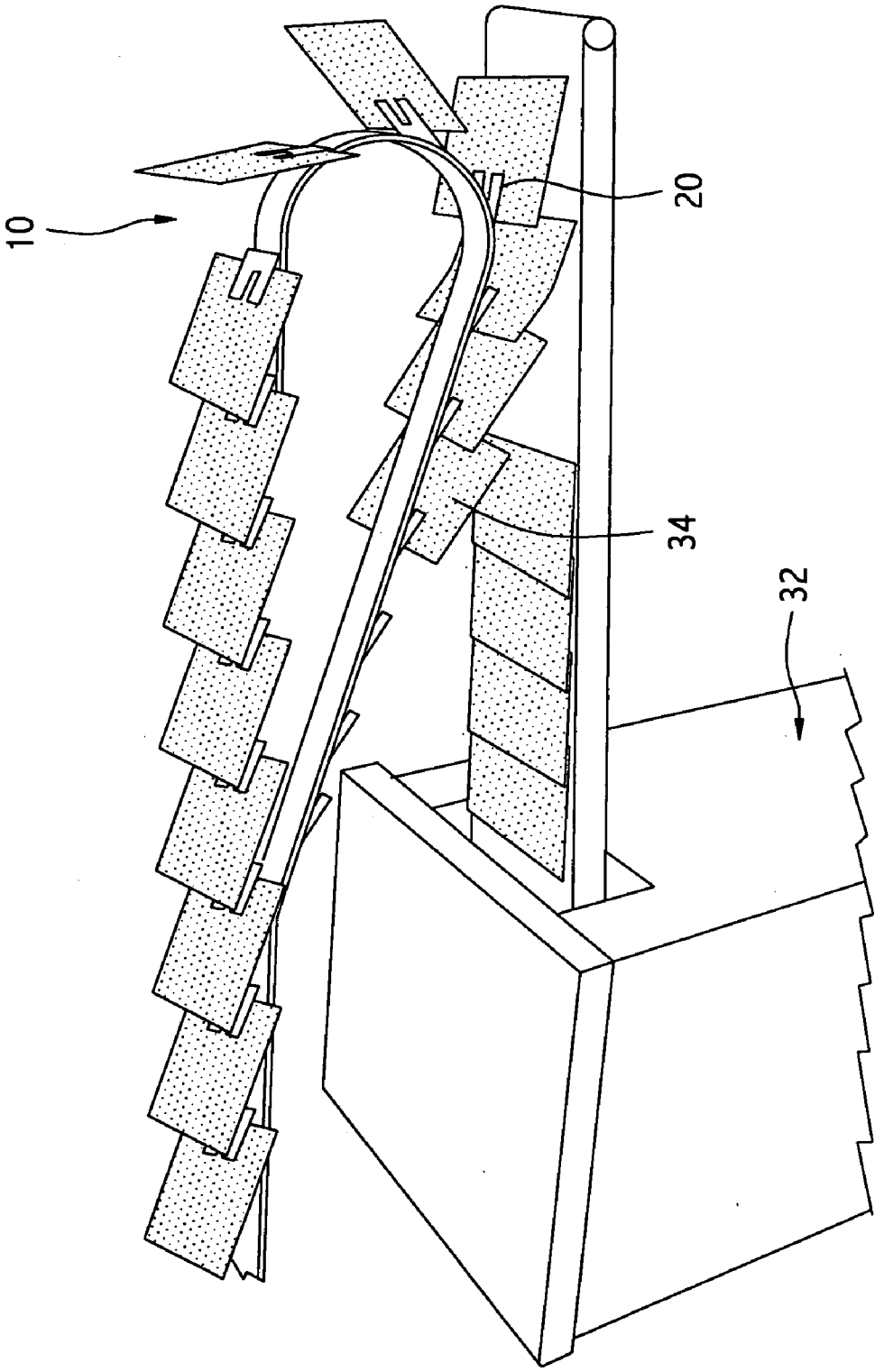


FIG. 9

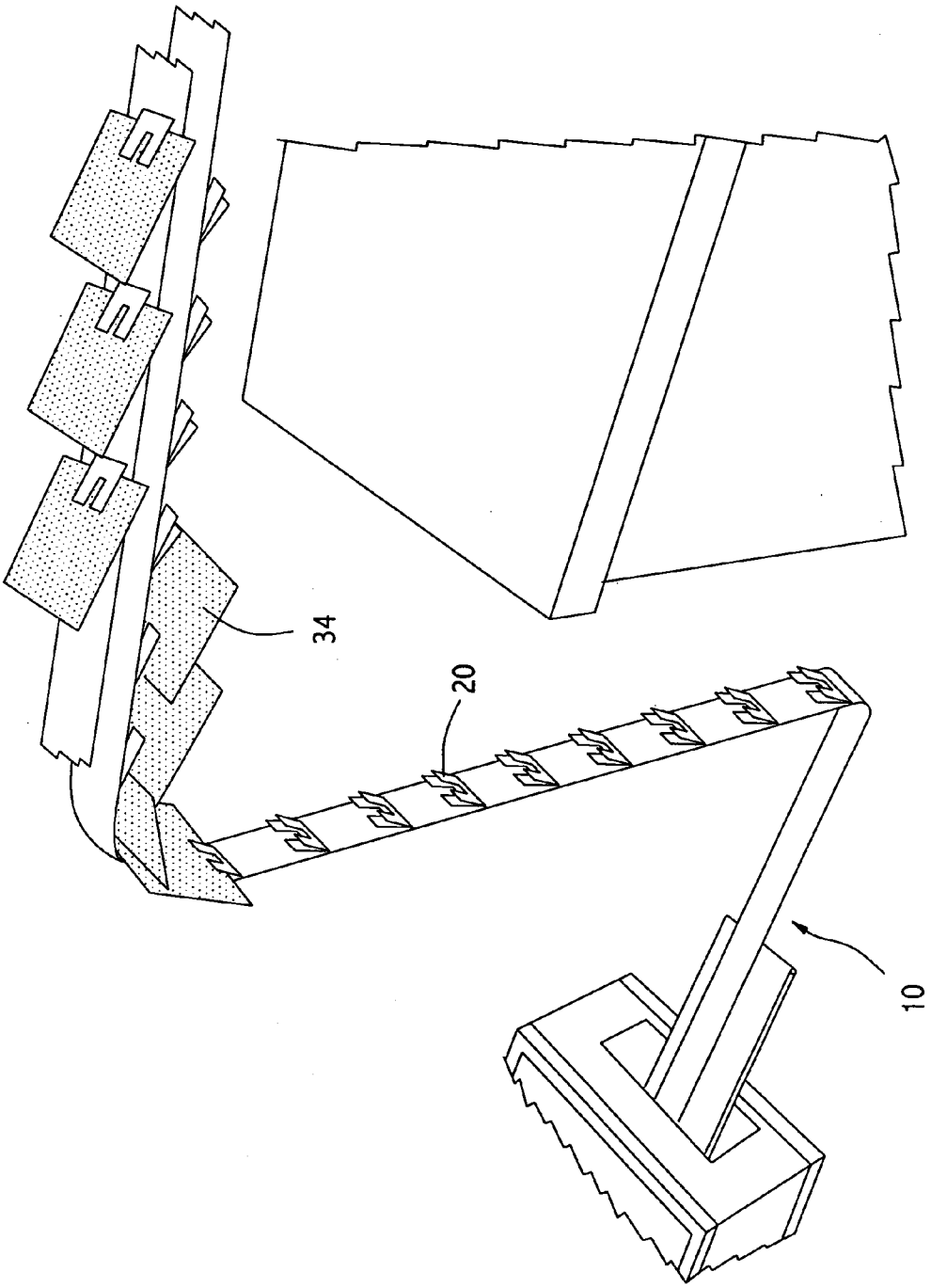


FIG. 10

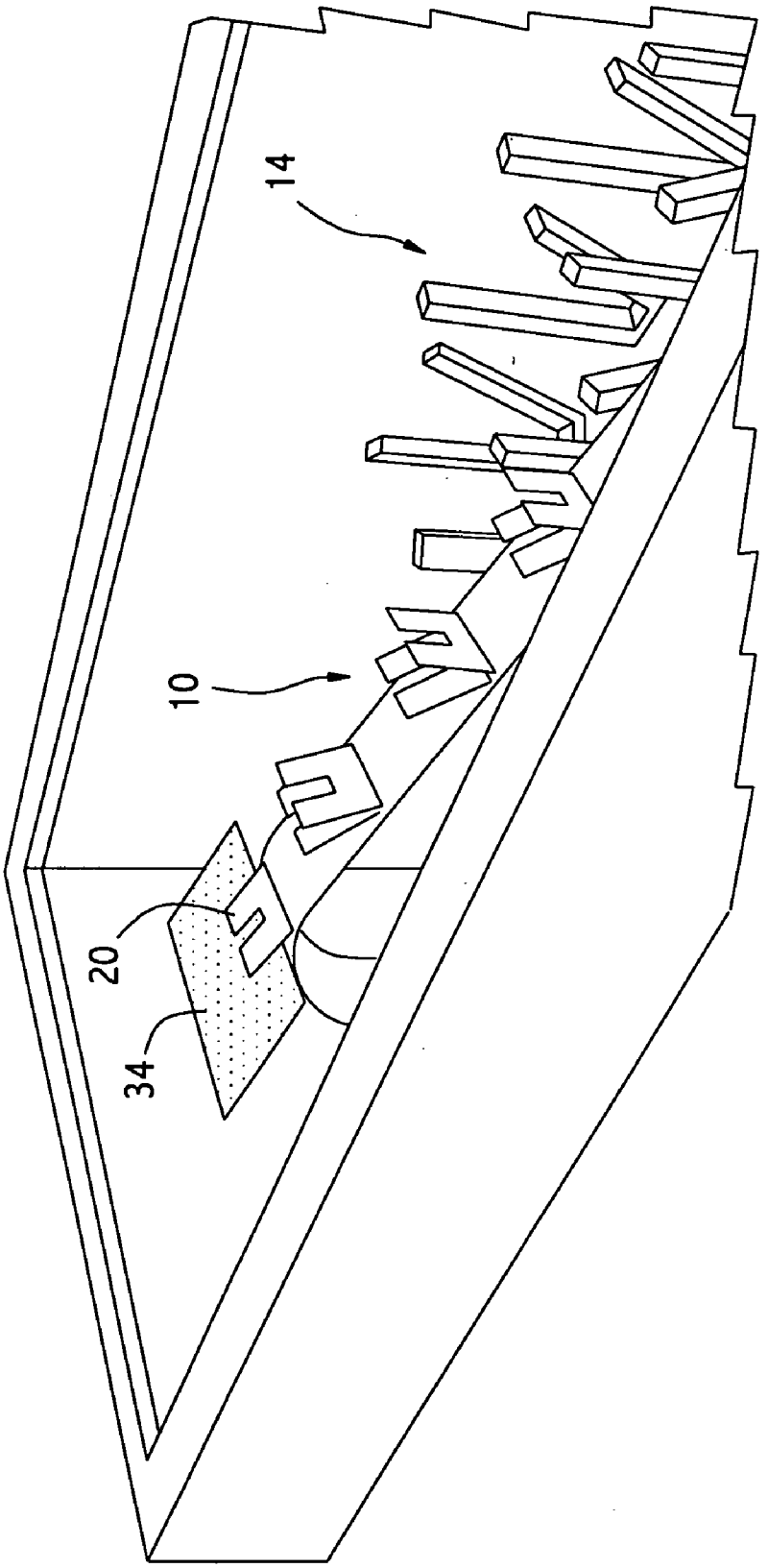


FIG. 11

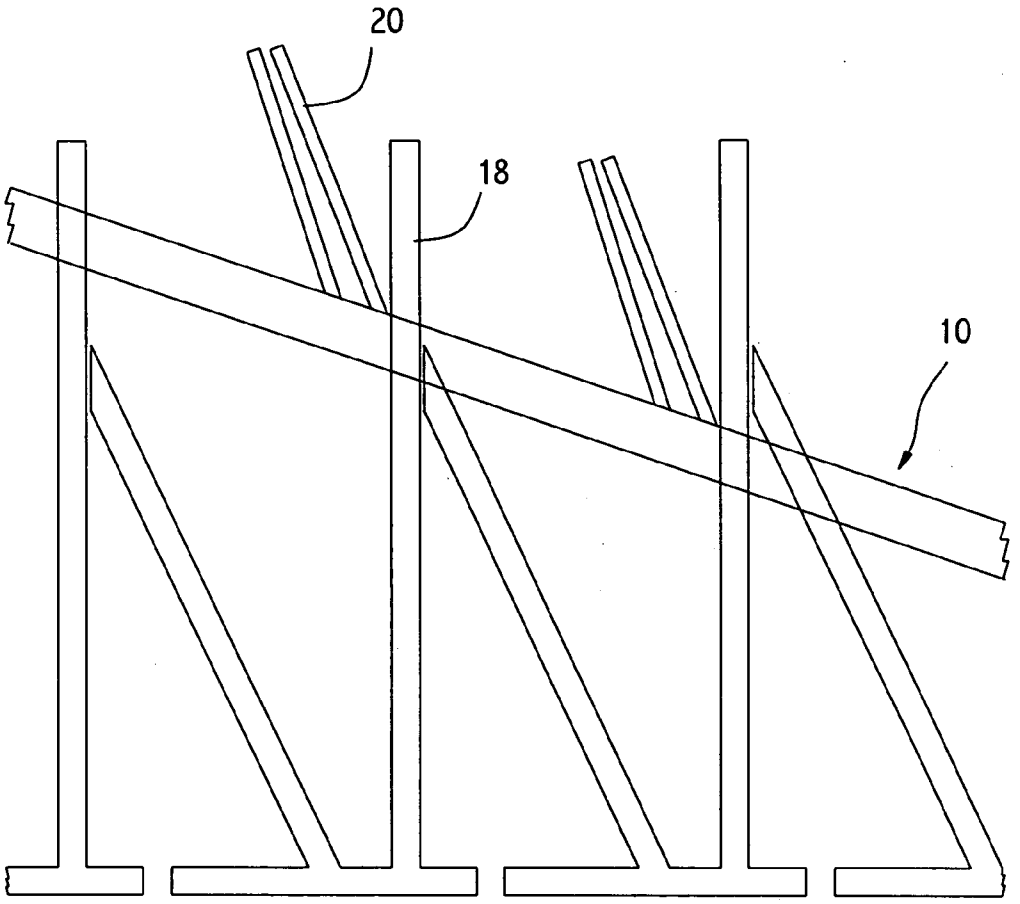


FIG. 12

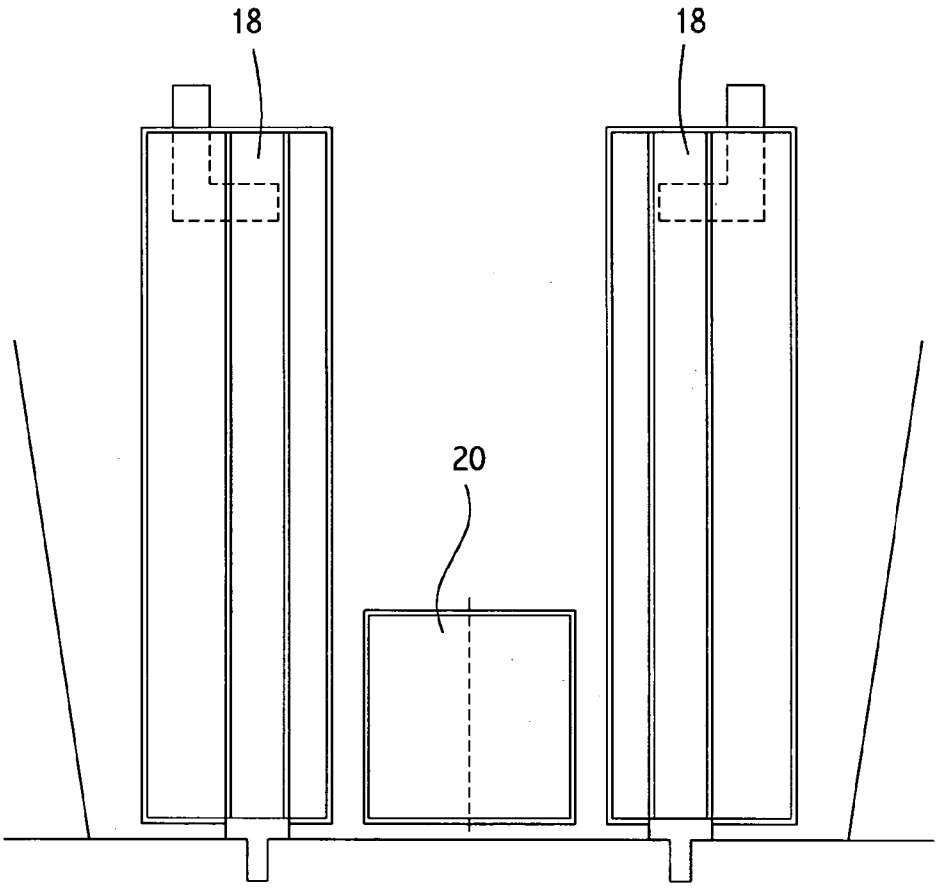


FIG. 13

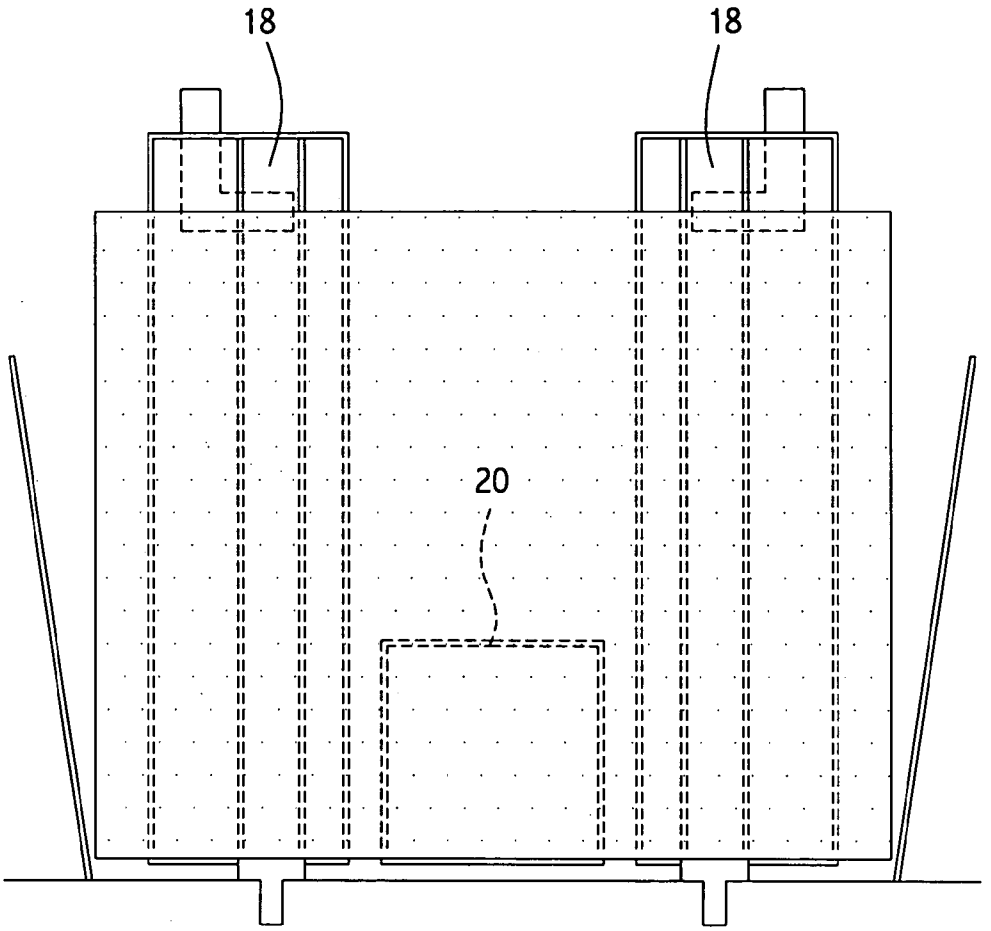


FIG. 14

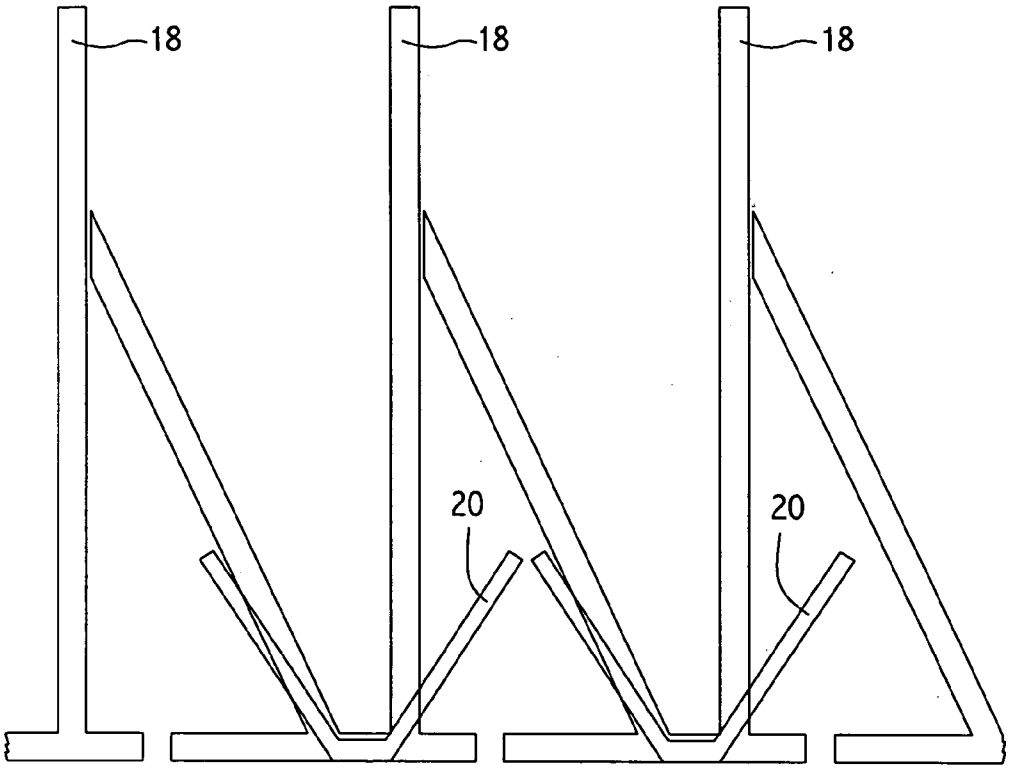


FIG. 15

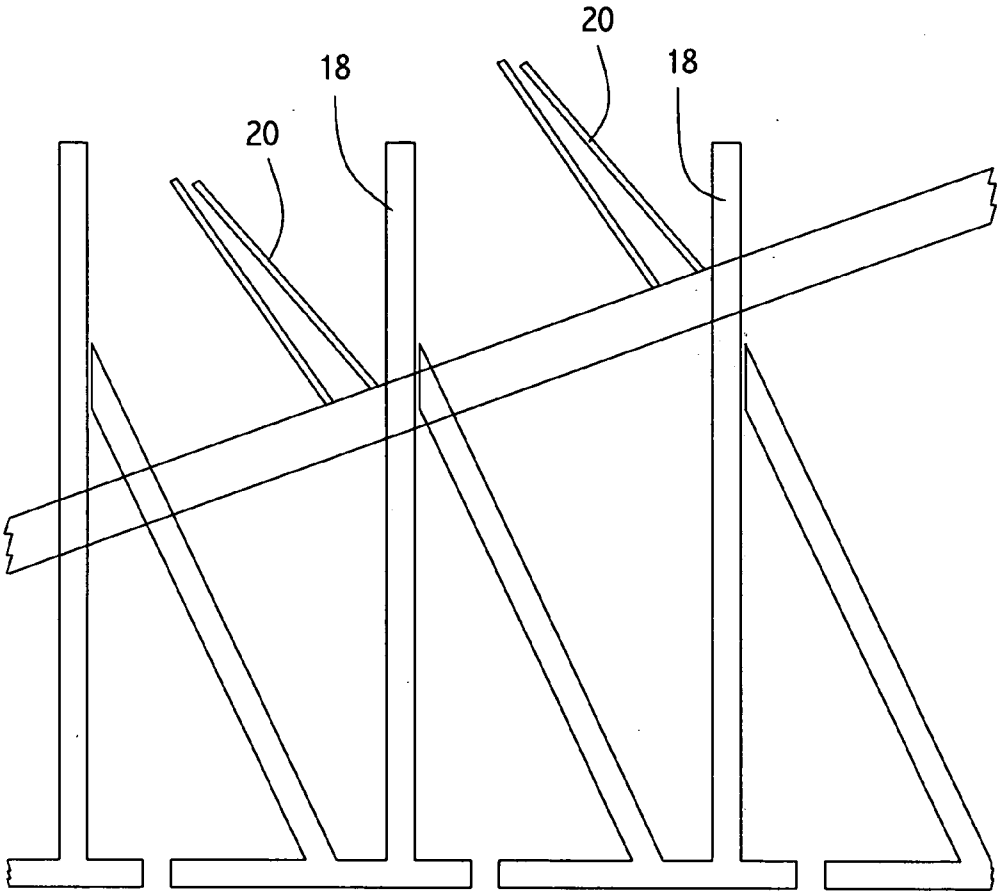


FIG. 16

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR HANDLING INSERTS FOR PRINTED MATERIALS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application 60/512,012 entitled "System and Apparatus for Handling Inserts for Printed Materials" that was filed on Oct. 16, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The invention relates generally to printing machines. More specifically, the invention relates to a method and apparatus for handling inserts for printed materials.

[0004] 2. Background Art

[0005] Printed materials such as newspapers and tabloid style magazines often come with supplemental inserts. These inserts are typically additional advertisements, etc. that are added to the printed material after its printing. The addition of these inserts is done by a production process that automatically places the inserts inside the printed materials. However, it is common for errors to occur in the process due to misfeeds of the inserts resulting in printed materials with no inserts. These errors typically have to be corrected by manually removing them from the final product and re-feeding them at the beginning of the production process. This is a costly, time-consuming an inefficient method of correcting this problem. Consequently, a method of handling inserts for printed materials that automatically corrects errors is needed.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] In some aspects, the invention relates to: a method for adding inserts to printed material, comprising: receiving a jacket in a jacket conveyor, where the jacket conveyor comprises, a gripper conveyor with a gripper, and a post conveyor with a support post; receiving an insert into the jacket from an insert feeder; delivering the jacket and insert to a product receiver; and returning a jacket with an insert error to the jacket conveyor for correction of the insert error.

[0007] In other aspects, the invention relates to: an apparatus for adding inserts to printed material, comprising: a jacket feeder; a jacket conveyor that receives jackets from the jacket feeder, comprising, a gripper conveyor with a plurality of grippers, where the grippers support the jackets from the bottom, and a post support conveyor with a plurality of post supports; an insert feeder that feeds inserts into the jackets; and a product receiver that receives jackets with inserts from the jacket conveyor.

[0008] Advantages of the present invention include: an apparatus for adding inserts to printed material, comprising: a jacket feeder; an insert feeder; a product receiver; means for receiving jackets from the jacket feeder in combination with inserts from the insert feeder and delivering the jackets with inserts to a product receiver; and means for automatically correcting jackets with insert errors.

[0009] Other aspects and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following description and the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0010] It should be noted that identical features in different drawings are shown with the same reference numeral.

[0011] **FIGS. 1-11** show diagrams of the steps of a method for placing inserts in a newspaper in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] **FIG. 12** shows a side view of the jacket conveyor in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] **FIG. 13** shows a front view of the jacket conveyor in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] **FIG. 14** shows a front view of the jacket conveyor with a jacket in place in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] **FIG. 15** shows a side view of the jacket conveyor with the gripper in the open position in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] **FIG. 16** shows a side view of the jacket conveyor in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] The present invention involves a system and apparatus for handling inserts for printed materials such as advertising inserts for newspapers. **FIGS. 1-11** show diagrams of the steps of a system for placing inserts in a newspaper in one example of the present invention. In this example, the newspapers or "jackets" are moved along the system by a jacket conveyor. The jacket conveyor includes three separate components that move in conjunction with each other: a gripper conveyor **10**; a left post conveyor **12**; and a right post conveyor **14**.

[0018] As shown in **FIGS. 1, 2**, and **3** the jacket conveyor passes underneath a high speed press feeder **16** that feed individual jackets into individual posts **18** and grippers **20**. An individual post support **18** supports the jacket **22** in an upright position. It is formed by a left and right post on the post conveyors **10** and **12**. A gripper **20** is located between the posts. These elements come together and work in conjunction as a jacket conveyor.

[0019] As shown in **FIGS. 4 and 5**, the jacket conveyor receives a closed jacket **24** from the high speed press feeder. The post support closes **26** and reopens **28** in order to open the jacket at its fold as the jacket conveyor moves along the production line. The jacket is held open by suction cups on the posts or any other suitable mechanism. The jacket conveyor then moves along underneath insert feeders **30** which feed inserts into the open jacket **28**. In some embodiments, the distance between the jackets on the jacket conveyor is 6 inches. Locating the jackets closer to each other on the conveyor represents an improvement in the rate of production since more finished jackets can be produced in a shorter amount of time.

[0020] As shown in **FIGS. 6-8**, the gripper conveyor **10** separates from the rest of the jacket conveyor after passing the last insert feeder **30**. The grippers **20** close the jacket and support it from the bottom. The gripper conveyor **10** moves the grippers **20** and the closed jackets along the line until the

jackets **22** are released from the grippers and sent to a stacker **32** or other similar device that stacks or otherwise processes the jackets for shipping. It is important to note that the gripper conveyor **10** carries the jackets with inserts from below. This helps prevent inserts from falling out of the jacket during production.

[**0021**] **FIGS. 9-11**, show the method of automatically correcting repairs to the jackets. If an error is detected, such as a missed insert in a jacket, the present invention may make automatic corrections to the jacket. A jacket with an error is called a "repair". In the present invention, the gripper **20** of a repair **34** may hold onto its jacket instead of releasing it to go to the stacker **32**. The repair **34** is then returned along the gripper conveyor **10** to the front of the system where the gripper conveyor **10** meets up with the left and right post conveyors **12** and **14** to reform the jacket conveyor. The repair is then moved along the line a second time to receive its missed inserts.

[**0022**] **FIGS. 12 and 16** show a side views of the jacket conveyor being formed and separated respectively. In each of these views, the gripper conveyor **10** with its grippers **20** are threaded in between each post conveyor **12** with its posts **18**. **FIG. 15** shows a side view of the completed jacket conveyor with an open gripper **20** and open post support **18**. **FIGS. 13 and 14** show frontal views of the gripper conveyor with and without a jacket **22**. These views show the position of the gripper **20** in between the post support **18** when the gripper conveyor is formed.

[**0023**] In some embodiments, the present invention is capable of producing up to 75,000 completed jackets w/inserts per hour. Additionally, it should be understood that while newspapers have been shown in the various embodiments, the term "jackets" could be used to define any type of printed material such as magazines, tabloid newspapers, etc. that would use inserts. The present invention would work with any such printed media that need an insert.

[**0024**] Advantages of the present invention may include: receiving the jacket directly into the gripper from the press feeder; stabilizing the position of the jacket with the post support; having the gripper located inside and acting in conjunction with the post support; using the gripper to support and carry the jackets from underneath; and automatically carrying repairs back through the system.

[**0025**] While the invention has been described with respect to a limited number of embodiments, those skilled in the art, having benefit of this disclosure, will appreciate that other embodiments can be devised which do not depart from the scope of the invention as disclosed here. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be limited only by the attached claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for adding inserts to printed material, comprising:

receiving a jacket in a jacket conveyor, where the jacket conveyor comprises,

a gripper conveyor with a gripper, and

a post conveyor with a support post;

receiving an insert into the jacket from an insert feeder;

delivering the jacket and insert to a product receiver; and

returning a jacket with an insert error to the jacket conveyor for correction of the insert error.

2. The method of claim 1, where the post conveyor comprises:

a left post conveyor with a support post; and

a right post conveyor with a support post.

3. The method of claim 1, where the gripper conveyor delivers the jacket and insert to the product receiver.

4. The method of claim 3, where the gripper conveyor holds the jacket from below while delivering the jacket and insert.

5. The method of claim 1, where the product receiver is a jacket stacker.

6. The method of claim 1, where the gripper conveyor returns the jacket with an insert error to the jacket conveyor.

7. The method of claim 1, where the jacket comprises a newspaper.

8. An apparatus for adding inserts to printed material, comprising:

a jacket feeder;

a jacket conveyor that receives jackets from the jacket feeder, comprising,

a gripper conveyor with a plurality of grippers, where the grippers support the jackets from the bottom, and

a post support conveyor with a plurality of post supports;

an insert feeder that feeds inserts into the jackets; and

a product receiver that receives jackets with inserts from the jacket conveyor.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, where the post support conveyor comprises:

a left post conveyor with a support post; and

a right post conveyor with a support post.

10. The apparatus of claim 8, where the gripper conveyor delivers the jackets with inserts to the product receiver.

11. The apparatus of claim 8, where the gripper conveyor returns a jacket with an error to the jacket conveyor.

12. The apparatus of claim 8, where the jackets are newspapers.

13. An apparatus for adding inserts to printed material, comprising:

a jacket feeder;

an insert feeder;

a product receiver;

means for receiving jackets from the jacket feeder in combination with inserts from the insert feeder and delivering the jackets with inserts to a product receiver; and

means for automatically correcting jackets with insert errors.

* * * * *