

## DISPLAY APPARATUS

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to display apparatus, and more particularly to advertising and information displays adapted for installation on fixtures in retail stores and other places visited by the general public.

Typical self-service retail stores, such as drug stores, supermarkets, and toy stores, have long rows of multiple-tier shelving units which are used to house products. In contrast to traditional retail stores, in which products might be displayed in a showcase but stocked elsewhere, and in which a clerk would retrieve the product from the stocking location and dispense it to the purchaser, the consumer-accessible shelving fixtures of modern stores perform all three of these functions. The product, or at least its exterior packaging, is visibly displayed on the shelf. Generally, many units of a particular product are stocked at that shelf; in many stores, the entire inventory of the product is stocked exclusively in publicly-accessible shelving fixtures. Since the consumer may select product from the shelf without the assistance of a clerk, the shelving also performs the dispensing function.

It is highly desirable to display advertisements or promotions for products at their shelf locations. While products are generally visible on their shelf, the mere presence of the product may be insufficient to stimulate consumer interest. The product may be enclosed in a small package, so that there is no large "advertising" surface to catch the consumer's eye, or the available space on the package may be insufficient to contain all the information that the manufacturer or retailer wishes to impart to a potential purchaser. Alternatively, a product may be packaged in a plain wrapping, or as in the case of fresh produce, no wrapping. Also, it is often inappropriate to put a special promotion on a product's packaging since the promotion may only run for a limited time period.

Manufacturers and retailers are also becoming aware that advertising is not merely effective when it appears on television, in a magazine or newspaper or on a billboard. In fact, in-store, and in particular "point-of-purchase", advertising has proven itself highly effective in motivating a consumer's purchase. The invention may also be mounted on the walls or any other location where the benefits described can be utilized. Accordingly, manufacturers and retailers have a need to display at the point of sale advertisements and other informational material concerning products. But space for displaying advertisements is often a scarce resource in modern retail stores. Since a free-standing advertising display would use space that could otherwise be occupied by product shelving or interfere with the store's traffic, such displays are often economically inefficient or disfavored by retailers. One solution to this problem is to attach a stationary display, such as a poster or sign to the shelving in order to advertise an adjacent product. However, a large advertising poster would prevent viewing of the underlying products, and may interfere with the consumer's removal of such products from the shelf. Moreover, the visual clutter that such signs may create would not conform to the orderly appearance that most retailers seek to maintain on their counters. While the size of the poster could be substantially reduced, this approach suffers from the same disadvantage that affects small product packages: there is insuffi-

cient room to display all the desired information. Furthermore, the shelving may not readily accommodate any suitable signage presently available.

The problem of limited space for displaying information is not unique to the retail store environment. Many other places visited by the general public experience a similar problem with insufficient space to display information. Museums, zoos, and other institutions often desire to display additional descriptive information for an exhibit, but are constrained by available exhibit space. In other cases, such as art museums, aesthetic considerations make the display of extensive written or graphic information adjacent an exhibit objectionable.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an advertising and information display which may be mounted on a fixture or support such that a large message may be displayed without significantly obscuring products located on the shelf.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an advertising and information display which may be mounted on a retail-store fixture or support such that a large message may be displayed without interfering with removal of products located on the shelf.

An advertising and information display according to the present invention includes a mounting bracket for removably attaching the display to a conventional retail shelving unit or other structural fixture, a fixed carrier for holding a relatively small, continuously displayed information medium, and a flexible, user-operable, automatically-retracting carrier for holding a substantially larger, intermittently displayed information medium. The fixed carrier is essentially rectangular and holds a removable placard for enticing the viewer. The fixed carrier and placard may be of any convenient width less than or equal to that of the receiving shelving unit or support. However, the vertical dimension of the fixed carrier and placard is preferably limited to an appropriate size so that these components do not extend significantly above or below the shelf to which the display is mounted, thereby avoiding interfering visually or physically with products located on that or adjacent shelves. In non-retail applications, the limited vertical dimension similarly prevents interference with vertically adjacent exhibits.

The flexible carrier is preferably a plastic or cloth sheet which is mounted behind the fixed carrier on a spring-loaded roller or other automatically retracting storage means. The flexible carrier may be several feet long and has imprinted thereon an advertising or informational message. A prominent tab or handle attached to the flexible carrier extends outward and downward from the fixed carrier to permit a consumer to pull the flexible carrier into its display position. The pull tab displays a message inviting a consumer to "PULL DOWN FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION" or another suitable message to encourage the consumer or viewer to interact with the display.

In operation, the flexible carrier is initially stowed in its hidden, retracted position. A user views the fixed placard and becomes interested in or is enticed to consider the product or exhibit. The user pulls the tab of the flexible carrier to reveal the additional product advertisement or information. When the user has finished viewing the additional information, he or she releases the tab, and the storage means automatically retracts the