

Description

This invention relates to dot wire driving apparatus.

Examples of conventional dot wire driving apparatus will be described hereinafter with reference to
 5 Figures 9 (a), 9 (b), 10 (a), 10 (b) and 11.

Figure 9 (a) illustrates a conventional dot wire driving apparatus comprising a power source section 2, a
 drive circuit 5, and a drive signal generating circuit 6.

Figure 9 (b) is a cross sectional view of an arrangement of a printer head 10 using dot wires. A driving
 coil 11 is wound around a core 12. The coil 11, when energised, causes deflection of a spring 13, which in
 10 turn imparts kinetic energy to a dot wire 14 connected thereto. Consequently, the dot wire 14 presses
 against an ink ribbon (not shown) to form a dot on a recording medium. The number of dot wires in the
 printer head 10 is generally between 8 and 64 depending on usage and when selectively energised the dot
 wires produce characters, figures, etc. in dot matrix form on the recording medium.

In Figure 9 (a), the power source section 2 has input terminals 1 for connection of a supply voltage to a
 15 stabilising circuit 3 consisting of a capacitor C_0 , a smoothing coil PL, a smoothing capacitor C_1 and a diode
 PD. The stabilising circuit 3 produces a stabilised voltage by feedback from a point B to a point A. The
 diode PD is so designed that the stabilising circuit 3 allows current to flow by virtue of electro-magnetic
 energy stored in the smoothing coil PL in a cut off manner, so as to charge the smoothing capacitor C_1 .

The drive signal generating circuit 6 comprises a shift register 9 for sequentially storing data
 20 corresponding to a character or figure to be printed by means of a shift clock signal, a latch circuit 8 for
 simultaneously latching the data accumulated in the shift register 9 by means of latch pulses, and an enable
 circuit 7 for restricting the time width of an output from the latch circuit 8 by means of an enable signal. The
 drive signal generating circuit 6 supplies data adapted to the printer head 10 to the drive circuit 5.

The drive circuit 5, whose arrangement is conventional, comprises coils $L_1, \dots, L_i, \dots, L_n$, and N-type
 25 transistors $TR_1, \dots, TR_i, \dots, TR_n$. The connection between corresponding pairs of the coils $L_1, \dots, L_i, \dots, L_n$ and the
 transistors $TR_1, \dots, TR_i, \dots, TR_n$, are connected via diodes $D_1, \dots, D_i, \dots, D_n$, to a Zener diode ZD. The subscripts 1, ..., i,
 correspond to the number of the dot wires of the printer head 10.

The relationship between electric current and energy for moving the dot wires in the dot wire driving
 apparatus illustrated in Figures 9 (a) and 9 (b) will be described with reference to Figures 10 (a) and 10 (b)
 30 which are diagrams illustrating equivalent circuits. In Figures 10 (a) and 10 (b) it is assumed that the voltage
 V at point B = 30 V, the inductance of the coil L_i is fixed at $L = 3$ mH and its resistance $R_L = 20$ ohm, the
 equivalent resistance R_T of the transistor $TR_i = 0.5$ ohm and the equivalent voltage V_Z of the Zener diode
 ZD = 75 V and its equivalent resistance $R_Z = 0.5$ ohm. Figure 10 (a) shows the case in which the
 transistor TR_i is ON while Figure 10 (b) shows the case in which it is OFF.

35 In Figure 10 (a), current i_i can be expressed as follows:

$$i_i = E/(R_L + R_T) \cdot \{1 - \exp(-t/\tau_0)\} \\ = 1.463 \{1 - \exp(-t/\tau_0)\}$$

40 where $\tau_0 = 3 \times 10^{-3}/(20 + 0.5) = 1.463 \times 10^{-4}$ s, and t is time.

Here, the ON period of the transistor TR_i is assumed to be 200 micro-seconds in order to calculate the
 energy of the system. The energy P_{IN1} supplied by the power source section 2 is expressed as follows:

$$45 \quad P_{IN1} = \int_0^{200 \mu s} 30 \cdot i_i dt = 3.99 \text{ mJ (joule)}$$

50 Energy consumption P_{R1} with a resistance of 20.5 ohm is expressed as follows:

$$55 \quad P_{R1} = \int_0^{200 \mu s} 20.5 \cdot i_i^2 dt = 2.21 \text{ mJ (joule)}$$

Energy P_L accumulated in the coil L_i is expressed as follows:

$$P_L = 1/2 \cdot L \cdot i_1^2 = 1.78 \text{ mJ}$$

5 The foregoing relationship is naturally translated as:

$$P_{IN1} = 3.99 \text{ mJ} = P_{R1} + P_L = 2.21 \text{ mJ} + 1.78 \text{ mJ} = 3.99 \text{ mJ}.$$

Next, the relationship after the transistor TR_i is turned OFF in Figure 10 (b) will be determined.

10 If current i_2 is determined when $t = 0$, $i_{20} = i_1$ (200 micro-seconds) = 1.99 A, and when $t = \infty$, $i_{2\infty} = (30 - 75)/20.5 = -2.2\text{A}$, then $i_2 = 3.20 \text{ EXP } (-t/\tau_0) - 2.2$.

If time τ when $i_2 = 0$ is determined,

$$\tau = 5.88 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s}.$$

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If the aforementioned current is plotted as a graph, Figure 11 is obtained. In the graph, a maximum cycle period is set at 500 micro-seconds since oscillations occur when the dot wire strikes against the ink ribbon until the dot wire returns to its original stationary position prior to the next time it is energised.

Now, the energy consumed between time 0 and time τ can be calculated as follows:

20 Energy P_{IN2} supplied by the power source section 2 is:

$$P_{IN2} = \int_0^{\tau} 30 \cdot i_2 dt = 0.9 \text{ mJ}$$

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Energy P_{R2} consumed by the overall resistance 20.5 ohms is:

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$$P_{R2} = \int_0^{\tau} 20.5 \cdot i_2^2 dt = 0.43 \text{ mJ}$$

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Energy P_{ZD} consumed by the equivalent voltage of the Zener diode ZD, i.e.

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$$P_{ZD}, \text{ equals } \int_0^{\tau} 75 i_2 dt = 2.25 \text{ mJ}.$$

Energy consumed by the resistance 0.5 ohms of the Zener diode ZD = $0.43 \text{ mJ} \cdot 0.5/20.5 = 0.01 \text{ mJ}$.

45 Hence, the total energy consumption P_{TZD} of the Zener diode is:

$$P_{TZD} = 2.25 + 0.01 = 2.26 \text{ mJ}.$$

To sum up, the energy supplied to the power source section 2, $P_{IN} = P_{IN1} + P_{IN2} = 3.99 + 0.9 = 4.89 \text{ mJ}$. Thus, $P_{TZD} = 2.26 \text{ mJ}$, i.e. the energy consumed by the Zener diode, amounts to as much as 46% of the energy supplied by the power source section 2.

The Zener diode ZD is necessary for quickly terminating the current i_2 in order to operate the dot wires at high speed, and the higher the Zener voltage, the more quickly the current i_2 can be terminated.

In addition, in an actual application, assuming that there are 24 dot wires and that the repetitive frequency is 2 kHz, the power P supplied by the power source section 2 is $P = 4.89 \times 10^{-3} \times 24 \times 2 \times 10^3 = 235 \text{ W}$, and the power consumption P_Z of the Zener diode is:

$$P_Z = 2.26 \times 10^{-3} \times 24 \times 2 \times 10^3 = 108 \text{ W}.$$

It will be appreciated that in the above described conventional dot wire driving apparatus, most of the energy supplied by the power source section 2 is consumed by the resistance of the coils $L_1, \dots, L_i$ and the Zener diode ZD and is thus converted into heat.

- 5 The greater the number of dot wires and the higher the operating speed, the greater the problem in designing the printer head. Furthermore, in the case where the number of dot wires is numerous, there is also the problem that a large capacity power source which can instantly supply the required power is necessary since the coils may be energised simultaneously.

A drive circuit is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,454,558 which does not use a Zener diode. However, 10 instead a driving capacitor C_1 , having been previously charged, drives the solenoid and when the solenoid is off, the counter electromotive force is fed to a further capacitor C_{10} . Thus the voltage on the driving capacitor varies wildly leading to an unstable and relatively slow printing.

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a dot wire driving apparatus in which electro-magnetic energy accumulated in driving coils of a printer head is temporarily stored in accumulating 15 means and is then fed back to a power source at high efficiency so as to reduce the load on the power source and effect a high speed printing operation, thereby overcoming the above described drawbacks of the conventional dot wire driving apparatus.

According to the present invention there is provided a dot wire driving apparatus for a printer which has a stabilised power source including a smoothing coil and a smoothing capacitor for energising a driving coil 20 for driving a dot wire so as to form a dot on a printing medium, accumulating means for accumulating electro-magnetic energy stored in said driving coil when current supplied thereto is terminated, said dot wire driving apparatus being characterised by comprising feedback means for feeding energy to said smoothing capacitor when the voltage of said accumulating means reaches a pre-determined level; and maintaining means for maintaining the voltage of said accumulating means so that said voltage does not fall 25 below said pre-determined level.

According to the present invention, there is provided a dot wire driving apparatus for a printer which has a stabilised power source including a smoothing capacitor for energising a driving coil for driving a dot wire so as to form a dot on a printing medium, accumulating means for accumulating electro-magnetic energy 30 stored in said driving coil when current supplied thereto is terminated, said dot wire driving apparatus being characterised by comprising: feedback means for feeding energy to said smoothing capacitor when the voltage of said accumulating means reaches a pre-determined level; and maintaining means including a further coil, switch means, detecting means and unidirectional element, said maintaining means for maintaining the voltage of said accumulating means so that said voltage does not fall below said pre-determined level.

35 Since the voltage is maintained at a substantially fixed level while energy stored in the accumulating means is fed back, high efficiency in the utilisation of the power source and a high speed operation of the dot wire can be attained.

Preferably said feedback means comprises detection means for detecting when the voltage of said accumulating means is at the pre-determined level or greater, and switch means which, in operation, is 40 switched by a signal from said detection means, the switch means being connected to said accumulating means whereby energy stored in said accumulating means is fed back to said smoothing capacitor via said smoothing coil or a further coil.

By virtue of this arrangement, the number of component elements of the feedback means can be reduced, and feedback at high efficiency becomes possible by setting the value of the energy fed back to 45 the smoothing capacitor appropriately.

Said maintaining means may comprise detection means for detecting when the voltage of said accumulating means is at the pre-determined level or greater and switch means which, in operation, is 50 switched by a signal from said detection means, said switch means and a further coil being connected in series, a uni-directional element being disposed between the connecting point thereof and said accumulating means.

This arrangement serves to improve the efficiency with which the maintaining means maintains the voltage of the accumulating means in such a manner that the voltage does not fall below the pre-determined level.

A further uni-directional element may be provided for said first mentioned switch means, and said 55 further coil is used in common, thereby, in operation, effecting feedback of energy stored in the accumulation means to said smoothing capacitor and maintenance of the voltage of said accumulating means.

This arrangement makes it possible to reduce the number of component elements required.

The accumulating means may be a capacitor.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a printer having a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention. Preferably said dot wire is mounted on a carriage carrying at least part of the dot wire driving apparatus.

5 This arrangement contributes to the production of a compact printer and reduction in cost of manufacture.

Thus, in accordance with the present invention, the voltage of the accumulating means can be controlled to a substantially fixed level through the co-operation of the component elements. With this arrangement, the accumulating means functions as a high tension Zener diode having a relatively small
10 power consumption. Thus, as much as 46% of the electro-magnetic energy is prevented from being converted into heat, which contributes to reduction in the power consumption. In addition, if the voltage of the accumulating means is set to a high level, it is possible to transmit rapidly the accumulated energy to the driving coils without increasing the amount of power consumed, so that a high speed printer can be realised easily.

15 The invention is illustrated, merely by way of example, in the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a circuit diagram of an embodiment of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention;

Figures 2 (a), 2 (b) and 2 (c) are equivalent circuit diagrams to illustrate operation of the dot wire driving apparatus shown in Figure 1;

20 Figure 3 is a diagram illustrating current flowing in the equivalent circuits shown in Figures 2 (a) to 2 (c);

Figure 4 is a diagram illustrating another embodiment of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention;

Figure 5 is a diagram illustrating a modification of a drive circuit of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 4;

25 Figures 6 and 7 are diagrams respectively illustrating a state of energisation of a transistor used in the driving circuit of Figure 5 and the waveform of current supplied to a driving coil;

Figure 8 is a diagram illustrating a schematic configuration of a printer provided with a dot wire driving apparatus in accordance with the present invention;

30 Figure 9 (a) is a diagram illustrating a conventional dot wire driving apparatus and Figure 9 (b) is a cross sectional view of a printer head for use with either a conventional dot wire driving apparatus or a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention;

Figures 10 (a) and 10 (b) are equivalent circuit diagrams to illustrate the operation of the conventional dot wire driving apparatus shown in Figure 9; and

35 Figure 11 is a diagram illustrating current flowing in the equivalent circuits shown in Figures 10 (a) and 10 (b).

Figure 1 is a diagram illustrating one embodiment of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention. In Figure 1, the same reference numerals and characters as those used in Figure 9 (a) denote identical components or parts. In Figure 1, the power source section 2 is illustrated partially, and only one coil L_1 , one diode D_1 and one transistor T_{R1} are shown in the drive circuit 5, and the drive signal
40 generating circuit 6 is omitted.

In Figure 1, the Zener diode ZD of Figure 9 is replaced by a capacitor C_2 at a point F.

The electro-magnetic energy accumulated in the coil L_1 when a transistor TR_1 is OFF is transmitted to and stored in the capacitor C_2 via the diode D_1 . The voltage at the point F rises each time the coil L_1 is energised. A comparator 20 detects whether or not a voltage V_h at the point F is, for example, 75 V or
45 greater. The detected signal together with a clock signal is connected to a NAND gate 21.

An intermittent signal from the NAND gate 21 switches on a transistor 22. By means this operation, excess energy of the capacitor C_2 when $V_h = 75$ V or greater is fed back to the capacitor C_1 of the power source section 2 through a line J and is applied to the coil PL. The current flowing through the coil PL when the transistor 22 is OFF charges the capacitor C_1 . The excess energy of the capacitor C_2 is thus
50 transferred efficiently to the capacitor C_1 .

A charging power source 23 effects charging through a diode RD in such a manner that the voltage V_h of the capacitor C_2 does not fall below a pre-determined value of, for instance, 72 V.

This charging power source 23 is provided because no current is supplied to the capacitor C_2 for a certain time after the turning ON of the power source connected to the power source section 2 or during a
55 period of non-printing when all the coils L_1 are inoperative. To operate under the above mentioned conditions, the charging power source 23 may be of the compact and small capacity type.

Since the capacitor C_2 replaces the Zener diode ZD of the conventional dot wire driving apparatus, it is necessary for the voltage to be stabilised at the aforementioned level of $V_h = 75$ V. If this voltage is

unstable, the period taken to terminate the current flowing through the coil L_1 after the transistor TR_1 is turned OFF is unstable, and so stable and high speed operation of the dot wires cannot be expected.

The operation of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 1 will be described with reference to the equivalent circuits shown in Figures 2 (a) to 2 (c). It is assumed that the ON period of the transistor TR_1 is identical with that of Figure 11 and that the current i_1 is also identical.

Figure 2 (a) shows an equivalent circuit in which the current flows from the coil L_1 into the capacitor C_2 - (capacitance = 1000 micro-Farad) after the transistor TR_1 turns OFF.

Figure 2 (b) shows an equivalent circuit in which the current flows from the capacitor C_2 to the capacitor C_1 on the assumption that no current flows from the power source section 2. Figure 2 (c) shows an equivalent circuit after the transistor 22 is turned OFF.

In the case of Figure 2 (a): when $t = 0$, $i_{20} = 1.94$ A, and the voltage V_h of the capacitor $C_2 = 75$ V; when $t = \infty$, $i_{\infty} = 0$ and $V_{h\infty} = 30$ V. If the current i_2 is determined on the basis of these conditions, $i_2 = 3.33 \text{ EXP } (-6.78 \times 10^3 t) - 2.24 \text{ EXP } (-4.91 \times 10^3 t)$.

Here, if τ is the time to reach the condition $i_2 = 0$, then $\tau = 5.9 \times 10^{-5}$ s. Energy transfer involved between periods 0 and τ can be determined as follows:

The energy P_{IN2} supplied by the power source section 2 is:

$$P_{IN2} = \int_0^{\tau} 30 \cdot i_2 dt = 0.9 \text{ mJ}$$

The energy P_{R2} consumed by the resistance 20.5 ohm is:

$$P_{R2} = \int_0^{\tau} 20.5 \cdot i_2^2 dt = 0.43 \text{ mJ}$$

Charge of the capacitor C_2 increases by

$$\int_0^{\tau} i_2 dt = 2.99 \times 10^{-5} \text{ coulomb.}$$

Thus the rise in voltage becomes 2.99×10^{-2} V.

Accordingly, an energy increment ΔP_{C2} of the capacitor C_2 is:

$$\Delta P_{C2} = 1/2 \times 10^{-3} \text{ F} \cdot (75.0299^2 - 75^2) = 2.24 \text{ mJ.}$$

Accordingly, $P_{IN2} + 1/2 L \cdot i_{20}^2 = 0.9 + 1.78 = 2.68 \text{ mJ} = 2.68 \text{ mJ} = P_{R2} + \Delta P_{C2} = 0.43 + 2.24 = 2.67 \text{ mJ.}$

Therefore, it follows that $2.24 \text{ mJ} / 2.68 \text{ mJ} = 83.5\%$ of the energy moves to the capacitor C_2 .

Referring now to Figure 2 (b), the case where the increased energy stored in the capacitor C_2 is fed back to the capacitor C_1 (capacitance = 5000 micro-Farads) will be described. It is assumed that the 1 ohm resistance in Figure 2 (b) represents the equivalent resistance of the transistor 22 and the coil PL. In addition, it is assumed that the capacitor C_1 has been charged to 30 V.

The conditions are as follows:

When $t = 0$, $i_3 = 0$, the charge Q_{C10} on the capacitor C_1 is $Q_{C10} = 30 \text{ V} \times 5 \times 10^{-3} = 0.15$ coulomb, while the charge Q_{C20} on the capacitor C_2 is $Q_{C20} = 75.0299 \times 10^{-3}$ coulomb. On the other hand, when $t = \infty$, $i_{3\infty} = 0$, $Q_{C1\infty} = 0.18752491$ coulomb, and $Q_{C2\infty} = 3.750498 \times 10^{-2}$ coulomb. This gives $i_3 = 62.4 \{ \text{EXP } (-8.61 \times 10^3 t) - \text{EXP } (-1.39 \times 10^3 t) \}$.

$$V_h = -7.25 \text{ EXP } (-8.61 \times 10^3 t)$$

$$+ 44.8 \text{ EXP } (-1.39 \times 10^3 t) + 37.5$$

When V_h changes from 75.0299 V to 75 V, the comparator 20 does not give an output, with the result that the transistor 22 is turned OFF.

- 5 If the time τ is determined as $\tau = 1.07 \times 10^5$ s, and the current i_3 at time τ is $i_3 = 4.57$ A, then:
Energy P_r consumed by the 1 ohm resistance is:

$$10 \quad P_r = \int_0^{\tau} 1 \cdot i_3^2 Z dt = 0.08 \text{ mJ}$$

- Electro-magnetic energy $1/2 Li_3^2 \tau = 1.05$ mJ, and the increased energy ΔP_{C11} stored in the capacitor
15 C_1 is:

$$\Delta P_{C11} = 0.90 \text{ mJ}$$

- From the above, 2.24 mJ from the capacitor C_2 changes to:

$$20 \quad P_r + 1/2 Li_3^2 \tau + \Delta P_{C1} = 0.08 + 1.05 + 0.9 = 2.03 \text{ mJ}$$

Here, a calculation error of 0.21 mJ occurs, but this is assumed to have been consumed by the 1 ohm resistance.

- 25 Referring now to Figure 2 (c), iterim calculations are omitted, and calculation is made with respect to the case after the transistor 22 is turned OFF. The current i_4 and the time τ when the current i_4 is turned OFF are determined as follows:

$$30 \quad \begin{aligned} i_4 &= 35.95 \text{ EXP } (-9.8 \times 10^3 t) \\ &- 31.38 \text{ EXP } (-2.04 \times 10^2 t) \\ \tau &= 1.42 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s} \end{aligned}$$

- From this, an energy increment ΔP_{C12} of the capacitor $C_1 = 0.95$ mJ. Electro-magnetic energy 1.05 mJ of Figure 2 (b) changes to $\Delta P_{C12} = 0.95$ mJ, and the amount consumed by the 1 ohm resistance thus
35 becomes 0.95 mJ.

- Figure 3 illustrates graphically the currents i_1 , i_2 , i_3 , and i_4 . If the peaks of the currents i_3 and i_4 are greater than the currents i_1 and i_2 , a difficulty would be experienced in practice. Accordingly, the output of the comparator 22 is turned ON and OFF by means of the clock signal applied to one input of the NAND gate 21 so as to allow the transistor 22 to be turned ON and OFF repeatedly with the result that the
40 currents i_3 and i_4 are made relatively small and the time for which energy is transmitted is increased. This arrangement also serves to improve the transmission efficiency.

- The foregoing description will be summarised as follows. The energy supplied by the power source section 2, i.e. $P_{IN1} + P_{IN2}$ equals 4.89 mJ, and the energy fed back to the capacitor C_1 , i.e. $\Delta P_{C11} + \Delta P_{C12} = 0.90 + 0.95 = 1.85$ mJ. The rate of recovery is $1.85/4.89$ which equals 37.8%. The remaining 62.2% is
45 mostly consumed by the resistance of the system, and part thereof is used as the dot forming energy of the dot wires.

- Referring now to Figure 4, there is illustrated a second embodiment of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention. In Figure 4, a coil SL is used in an energy feedback loop without using the smoothing coil PL, thereby providing an energy feedback loop and a substitute for the charging power
50 source 23 for the capacitor C_2 .

In the energy feedback loop, not only is the smoothing coil PL replaced by the coil SL, but the diode PD is replaced by a diode D_{S2} . However, there is no substantial difference in operation.

- As for the charging of the capacitor C_2 , the comparator 25 delivers an output when, for instance, the charging voltage V_h reaches 72 V in the same way as described in relation to Figure 1. An AND gate 26
55 intermittently delivers the output of the comparator 25 under the control of a clock signal so as to turn ON intermittently the transistor 24, thereby allowing an ON/OFF current to flow to the coil SL. When the transistor 24 is OFF, the electro-magnetic energy of the coil SL charges the capacitor C_2 via a diode D_{S1} . When the charging voltage exceeds 72 V, the comparator 25 stops producing an output signal, so that the

charging operation ceases.

Referring now to Figure 5, a modification of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 4 will be described. In Figure 5 an additional drive circuit 30 is added to the drive circuit 5 which has been described above. The drive circuit 30 has a transistor 31 with a polarity (P-type) different from that of the transistor TR_i and forms a current loop for the coil L_i. A diode 32 is provided to prevent reverse current flow from the capacitor C₂.

An example of the operation of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 5 will be described with reference to Figures 6 and 7. In Figures 6 and 7, the specification of the coil L_i is changed so that a greater amount of current can flow. Waveforms (a) and (b) of Figure 6 respectively illustrate the states of energisation of the transistors TR_i and 31, while waveform (c) illustrates the current corresponding to the same. The dotted lines show the operation of the embodiments of Figures 1 and 4.

If the dot wire driving apparatus is thus arranged, kinetic energy can be imparted to the dot wires more speedily. During the first half of the cycle, current increases and power consumption becomes relatively large. During the second half, however, since the current decreases substantially as compared with the Figures 1 and 4 cases, the power consumption for one cycle can be reduced. Most of the electro-magnetic energy of the coil SL at the time when the transistor 31 is OFF is accumulated in the capacitor C₂. Accordingly, the arrangement shown in Figure 5 is capable of further improving efficiency.

Figure 7 illustrates the case in which the manner of operation in the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 5 is modified. Waveform (a) of Figure 7 illustrates the case in which the transistor TR_i is energised, while the waveform (b) of Figure 7 illustrates the method in which the transistor 31 is energised. In this arrangement, the current flowing through the coil SL exhibits a trapezoidal serriform shape, as shown by waveform (c) of Figure 7. This arrangement is also capable of improving the efficiency.

Referring to Figure 8, the application of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention to a printer will be described. In Figure 8, reference numeral 40 denotes a platen, and reference numeral 41 denotes recording paper. An ink ribbon (not shown) is disposed between the recording paper 41 and the printer head 10. A carriage 42 is adapted to move the printer head 10 horizontally across the paper. A drive section 43 comprises the drive circuit and the drive signal generating circuit which have been described above. The drive section 43 is mounted on the carriage 42 in such a manner as to be adjacent to the printer head.

A connecting cable 44 is connected to a control section of the printer. A terminal section 44a of the connecting cable 44 is illustrated in expanded form. By mounting the drive section 43 on the carriage 42, it is possible to reduce the number of cables and the number of terminals at the terminal section as compared with the case where the coils of the printer head of a conventional printer are connected by a connecting cable to a drive section. This arrangement also contributes to a cost reduction since the cable and the control section of the printer can be made compact.

In the terminal section 44a, GND and 30 V represent power supply side terminals; GND and 5 V represents supply side terminals for the drive signal generating circuit; and an HV terminal is a connecting terminal to the capacitor C₂. If the capacitor C₂, the feedback loop components, and the charging power source for the capacitor C₂ are also mounted on the carriage 42, the HV terminal can be dispensed with.

As described above, in a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention, electro-magnetic energy wastefully accumulated after the operation of a dot wire is temporarily stored in a capacitor, and excess energy is fed back to the power source in such a manner as to hold the voltage of this capacitor at a fixed level. As a result, the present invention offers immense advantages in bringing about a reduction in the power consumption, the high speed response of dot wires and a reduction in manufacturing cost of printers.

Claims

1. A dot wire driving apparatus for a printer which has a stabilised power source (2) including a smoothing coil (PL) and a smoothing capacitor (C₁) for energising a driving coil (L_i) for driving a dot wire (14) so as to form a dot on a printing medium, accumulating means (C₂) for accumulating electro-magnetic energy stored in said driving coil (L_i) when current supplied thereto is terminated, said dot wire driving apparatus being characterised by comprising: feedback means (20,22) for feeding energy to said smoothing capacitor (C₁) when the voltage of said accumulating means (C₂) reaches a pre-determined level; and maintaining means (23, RD) for maintaining the voltage of said accumulating means (C₂) so that said voltage does not fall below said pre-determined level.



charging operation ceases.

Referring now to Figure 5, a modification of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 4 will be described. In Figure 5 an additional drive circuit 30 is added to the drive circuit 5 which has been described above. The drive circuit 30 has a transistor 31 with a polarity (P-type) different from that of the transistor TR_i and forms a current loop for the coil L_i. A diode 32 is provided to prevent reverse current flow from the capacitor C₂.

An example of the operation of the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 5 will be described with reference to Figures 6 and 7. In Figures 6 and 7, the specification of the coil L_i is changed so that a greater amount of current can flow. Waveforms (a) and (b) of Figure 6 respectively illustrate the states of energisation of the transistors TR_i and 31, while waveform (c) illustrates the current corresponding to the same. The dotted lines show the operation of the embodiments of Figures 1 and 4.

If the dot wire driving apparatus is thus arranged, kinetic energy can be imparted to the dot wires more speedily. During the first half of the cycle, current increases and power consumption becomes relatively large. During the second half, however, since the current decreases substantially as compared with the Figures 1 and 4 cases, the power consumption for one cycle can be reduced. Most of the electro-magnetic energy of the coil SL at the time when the transistor 31 is OFF is accumulated in the capacitor C₂. Accordingly, the arrangement shown in Figure 5 is capable of further improving efficiency.

Figure 7 illustrates the case in which the manner of operation in the dot wire driving apparatus of Figure 5 is modified. Waveform (a) of Figure 7 illustrates the case in which the transistor TR_i is energised, while the waveform (b) of Figure 7 illustrates the method in which the transistor 31 is energised. In this arrangement, the current flowing through the coil SL exhibits a trapezoidal serriform shape, as shown by waveform (c) of Figure 7. This arrangement is also capable of improving the efficiency.

Referring to Figure 8, the application of a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention to a printer will be described. In Figure 8, reference numeral 40 denotes a platen, and reference numeral 41 denotes recording paper. An ink ribbon (not shown) is disposed between the recording paper 41 and the printer head 10. A carriage 42 is adapted to move the printer head 10 horizontally across the paper. A drive section 43 comprises the drive circuit and the drive signal generating circuit which have been described above. The drive section 43 is mounted on the carriage 42 in such a manner as to be adjacent to the printer head.

A connecting cable 44 is connected to a control section of the printer. A terminal section 44a of the connecting cable 44 is illustrated in expanded form. By mounting the drive section 43 on the carriage 42, it is possible to reduce the number of cables and the number of terminals at the terminal section as compared with the case where the coils of the printer head of a conventional printer are connected by a connecting cable to a drive section. This arrangement also contributes to a cost reduction since the cable and the control section of the printer can be made compact.

In the terminal section 44a, GND and 30 V represent power supply side terminals; GND and 5 V represents supply side terminals for the drive signal generating circuit; and an HV terminal is a connecting terminal to the capacitor C₂. If the capacitor C₂, the feedback loop components, and the charging power source for the capacitor C₂ are also mounted on the carriage 42, the HV terminal can be dispensed with.

As described above, in a dot wire driving apparatus according to the present invention, electro-magnetic energy wastefully accumulated after the operation of a dot wire is temporarily stored in a capacitor, and excess energy is fed back to the power source in such a manner as to hold the voltage of this capacitor at a fixed level. As a result, the present invention offers immense advantages in bringing about a reduction in the power consumption, the high speed response of dot wires and a reduction in manufacturing cost of printers.

Claims

1. A dot wire driving apparatus for a printer which has a stabilised power source (2) including a smoothing coil (PL) and a smoothing capacitor (C₁) for energising a driving coil (L_i) for driving a dot wire (14) so as to form a dot on a printing medium, accumulating means (C₂) for accumulating electro-magnetic energy stored in said driving coil (L_i) when current supplied thereto is terminated, said dot wire driving apparatus being characterised by comprising: feedback means (20,22) for feeding energy to said smoothing capacitor (C₁) when the voltage of said accumulating means (C₂) reaches a pre-determined level; and maintaining means (23, RD) for maintaining the voltage of said accumulating means (C₂) so that said voltage does not fall below said pre-determined level.



2. A dot wire driving apparatus for a printer which has a stabilised power source (3) including a smoothing capacitor (C_1) for energising a driving coil (L_i) for driving a dot wire (14) so as to form a dot on a printing medium, accumulating means (C_2) for accumulating electro-magnetic energy stored in said driving coil (L_i) when current supplied thereto is terminated, said dot wire driving apparatus being characterised by comprising: feedback means (20,22) for feeding energy to said smoothing capacitor (C_1) when the voltage of said accumulating means (C_2) reaches a pre-determined level; and maintaining means including a further coil (SL), switch means (24,26), detection means (25) and unidirectional element (D_{s1}), said maintaining means for maintaining the voltage of said accumulating means (C_2) so that said voltage does not fall below said pre-determined level.
3. A dot wire driving apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, in which said feedback means comprises detection means (20) for detecting when the voltage of said accumulating means (C_2) is at the predetermined level or greater, and first switch means (22) which, in operation, is switched by a signal from said detection means (20), the switch means being connected to said accumulating means (C_2) whereby energy stored in said accumulating means (C_2) is fed back to said smoothing capacitor (C_1) via said smoothing coil (PL) or a further coil (SL)
4. A dot wire driving apparatus as claimed in claim 2 or 3 when dependent on claim 2 in which said detection means (25) is arranged for detecting when the voltage of said accumulating means (C_2) is at the pre-determined level or greater and second switch means (24) which, in operation, is switched by a signal from said detection means (25).
5. A dot wire driving apparatus as claimed in claim 3 when dependant on claim 2 or 4 in which said unidirectional element (D_{s1}) is provided for said first switch means (22), and said further coil (SL) is used in common, thereby, in operation, effecting feedback of energy stored in the accumulation means (C_2) to said smoothing capacitor (C_1) and maintenance of the voltage of said accumulating means (C_2).
6. A dot wire driving apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim characterised in that the accumulating means (C_2) is a capacitor.
7. A printer having a dot wire driving apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim.
8. A printer as claimed in claim 7 characterised in that said dot wire (14) is mounted on a carriage (42) carrying at least part of the dot wire driving apparatus.

Patentansprüche

1. Nadeltreibervorrichtung für einen Drucker, mit einer stabilisierten Spannungsquelle (2), die eine Glättungsspule (PL) und einen Glättungskondensator (C_1) aufweist zum Erregen einer dem Antreiben einer Nadel (14) dienenden Treiberspule (L_i), um auf einem Druckträger einen Punkt zu erzeugen, einer Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) zum Ansammeln elektromagnetischer Energie, die in der Treiberspule (L_i) gespeichert ist, wenn die Stromzufuhr zu ihr beendet wird, wobei die Nadeltreibervorrichtung gekennzeichnet ist durch: eine Rückkopplungseinrichtung (20, 22) zum Zuführen von Energie zu dem Glättungskondensator (C_1), wenn die Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) einen vorbestimmten Pegel erreicht; und eine Halteeinrichtung (23, RD) zum Halten der Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) derart, daß die Spannung nicht unter den vorbestimmten Pegel abfällt.
2. Nadeltreibervorrichtung für einen Drucker, mit einer stabilisierten Spannungsquelle (3), die einen Glättungskondensator (C_1) zum Erregen einer Treiberspule (L_i) zum Antreiben einer Nadel (14) aufweist, um auf einem Druckträger einen Punkt zu bilden, einer Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) zum Ansammeln elektromagnetischer Energie, die in der Treiberspule (L_i) gespeichert ist, wenn die Stromzufuhr zu ihr beendet wird, wobei die Nadeltreibervorrichtung gekennzeichnet ist durch: eine Rückkopplungseinrichtung (20, 22) zum Zuführen von Energie zu dem Glättungskondensator (C_1), wenn die Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) einen vorbestimmten Pegel erreicht; und eine Halteeinrichtung mit einer weiteren Spule (SL), einer Schalteinrichtung (24, 26), einer Detektoreinrichtung (25) und einem unidirektionalen Element (D_{s1}), wobei die Halteeinrichtung dazu dient, die Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C_2) derart zu halten, daß die Spannung nicht unter den vorbestimmten Pegel abfällt.



3. Nadeltreibervorrichtung nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, bei der die Rückkopplungseinrichtung eine Detektoreinrichtung (20) aufweist, um festzustellen, wann die Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) auf dem vorbestimmten Pegel oder darüber liegt, und eine erste Schalteinrichtung (22) aufweist, die im Betrieb von einem Signal seitens der Detektoreinrichtung (20) umgeschaltet wird, wobei die Schalteinrichtung mit der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) verbunden wird, so daß in der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) gespeicherte Energie über die Glättungsspule (PL) oder eine weitere Spule (SL) zu dem Glättungskondensator (C₁) zurückgeleitet wird.
4. Nadeltreibervorrichtung nach Anspruch 2 oder 3, falls von 2 abhängig, bei der die Detektoreinrichtung (25) dazu ausgebildet ist, festzustellen, wann die Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) auf einem vorbestimmten Pegel oder darüber liegt, und eine zweite Schalteinrichtung (24) im Betrieb durch ein Signal seitens der Detektoreinrichtung (25) umgeschaltet wird.
5. Nadeltreibervorrichtung nach Anspruch 3 in Verbindung mit Anspruch 2 oder nach Anspruch 4, bei der das unidirektionale Element (D₁₁) für die erste Schalteinrichtung (22) vorgesehen ist und die weitere Spule (SL) gemeinsam verwendet wird, wodurch im Betrieb eine Rückkopplung von in der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) gespeicherter Energie zu dem Glättungskondensator (C₁) und das Halten der Spannung der Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) bewirkt werden.
6. Nadeltreibervorrichtung nach jedem vorhergehenden Anspruch, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sammlereinrichtung (C₂) ein Kondensator ist.
7. Drucker mit einer Nadeltreibervorrichtung nach jedem vorhergehenden Anspruch.
8. Drucker nach Anspruch 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Nadel (14) auf einem Schlitten (42) gelagert ist, welcher mindestens einen Teil der Nadeltreibervorrichtung trägt.

Revendications

1. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille pour une imprimante qui possède une source d'alimentation stabilisée (2) comprenant une bobine de filtrage (PL) et un condensateur de filtrage (C₁) pour exciter une bobine motrice (L_i) destinée à attaquer une aiguille (14) de manière à former un point sur un milieu d'impression, des moyens accumulateurs (C₂) destinés à accumuler l'énergie électromagnétique stockée dans ladite bobine motrice (L_i) lorsque le courant qui lui est fourni est interrompu, ledit dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille étant caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend : des moyens de renvoi (20, 22) destinés à fournir de l'énergie audit condensateur de filtrage (C₁) lorsque la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) atteint un niveau prédéterminé ; et des moyens de maintien (23, RD) destinés à maintenir la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) de telle manière que ladite tension ne tombe pas au-dessous dudit niveau prédéterminé.
2. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille pour une imprimante qui possède une source d'alimentation stabilisée (3) comprenant un condensateur de filtrage (C₁) pour exciter une bobine motrice (L_i) destinée à attaquer une aiguille (14) de manière à former un point sur un milieu d'impression, des moyens accumulateurs (C₂) destinés à accumuler l'énergie électromagnétique stockée dans ladite bobine motrice (L_i) lorsque le courant qui lui est fourni est interrompu, ledit dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille étant caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend : des moyens de renvoi (20, 22) destinés à fournir de l'énergie audit condensateur de filtrage (C₁) lorsque la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) atteint un niveau prédéterminé ; et des moyens de maintien comprenant une autre bobine (SL), des moyens de commutation (24, 26), des moyens de détection (25) et un élément unidirectionnel (D_{S1}), lesdits moyens de maintien étant destinés à maintenir la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) de telle manière que ladite tension ne tombe pas au-dessous dudit niveau prédéterminé.
3. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel lesdits moyens de renvoi comprennent des moyens de détection (20) destinés à détecter le moment où la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) se trouve au niveau prédéterminé ou à un niveau supérieur, et des premiers moyens de commutation (22) qui, en fonctionnement, sont commutés par un signal issu desdits moyens de détection (20), les moyens de commutation étant connectés auxdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂), de sorte que l'énergie stockée dans lesdits moyens accumulateurs (C₂) est



renvoyée audit condensateur de filtrage (C_1) à travers ladite bobine de filtrage (PL) ou à travers une autre bobine (SL).

- 5 4. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille selon la revendication 2 ou 3, rattachée à la revendication 2, dans lequel lesdits moyens de détection (25) sont agencés pour détecter le moment où la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C_2) se trouve au niveau prédéterminé ou à un niveau supérieur, et des deuxièmes moyens de commutation (24) qui, en fonctionnement, sont commutés par un signal issu desdits moyens de détection (25).
- 10 5. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille selon la revendication 3, rattachée à la revendication 2, ou 4, dans lequel ledit élément unidirectionnel (D_{S1}) est prévu pour lesdits premiers moyens de commutation (22), et ladite autre bobine (SL) est utilisée en commun, de sorte que, en fonctionnement, elle assure le renvoi de l'énergie stockée dans les moyens accumulateurs (C_2) audit condensateur de filtrage (C_1) et le maintien de la tension desdits moyens accumulateurs (C_2).
- 15 6. Dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que les moyens accumulateurs (C_2) sont un condensateur.
- 20 7. Imprimante possédant un dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.
8. Imprimante selon la revendication 7, caractérisée en ce que ladite aiguille (14) est montée sur un chariot (42) qui porte au moins une partie du dispositif d'attaque d'aiguille.

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