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ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR, PROCESS CARTRIDGE AND ELECTROPHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE FORMING APPARATUS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION AND RELATED ART

The present invention relates to an electrical connector, a process cartridge, and an electrophotographic image forming apparatus.

In this specification, an electrophotographic image forming apparatus includes an electrophotographic copy machine, an electrophotographic printer (LED printer, laser beam printer, and the like), an electrophotographic facsimile apparatus, an electrophotographic word processor, and the like. Also in this specification, a process cartridge means such a process cartridge that is removably installable in the main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, and integrally comprises an electrophotographic photosensitive member, as well as a charging means, a developing means, and/or a cleaning means. It also means such a process cartridge that is removably installable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus, and integrally comprises an electrophotographic photosensitive member, and at least a developing means.

Further, the present invention relates to any unit removably installable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus. More specifically, it

relates to any unit such as a developing device, a toner cartridge, a process cartridge, or the like, which is removably installable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus.

It is a common knowledge that some of image forming apparatuses such as a copy machine or a laser beam printer, which employs an electrophotographic image formation process can be rendered maintenance-free with the use of a process cartridge which integrally comprises an electrophotographic photosensitive member, and one or a plurality of processing means, such as a cleaning unit or a development unit, which acts on the electrophotographic photosensitive member.

In the case of such an image forming apparatus as described above, after the functions of the structural components in a process cartridge deteriorate due to usage, the process cartridge is entirely replaced with a fresh process cartridge. This process cartridge replacement operation is an extremely simply operation comprising a step of opening the main assembly of the image forming apparatus, a step of removing the process cassette with worn components out of the main assembly of the image forming apparatus, and a step of installing a fresh process cartridge in the main assembly of the image forming apparatus. Therefore, such an image

forming apparatus can be easily maintained by a user alone.

Recently, the aforementioned conventional art has been further developed to improve the usability of the above described image forming apparatus. More specifically, it has been considered to add the following functions to the above image forming apparatus:

(1) Data storing function: data regarding manufacturing conditions and the like are written into an electronic device such as a memory provided in a process cartridge, at the time of manufacturing or shipment, and when the process cartridge is installed in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus, the data is looked up by the image forming apparatus in order to carry out an image forming operation under the optimum condition for the process cartridge.

(2) Toner remainder reporting function: the amount of the remaining toner is sequentially detected during the image forming operation, and is stored in the memory so that the data regarding the amount of the remaining toner can be sequentially looked up.

(3) Self diagnostic function: the diagnosis data for the main assembly of an image forming apparatus is stored in the memory of the process cartridge, in order to allow a service supplier to look up the stored diagnostic data to provide a fast maintenance

service, or to efficiently deal with anomaly.

In order to add the above functions to an image forming apparatus, it is necessary to mount an electronic device such as an EEPROM or the like in a unit such as a process cartridge which is removably installable in the image forming apparatus. As the means for mounting the electronic device in the process cartridge, it is conceivable to provide the process cartridge with a printed circuit on which electronic devices such as a memory, and a connector, have been mounted.

Generally, the aforementioned non-volatile memory and connector are mounted on the printed circuit provided in a process cartridge, along with the electrically functional components such a diode, a resistor, or a condenser, which protects the IC from electrical surge.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A primary object of the present invention is to provide an electrical connector which makes it easier to mount a memory in a unit such as a process cartridge which is removably mountable in an image forming apparatus, as well as to provide a unit which is removably mountable in an image forming apparatus and comprises such an electrical connector, and an image forming apparatus compatible with such a unit.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an electrical connector which makes it possible to compactly mount a memory in a unit such as a process cartridge which is removably mountable in an image forming apparatus, as well as to provide a unit which is removably mountable in an image forming apparatus and comprises such an electrical connector, and an image forming apparatus compatible with such a unit.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an electrical connector which makes it possible to reliably establish electrical connection between a memory and the main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, as well as to provide a unit which is removably mountable in an image forming apparatus, and an image forming apparatus compatible with such a unit.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an electrical connector comprising a memory, a unit comprising such an electrical connector, and an image forming apparatus compatible with such a unit.

According to an aspect of the present inventin, there is provided an electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector, provided in a main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, comprising storing member for storing information; a

plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with a contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector; wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines.

According to another aspect of the present invention, an electrical connector comprises storing means for storing data, and a plurality of electrical terminals which are connected to, or disconnected from, the corresponding electrical terminals of the counterpart connector provided on the main assembly side of an image forming apparatus, wherein the storing means is electrically connected to each of the plurality of electrical terminals by a lead wire, and a unit removably installable in an image forming apparatus comprises such an electrical connector. Further, an image forming apparatus is rendered compatible with such a unit.

These and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent upon a consideration of the following description of the preferred embodiments of the present invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a longitudinal sectional view of a process cartridge comprising a connector in accordance with the present invention, and an image forming apparatus containing such a process cartridge.

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of a process cartridge comprising a connector in accordance with the present invention.

Figure 3 is a block diagram for controlling the image forming apparatus illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the connector in the first embodiment of the present invention, depicting the structure thereof.

Figure 5 is a longitudinal sectional view of the connector in the first embodiment of the present invention, depicting the structure thereof.

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the connector assembly in accordance with the present invention, and a process cartridge, depicting the structures thereof.

Figure 7 is a longitudinal sectional view of the connector assembly in the first embodiment of the present invention, depicting the structure thereof

Figures 8(a), 8(b) and 8(c) are schematic longitudinal sections of the connector assembly and process cartridge, depicting how they are fitted together.

Figure 9 is a perspective view of the

connector in the second embodiment of the present invention, depicting the structure thereof.

Figure 10 is a longitudinal sectional view of the connector in the second embodiment of the present invention, depicting the structure thereof.

Figure 11 is a perspective view of an example of the connector from which an IC can be easily removed.

Figures 12(a) and 12(b) are a front view, and a sectional view as seen from the front, respectively, of the example of the connector from which an IC can be easily removed.

Figure 13 is a longitudinal sectional view of a connector, depicting the connector structure for increasing the static electrically resistance of the connector.

Figure 14 is a longitudinal sectional view of a connector, and a unit comprising the connector, depicting the structure for increasing static electricity resistance of the connector, and how the connector is disposed in the unit.

Figures 15(b) and 15(a) are longitudinal sectional views of a connector capable of preventing accidental IC disengagement, depicting the connector before and after its placement in the unit, respectively.

Figure 16 is a longitudinal section of a

connector and a unit comprising the connector, depicting a structural arrangement for preventing the accidental IC disengagement by the unit side.

Figures 17(a) and 17(b) are perspective views of a connector assembly, depicting two piece structure and one piece structure, respectively.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Hereinafter, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the drawings.

Embodiment 1

Figure 1 is a sectional view of an image forming apparatus in which a process cartridge in accordance with the present invention is disposed. In this embodiment, the image forming apparatus in in the form of a laser beam printer. Figure 2 is a sectional view of the process cartridge disposed in the image forming apparatus illustrated in Figure 1.

Referring to Figure 1, the image forming apparatus A in this embodiment contains a process cartridge B comprising a photosensitive drum, that is, an electrophotographic photosensitive member in the form of a drum. An optical image reflecting image data is projected from an optical system 1 onto this photosensitive drum 7 to form an electrostatic latent image. The electrostatic latent image is developed

into a visible image, that is, a toner image, by the developing means 10 of the process cartridge, and the developer contained in the developing means. In synchronism with the toner image formation, a recording medium 2 is delivered by a conveying means 3a and 3b. The toner image having been formed on the photosensitive drum 7 is transferred onto the recording medium 2 by a transferring means 4, and then, the recording medium 2 is conveyed to a fixing means 5 by a conveying means 3c. After the transferred toner image is fixed to the recording medium 2 by the pressure roller 5a and fixing roller 5b of the fixing means 5, the recording medium 2 is discharged into a delivery portion 6 by a conveying means 3d.

The main assembly 16 of the image forming apparatus A comprises a bottom frame 17 and a top frame 18. The bottom and top frames 17 and 18 are connected with a hinge 19 so that the top frame 18 can be opened or closed relative to the bottom frame 17. The bottom frame 17 holds a paper magazine MP in which the recording medium 2 is loaded, the major portion of the conveying means 3a, 3b and 3d, the transferring means 4, the fixing means 5, and the like. The top frame 18 holds the optical system 1, and the rest of the conveying means.

In order to install the process cartridge B,

first, the top frame 18 is rotated about the hinge 19 in the counterclockwise direction in Figure 1 to create an opening between the top and bottom frames 17 and 18. Then, the process cartridge B is inserted through the opening, diagonally downward from the top right to the bottom left along the guide portion (unillustrated) provided in the bottom frame 17. As the process cartridge B is inserted, its position is fixed by an unillustrated positioning member, and at the same time, an I/O connector 15 provided in the bottom frame 17 is engaged with the I/O connector 21 of the process cartridge B.

In order to remove the process cartridge B from the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, the top frame 18 is opened, and the process cartridge B is pulled out in the diagonally upward direction from the bottom left to the top right of Figure 1. During this removal, the I/O connectors 16 and 21 are automatically disengaged from each other.

Referring to Figure 2, the process cartridge B in this embodiment comprises the aforementioned photosensitive member 7, and processing means which act on the photosensitive member 7. The processing means includes a charging means 8 (for example, charge roller illustrated in Figure 2) for charging the surface of the photosensitive drum 7, an exposing portion 9 through which an optical image is projected

onto the charged surface of the photosensitive member 7 from the optical system 1, the aforementioned developing means 10 for developing the latent image formed on the photosensitive member 7, and a cleaning means 11 comprising a cleaning blade 11a and a toner collector 11b. The developing means 10 comprises a developer container 13, a development roller 10a, and a toner regulator blade 10b. The developer container 13 holds the toner. The development roller 10a is disposed in a development frame 12 in a manner to adjoin the photosensitive drum 7. The toner regulator blade 10b is placed in contact with the development roller 10a. The development frame 12 is united with the developer container 13, wherein their internal spaces are connected through an opening 13a.

After the toner image is transferred onto the recording medium 2 by the transferring means 4 (transfer roller), the photosensitive drum 7 of the process cartridge B is cleaned by the cleaning blade 11a to remove the toner remaining on the photosensitive drum 7, becoming prepared for the following image formation.

Figure 3 is a block diagram for controlling the electrophotographic image forming apparatus and process cartridge in this embodiment. In this diagram, only the diagram portion related to the actual control system is depicted, without depicting

the electric power source and the like. First, the basic control of the image forming apparatus will be described.

In Figure 3, the portion of the electronic device, which is in the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, is surrounded with a double-dot chain line 30. An engine controller (MPU) 31 has a computing function, a memory function, an internal clock function, and a function to input/output signals. Normally, it is a device in the form of an ASiC or the like. To this engine controller 31, a main motor control block 32, a primary charge voltage/current control block 33a, a development bias voltage control block 33b, a transfer voltage control block 33c, and a scanner unit control block 33d are connected to control each unit by the programs in the engine controller 31.

Also within the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, various sensor switches constituting a sensor switch group 37 are disposed at appropriate locations, and the output of the sensor switch group 37 is transmitted to the engine controller 31 so that the operational conditions of the various portions of the apparatus can be monitored by the engine controller 31 throughout a printing operation sequence. Also, a formatter 34 is connected to the engine controller 31. The formatter 34 is a device

which has a function for storing printing formats, a function for developing the printing formats into image data, and also functions as an input/output port. In other words, it functions as a pre-processor for the engine controller 31.

In Figure 3, the area surrounded by a double-dot chain line, which is designated by a reference code C', is the portion which is mounted in the process cartridge B. At the same time as the process cartridge B is installed into the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, the engine controller 31 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16 and the circuit portion C' mounted in the process cartridge B are electrically connected through the I/O connector 49. The engine controller 31 is connected to the input/output device (I/O port) 44 of the process cartridge B through the input/output port of the circuit portion of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16 and the input/output connector 49, so that the engine controller 31 is allowed to communicate with the computing device of the process cartridge B, and also to refer to the data from the sensor group 43 of the process cartridge B.

Next, the functions of the portion C' mounted on the process cartridge side will be described. The sensor group 43 on the process cartridge side comprises a cartridge sensor 43a based on a limit

switch or the like, a toner remainder detection sensor 43a based on capacitance detection or light quantity detection, a charger resistance sensor 43c for detecting condensation and short circuit by detecting the electrical resistance of a charging means 8, a temperature sensor 34d for detecting the temperature increase of the process cartridge B, and the like. These sensors are connected to the input/output port 44 of the process cartridge B.

Also, a memory device 42 is mounted in the process cartridge B. In this embodiment, a rewritable EP ROM is employed as the memory device 42 (storing member). Also in this embodiment, a serial port is employed as an input/output port for exchanging the input and output signals between the aforementioned engines controller 31 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16 and the computing device 41 on the process cartridge side, to reduce the number of contact points so that the contact failure or the like can be prevented.

An example of how the control circuit portion C' is mounted in the process cartridge B is depicted in Figure 2. This portion C' of the control circuit may be disposed anywhere in the process cartridge B. In this embodiment, however, it is disposed in a cleaning frame 14 which plays a role of a positional reference for fixing the position of the process

cartridge B in the image forming apparatus main assembly 16. More specifically, it is attached to the end portion of the cleaning frame 14, that is, a point farthest from the noise source such as the charge unit, the transfer unit, and the like. Also, more specifically, the cleaning frame 14 is provided with a recess 14a, as seen from outside, and an I/O connector 21 is disposed under a cover 22 which is fixed to the cleaning frame 14 in a manner to cover the recess 14a. As shown in Figure 2, the cleaning frame 14 holds the photosensitive drum 7, the charging means 8, and the cleaning means 11. The development frame holds the developing means 10, and is connected to the cleaning frame 14 in a manner to allow them to pivot relative to each other.

Referring again to Figure 1 in which a process cartridge comprising the aforementioned control circuit portion is in the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, the I/O connector portion 21 of the process cartridge B in the image forming apparatus main assembly 16 is connected to the I/O connector portion 15 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, forming the I/O connector 49 illustrated in Figure 3. These connector portion 21 and 15 are structured in such a manner that they are automatically engaged with each other as the process cartridge B is inserted into the image forming

apparatus main assembly 16.

In this embodiment, the I/O connector portions 15 and 21, which constitute the I/O connector 49, is described as components comprising the contacts, for connecting the IC and the engine controller 31. However, they may comprise contacts for connecting the sensor group 42 on the process cartridge side to the engine controller 31, in addition to the contacts for connecting the IC and the engine controller 31, or they may comprise only the contact for connecting the IC and the engine controller 31.

Referring to Figure 4 which depicts the aforementioned I/O connector portions 15 and 21, the connectors employed in this embodiment will be described. Figure 4 is a perspective view of a connector, and depicts the structure thereof. An IC (integrated circuit) 51 (storing member) is mounted in the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side. The connector main structure 53 is a structural component which integrally comprises an IC socket and the connector. A connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, which is the counterpart of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side, is also a structural component, and is mounted on the connector mount 58 with the use of small screws 56. The small

screw 56 is put through hole 57a of the connector main structure 57, and is screwed into the female screw 58a of the connector mounts 58 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16.

Figure 5 is a sectional view of the connector illustrated in Figure 4.

In this embodiment, the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side contains a contact 52 which is placed in contact with the IC 51. This connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side is fixed to the process cartridge B. As for the connector main structure 58 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, which is the counterpart of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side, is fixed to the connector mount 58, that is, a part of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, with the use of the small screw 56. However, since the connector main structure 53 attached to the process cartridge B side is firmly fixed to the process cartridge B, it is necessary to make it sure that imperfect alignment between the process cartridge B and the image forming apparatus main assembly 16 does not generate stress in the connector main structures 53 and 57. Therefore, the connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side must be floatingly attached to the connector mount 58 of the image

forming apparatus main assembly 16. Figure 5, a sectional view, depicts a connector designed in consideration of such a requirement. More specifically, the diameter of the hole 57a of the connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side is rendered slightly larger than that of the small screw 56 to create a gap larger enough to compensate for the aforementioned misalignment. Therefore, even though the small screw 56 is firmly screwed into the female screw 58a of the connector attachment portion 58 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, the connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side is floatingly attached to the connector mount 58 of the image forming apparatus main assembly 16.

Next, the structures of the I/O connectors 15 and 21 will be described.

The connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side is formed of synthetic resin. It is hollow, and has a substantially square cross-section. Its base side half (top side in the drawings) is larger than its engagement portion side (bottom side in the drawings). In the internal space of the connector main structure on the process cartridge side is occupied by the IC mount 53c. The IC mount 53c is integrally formed with the connector

main structure 53, or is first formed independently from the connector main structure 53, and then attached to the external wall portion 53a and engagement portion wall 53b of the connector main structure 53. The longitudinal section of the IC mount 53 is in the form of a character T as shown in Figure 5. The surface of the IC mount 53c and the base side external wall 53a, and the surface of the IC mount 53c and the engagement portion side external wall 53b, form a continuous terminal mounting space 53d which opens outward at the top and bottom. The contact 52 is disposed in the IC mounting space, substantially in contact with the IC mount 53c except for a contact portion 52a, the bottom end portion. More specifically, in order to assure that the contact 52 is reliably placed in contact with the contact 53 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, the bottom end of the contact 52 is bent outward to form the contact portion 52a. As for the IC 51, the main structure 51a of a chip is disposed directly above the IC mount 53c, with the provision of a predetermined gap. The lead wires 51b of the IC 51 are inserted from above into the electrode mounting space 53d, and made to directly press on the contact 52. The IC 51 is electrically connected to each of the contacts 52, by one of the lead wires 51b.

The connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side integrally comprises a mount portion 57b provided with the aforementioned hole 57a for the small screw, and an engagement portion 57c in the form of a rectangular parallelepiped. Wiring 59 is connected to a contact 55 fixed to the contact main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side. The contact 55 is in contact with the internal surface of the engagement portion 57c. A reference symbol 57c2 designates a cavity provided in the engagement portion 57c. As the process cartridge B is inserted into the image forming apparatus main assembly 16, the internal periphery 53b1 of the engagement portion 53b of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side fits against the external periphery 57c1 of the engagement portion 57c of the connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, and the contact portion 52a of the contact 52 on the process cartridge side is pressed against the contact 55 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, being elastically bent inward, and establishes electrical connection. In other words, when the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side is electrically connected to the connector main structure 57 on the image forming apparatus main assembly side, the engagement portion 57c of the image

forming apparatus main assembly side fits into the space 53d of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side. As a result, the contact 52 of the connector main structure 53 fits into the aforementioned cavity 57c2, and comes in contact with the contact 55 disposed in the cavity 57c2. The IC 51 is behind the contact 52 relative to the direction (direction of an arrow mark X) in which the connector main structure 53 is fitted with the connector main structure 57. The bottom end of the external wall 53a of the connector main structure 53, which first comes in contact with the connector main structure 57 when two are connected, is provided with a tapered portion 53a1 by which the connector main structure 53 is guided.

In the drawing, the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side, and the mount portion 54 for the connector main structure 53 are schematically drawn to show the direct attachment of the former to the latter. However, the manner in which the I/O connector portion 21 is attached to the process cartridge B is not limited to the direct attachment depicted in the drawing. The connector mount portion 54 on the process cartridge side may be, for example, a part of the cover 22 attached to the cleaning frame 14 of the process cartridge B shown in Figure 2.

Next an example of how to attach the connector on the process cartridge side to the process cartridge with the use of a support member will be described.

Figure 6 is a perspective drawing which depicts a method for attaching a connector supported by a support member, to a process cartridge.

Figure 6 depicts a specific example of how a connector is attached to a process cartridge in this embodiment. In the drawing, the left and right sides of the I/O connector portion 21 and connector support members 66 and 67 are symmetrical relative to a symmetry plane S (which will be described later).

Also referring to Figure 6, the cleaning frame 14 of the process cartridge B is provided with a connector mounting space 61. Each of the opposing lateral surfaces 81 of the space 61 is provide with a guide groove 62 (one of the lateral walls 81 and one of the guide groove are not illustrated). This guide groove 62 extends in the same direction as the inserting direction of the process cartridge B indicated by an arrow mark E. Also, each lateral surface 81 is provided with a vertical groove 63, which is located at the deepest corner 61a of the space 61, and extends from the top surface 14a of the cleaning frame 14 to the bottom surface 61b of the space 61 in the direction perpendicular to the guide

groove 62. Further, each lateral surface 81 is provided with a rabbet-like portion 64, which also vertically extends from the top surface 14a of the cleaning frame 14 to the bottom surface 61b of the space 61 in the direction perpendicular to the guide groove 62.

On the other hand, the I/O connector portion 21 on the process cartridge side is supported by two support members composed of resin material, that is, a top support member 66 and a bottom support member 67 which are separable from each other at a separation plane 69; the I/O connector portion 21 and the connector support member 66 and 67 form a connector unit C. Both external lateral surfaces of the connector unit C are provided with a straight tongue-like portion 68 which extends along the separation plane 69 of the top and bottom connector support members 66 and 67. Also, the left and right ends of the top connector support member 66 are provided with a locking claw 66a.

Next, the configuration of the locking claw 66a will be described. The left and right locking claws 66a are symmetrical relative to the vertical plane S which includes the line coinciding with the stem line of the arrow mark E which indicates the inserting direction of the top connector support member 66. The outward front corner of the claw 66a

forms a guide portion 66a2, which first comes in contact with the entrance side of the lateral surface 81 of the space 61 when the connector support member 66 is inserted into the space 61 in the direction of the arrow mark E. Further, the claw 66a is provided with a slit 66a3, which is cut into the claw 66a from the inserting end of the claw 66a. The lateral surface 86 of the top connector support member 66, which fits against the lateral surface 81 of the space 61, is provided with a stopper 84, which is located at the trailing end side relative to the inserting direction of the top connector support member 66.

The width of the vertical groove 63 located at the corner of the space 61 of the process cartridge B is greater than the length of the claw 66a of the connector support member 66 in the inserting direction of the connector support member 66. The distance between the surface of the claw 66a on the trailing end side and the bumping surface 84a of the stopper 84 equals to the sum of the length of the lateral surface 81 in the inserting direction of the connector support member 66, and the engagement margin.

Further, the claw 66a is separated by the slit from the top half portion 66d of the tongue-like portion 68, which belongs to the top connector support member 66.

Referring to Figure 7(a) which is a sectional

view of the I/O connector portion 21 on the process cartridge side, and the top and bottom connector support members 66 and 67, in the disassembled state. Figures 7(a-1) and 7(a-2) illustrate the trailing end thereof relative to the inserting direction of the connector support members 66 and 67. The sectional view of the connector support members 66 and 67 in the assembled state is given as Figure 7(b). In Figure 7, the details of the external periphery of the connector support members 66 and 67 are omitted to simplify the drawing.

The I/O connector portion 21 on the process cartridge side comprises central structure portions 21c and 21d, and a flange portion 21a which fits around the central structure, between the portion 21c and 21d. The central structure portions 21c and 21d are substantially square in section area. The flange portion 21a comprises four pieces, forming a complete square, or comprises at least two pieces which are attached to the top and bottom surfaces, respectively of the central structure.

The inward facing surfaces of the connector support members 66 and 67 are provided with grooves 66g and 67g, respectively, in which the top and bottom pieces of the flange portion 21a of the I/O connector portion 21 on the process cartridge side are fitted. Also, they are provided with projections 66h and 67h

which cramp the central structure portions 21d from above and below, respectively. The rear end portions of the connector support members 66 and 67, relative to the direction in which the connector unit C is inserted into the space 61 of the process cartridge B, forms projections 66f and 67f which cramp the central structure portion 21c from above and below, respectively. These projections 66f and 67f double as the side walls of the grooves 66g and 67g. The inward facing surface of the left lateral wall of the connector support members 66, and the inward facing surface of the right lateral wall of the connector support member 66, are provided with projections 66i and 66j. Also, the inward facing surface of the left lateral wall of the connector support member 67, and the inward facing surface of the right lateral wall of the connector support member 67, are provided with the projection 67i and 67j, respectively. The projections 66i and 67i, and the projection 66j and 67j, cramp the central structure portions 21c and 21d, respectively, from the horizontal direction.

Figure 7(b) is a sectional view of the connector unit C illustrated in Figure 6, at the plane S (this plane S is perpendicular to the separation plane 69, and divides the connector unit C into symmetrical left and right halves).

Next, the positional fixation of the I/O

connector portion 21 on the process cartridge side in the connector unit C will be described with reference to directions X, Y and Z shown in Figure 7 (X direction is perpendicular to the surface of Figure 7; Z direction is the direction in which the connector unit C is inserted or removed, and coincide with the arrow E direction in Figure 6).

First, regarding the Z direction, the I/O connector portion 21 is fixed in the connector unit C as the flange portion 21a of the I/O connector portion 21 is cramped into the grooves 66g and 67g of the connector support members 66 and 67, respectively. As for the Y direction, the I/O connector portion 21 is fixed in the connector unit C as the central structure portion 21c of the I/O connector portion 21, that is, the central structure portion located on the rear side of the flange portion 21a, is cramped from above and below by the projections 66f and 67f which double as one of the walls of the grooves 66g and 67g of the connector support members 66 and 67, respectively. Further, the central structure portion 21d, that is, the central structure portion located on the front side of the flange portion 21a, is cramped from above and below by the protection 66h and 67h, respectively, to prevent the rotational movement of the I/O connector portion 21 about the axis X. As for the X direction, the I/O connector portion 21 is

positionally fixed as the lateral surfaces of the central structure portion 21c of the I/O connector portion 21 are cramped by a pair of projections 66i and a pair of projections 67i (projections on the opposing side are not illustrated) provided on the corresponding internal lateral surfaces of the connector support members 66 and 67. Further, a pair of protections 66j and a pair of projections 67j (projections on the opposing side are not illustrated) cramp on the lateral surfaces of the central structure portion 21d of the I/O connector portion 21 to prevent the rotational movement of the I/O connector portion 21 about the axis Y. As these components are assembled as described above, the top and bottom connector support members 66 and 67 join with each other at the separation plane 69. The connector support members 66 and 67 may be glued together by coating in advance the connector support members 66 and 67 with adhesive, on the surfaces facing the separation plane 69. However, even without gluing, the connector support members 66 and 67 do not separated from each other once the connector support members 66 and 67 are inserted into the space 61 of the process cartridge B after the I/O connector portion 21 is disposed in the connector support members 66 and 67.

With the employment of the structure

illustrated in Figure 7, it is possible to precisely and solidly fix the I/O connector portions 21 on the process cartridge side in the connector unit C.

Next, a method for attaching the aforementioned connector unit C to the process cartridge B will be described.

The connector unit C is inserted in a straight line into the space 61 of the process cartridge B, in the direction of the arrow mark E, with its tongue-like portions being fitted in the corresponding guide grooves 62 of the process cartridge B. This tongue-like portion is constituted of the portions 66d and 67d of the connector support members 66 and 67, respectively, that is, the straight portions which have an L-shaped cross-section and extend along the separation plane 69.

Figure 8 is a schematic drawing for describing how the connector unit C is inserted into the connector mounting space 61 of the process cartridge B. In the drawing, only one of the left and right sides of the connector unit C and space 61 is illustrated. The left and right sides of the connector unit C are symmetrical relative to the arrow mark E in Figure 6.

Figure 8(a) depicts the first stage of the insertion, in which the guide portion 66a2 of the locking claw 66a of the connector unit C comes in

contact with the lateral surface 81 of the space 61 of the process cartridge B, on the front side as seen from the direction from which the connector unit C is inserted.

As pressure is applied to the connector unit C in the arrow mark E direction, the locking claw 66a is elastically bent toward the slit 66a, and as the connector unit C is inserted deeper, the lateral surfaces 86 of the connector unit 86 come in contact with the correspondent lateral surfaces 81 of the space 61 (Figure 8(b)).

Then, as the connector unit C is further inserted to the final position, that is, the position where it is to be fixed, the hooking surface 85 reaches the vertical groove 63 on the process cartridge side, allowing the claw 66a to restore its original shape due to its resiliency. As a result, the lateral wall 83 of the vertical groove 63 flatly joins with the hooking surface 85 of the claw 66a, and the front surface 82 of the rabbet-like portion 64 also flatly joins with the bumping surface 84a of the stopper 84, whereby the connector unit C is positionally fixed in term of the Z direction. As for the Y direction, the guide grooves 62 of the process cartridge B engage with the tongue-like portions 68 of the connector unit C to positionally fix the connector unit C.

As for the X direction, the left and right lateral surfaces 81 of the space 61 of the process cartridge B engage with the lateral surfaces 86 of the connector unit C to fix the position of the connector unit C.

Therefore, the employment of the connector unit C and process cartridge B which have the above described structures makes it possible to precisely and solidly fix the connector unit C to the process cartridge B.

Embodiment 2

Next, the second embodiment of the present invention will be described. This embodiment is similar in structure to the first embodiment illustrated in Figure 5, except that the base side of the exterior wall 53a of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side is extended upward. Therefore, the description of the first embodiment may be quoted as the description of this embodiment, except for the difference which will be described next.

Referring to Figure 9, in the case of the connector main structure 90 on the process cartridge side, an IC 51 is surrounded with the base portion of the external wall 90a of the connector main structure 90 on the process cartridge side. With the provision of this structure, even if the connector main

structure 90 on the process cartridge side is carelessly handled after the installation of the IC 51, the IC 50 can be prevented from being subjected to destructive force.

Figure 10 is a sectional view of the connector main structure 90 on the process cartridge side in this embodiment. As shown in the drawing, it is structured in such a manner that the top end surface 106 of the external wall 90a comes above the top surface 105 of the IC 51.

Figure 11 illustrates a modified version 111 of the connector main structure 90 in this embodiment. In this case of the connector main structure 111, the top edge of one or both of the opposing two sections of the external wall 111a is provided with a notch 112 in order to make it easier to remove the IC 51. This section of the external wall 111a is the section which faces the lateral surface 51c of the chip main structure 51a of the IC 51, that is, the surface from which the lead wires 51b are not extending. With the provision of this arrangement, when it is necessary to remove the IC 51, the IC 51 can be easily dislodged from the IC mount by placing a sharp object such as a screw driver tip below or against the IC 51 through this notch 112.

Figure 12(a) is an external side view of the connector main structure 111 illustrated in Figure 11,

and Figure 12(b) is a sectional view of the same. If the bottom surface of the IC 51 is flatly in contact with the IC mount 53c, it is difficult to insert an IC removal tool such a screw driver between the IC 51 and the IC mount 53c. Therefore, such projections 121 as those illustrated in Figure 12(b) may be placed on the IC mount 53c of the connector main structure 111 on the process cartridge side to maintain a predetermined gap 122 between the IC 51 and the IC mount 53c, so that it becomes far easier to remove the IC 51.

Embodiment 3

Next, the third embodiment of the present invention will be described.

In this embodiment, a structure designed to protect an IC from external static electricity will be described. Figure 13 illustrates a structure designed to secure a creepage distance between the connector terminal and an electrostatically charged external object; the structure secures a sufficient distance between the connector terminal and the end surface of the connector.

More specifically, the portion of the engagement portion 53b below the bottom end of the contact 52 is extended in order to render the distance 131 so large that even if an object such as a probe 130 having an edge angle (α) of 25 deg. is inserted into the electrode mounting space 53d, it is not

allowed to come in contact with the contact 52.

Next, referring to Figure 14, a method for attaching the connector main structure 53 in accordance with the present invention to a unit such as a process cartridge will be described. A wall member 144 is attached to the frame 142 of a unit such as the process cartridge B, the developing unit, or the like, to form a pouch-like space 143 within the frame 142. The frame 142 is provided with an opening 145 which connects the space 143 and the outside. The wall member 144 is provided with ribs 144a, the tip of which contacts the base portion of the external wall 53a of the connector main structure 53 on the process cartridge side. The connector main structure 53 is attached in such a manner that the surface on which the IC 51 is mounted faces inward, and the engagement portion 53b fits into the opening 145 of the unit to expose itself from the unit frame 142. In other words, this arrangement shields the IC 51 from the external elements. Therefore, the IC is better protected from electrostatic charge, and also the connector failure caused by the adhesion of foreign matter such as dust can be prevented.

Further, the arrangement described in the foregoing paragraph may be modified in such a manner that the wall member 144 is integrally formed with the unit frame 142, and the portion of the unit frame 142,

which covers the pouch-like space, is formed as a separated cover member to be attached to the unit frame 142.

Embodiment 4

Next, the fourth embodiment will be described.

The fourth embodiment is an embodiment of an idea for preventing an IC mounted on the IC mount 53c from becoming disengaged from the IC mount 53c when a connector main structure is disposed in a unit. Figure 15(a) is a sectional view of the connector of this embodiment before its placement in the unit, and Figure 15(b) is a sectional view of the same after its placement in the unit.

Referring to Figure 15(b), the base portion of the external wall 53a of the connector main structure on the process cartridge side is formed of an elastic synthetic resin material and is provided with a fixing member 151 which comes above the lead wires 51b extending from the lateral portion of the chip main structure 51a of an IC 51. The section 53a1 of the base portion of the external wall 53a, which is parallel to the surface of the Figure 15, and the section 53a2 of the base portion of the external wall 53a, which is perpendicular to the surface of Figure 15, are independent from each other, being separated at a plane which coincides with the internal surface

of the section 53a1. The exterior surface of the section 53a2 of the base portion of the external wall 53a is provided with a projection 53e. This protection 53e fits in a recess 155 provided in the wall of the opening 154 of a unit 152.

Referring to Figure 15(a), the section 53a2 is slanted outward so that the distance between the opposing two fixing members 151 becomes wider to better expose the IC mount 53c. Next, referring to Figure 15(b), as the connector unit is inserted into the opening 154 of the unit 152, the outwardly slanted sections 53a2 are elastically bent toward each other, following the correspondent walls of the opening 154. Therefore, the fixing members 151 are made to close in toward each other in a manner to cramp the IC 51, preventing the IC 51 from becoming disengaged from the IC mount 53c. Further, the projection 53e of the base portion of the external wall 53a of the connector main structure 53 fits in the recess 155 provided in the wall of the opening 154, and therefore, the connector mains structure 53 is not liable to be dislodge by external force.

Referring to Figure 16, in order to cramp the chip main structure 51a of the IC 51, a wall member 144 may be provided with a boss, instead of disposing the fixing member 151 as described above (in Figure 16, the sections having the same functions as those

illustrated in Figure 14 are designated with the same referential codes so that the description of the structure illustrated in Figure 14 can be quoted as the description of the structure in Figure 16).

Further, a supporting member may be interposed between the connector main structure 53 and the frame of a unit such as a process cartridge.

Embodiment 5

Next, the fifth embodiment of the present invention will be described.

In this embodiment, the structure of the connector unit C in the first embodiment is modified in consideration of the connector unit manufacturing (assembling) conditions.

Figure 17(a) illustrates a two-piece connector unit. The top piece 171 integrally comprises an I/O connector portion 171a and a top support member 171b. It is united with a bottom support member 172 to form a connector unit C.

In Figure 17, the sections having the same functions as those illustrated in Figure 6 are designated with the same referential codes to quote the description of Figure 6 as the description for Figure 17. In the drawing, a claw 66a is illustrated without showing the slit provided around it. The bottom surface of the I/O connector portion 171a is provided with a flange 171a1 which extends in the

direction perpendicular to the inserting direction E of the connector unit C, and the bottom support member 172 is provided with a groove 172a in which the I/O connector portion 171a is fitted. This groove 172a extends in the direction indicated by an arrow mark E (inserting direction of connector unit C), and is provided with a groove 172b in which the flange 171a1 of the I/O connector portion 171a is fitted. This groove 172b extends in the direction perpendicular to the groove 172a. The external configuration of the assembled connector unit C is the same as the connector unit C illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 17(b) depicts a single-piece connector unit 173, in the case of this connector unit 173, an I/O connector portion 173a is integrally formed with a support portion 173b. The external configuration of the connector unit 173 is also the same as the connector unit C illustrated in Figure 6.

Whichever design is employed among the three-piece design in the first embodiment, the two-piece design in this fifth embodiment, and the single-piece design also in this fifth embodiment, the effects of the present invention can be satisfactorily realized. Therefore, a manufacturer may select the most appropriate one among the aforementioned designs in consideration of manufacturing related concerns, for example, metallic mold cost, assembly cost, and the

like.

As described above, according to the preceding embodiments, an electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) engageable with a counterpart connector (57) provided on the image forming apparatus main assembly side comprises a memory member (51) for storing information, and a plurality of electrical terminals (52) which are separably connected to the electrical terminals (55) of the connector (57) on the apparatus main assembly side when the connector (53, 90 or 111) is engaged with the connector (57) of the apparatus main assembly, wherein the memory member (51) is electrically connected to each of the plurality of electrical terminals (52) with the use of electrically conductive members (for example, lead wires 51b).

According to one of the aspects of the embodiments, the memory member (51) is disposed on the upstream side of the terminal (52) relative to the direction (direction indicated by an arrow mark X) in which the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) is moved to be engaged with the connector (57) of the apparatus main assembly.

According to another aspect of the embodiments, the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) comprises a wall (53a, 90a or 111a) extended to surround the terminals (52).

According to another aspect of the

embodiments, the bottom end of the wall (53a, 90a or 111a), which is to be engaged with the connector (57) of the apparatus main assembly, is provided with a tapered portion (53a1), which guides the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) when the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) is engaged with the connector (57) of the apparatus main assembly. As the electrical connector (50, 90 or 111) is electrically connected to the connector (57) of the apparatus main assembly, the engagement portion (57c) of the connector (57) on the apparatus main assembly side fits in the space (53d) created between the internal surface of the wall (53a, 90a or 111a) and the terminal (52). The engagement portion (57c) is provided with a recess (57d), and the terminal 52 of the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) enters the recess (57d) to make electrical contact with the apparatus main assembly side terminal (55) disposed in the recess (57d).

According to another aspect of the embodiments, the electrical connector (90 or 111) is provided with an external wall (90a or 111a) which covers both longitudinal ends of the memory member (51), wherein a plurality of lead wires (51b) extend from the longitudinal edges of the memory member (51).

According to another aspect of the embodiments, the electrical connector (111) is

provided with an external wall (111a) which covers both longitudinal ends of the memory member (51), wherein a plurality of lead wires (51b) extend from the longitudinal edges of the memory member (51), and at least one of the longitudinal ends of the memory (51) is exposed so that a tool (130) can be inserted from the longitudinal direction of the memory member (51) to dislodge the memory member (51) from its mount.

According to another aspect of the embodiments, the electrical connector (53, 90 or 111) is provided with a wall (53a, 90a or 111a) which surrounds the terminal (52), and a space (53d) is provided between the internal surface of the wall and the terminal, wherein the terminal (52) is disposed deep inside the space (53d), being sufficiently away from the bottom end of the wall in the height direction of the wall to secure a distance for preventing the terminal (52) from coming incontact with a foreign object even when a foreign object, for example, a probe (130) having an edge angle of 25 deg., happens to be inserted into the space (53d).

The following is evident from the above descriptions:

(1) According to the preceding embodiments, it is possible to realize an inexpensive, small, and highly noise resistant structure for an electrical connector

which is used to install an electronic device, for example, an IC such as an EPROM, in a unit removably mountable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus.

(2) According to one of the aspects of the preceding embodiment, an IC is placed directly in contact with a connecting means on which the IC is mounted; therefore, the IC is automatically connected to the counterpart connector by simply engaging two connectors, eliminating the need for separate wiring which electrically connects the IC to the counterpart connector.

(3) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiment, an IC and an electric power supplying means are disposed in a connector; therefore, only one connector pair is necessary to transmit signals to and from the IC, and supply the unit with electric power.

(4) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, only one connector pair is necessary to transmit signals to and from the IC, to supply the unit with electric power, and to pick up the signals from the sensors connected to the connector on which the IC is mounted.

(5) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiment, at least one connector of the connector pair is mounted in a positionally adjustable manner to deal with the misalignment of the connectors;

therefore, the two connectors can be reliably engaged.

(6) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the IC is mounted in such a manner that the IC is surrounded by the extension of the connector main structure; therefore, the IC is not liable to come directly in contact with foreign objects.

(7) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector main structure is provided with an external wall for surrounding the IC, wherein one, or opposing two, of the four sections of the external wall, which does not face the lead wires of the IC, is provided with a notch; therefore, it is easy to remove the IC.

(8) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the surface of the connector main structure, which faces the bottom surface of the IC, is provided with projections to prevent the bottom surface of the IC from coming flatly in contact with the surface of the connector main structure; therefore, a gap useful for dislodging the IC can be secured between the IC and the connector main structure.

(9) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the terminal is made to double as means for connecting the IC, and the IC and terminal are supported by the connector main structure; therefore, the structure is simplified.

(10) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector main structure is formed of electrically insulative material, and comprises an external wall which surrounds the connection terminals, and a terminal mount disposed within the external wall, wherein one end of the external wall forms an engagement portion which is separably engaged with the counterpart connector on which the IC is not mounted, and the IC is automatically connected to the terminal as the IC is mounted on the terminal mount; therefore, the structure of the electrical connector is simple, strong, and easy to manufacture.

(11) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the engagement portion is extended; therefore, forgone objects such as a probe are not liable to be allowed to reach as far into the terminal mounting space as the terminal location; in other words, the extension of the engagement portion serves as means for preventing static electricity discharge.

(12) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, opposing sections of the external wall of the connector main structure are slanted outward and also is rendered elastically bendable in the inward direction, wherein the top end of each of these opposing sections is provided with an IC cramping member; therefore, the IC is not liable to dislodge from the connector main structure after the connector

is attached to a unit.

(13) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, an electronically erasable storing means is employed as the IC; therefore, the connector can hold the information of a unit to which the connector with the IC is attached.

(14) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector with the IC is provided with a support member; therefore, the connector can be easily fitted to a member to which the connector is to be attached, and at the same time, the connector is protected by the support member.

(15) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector is supported with two separate support members which can be easily assembled together. Therefore, component manufacturing steps can be simplified. Also, with this arrangement, the connector can be standardized, and the same connector can be attached to different types of unit simply by using different support members, affording flexibility in connector application.

(16) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector is integrally formed with a part of the support member, and this connector integral with a part of the support member is supported by the other part of the support member; therefore, the connector main structure is reinforced.

(17) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector and the support member are integrally formed; therefore, the connector is highly strong and rigid.

(18) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the means for storing the information regarding a unit removably installable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus is mounted in the connector which requires only a small space; therefore, it is unnecessary to increase the unit size. Also, the space in which the connector is mounted is located adjacent to the external wall of the unit, being is covered with the unit frame wall or a separate lid. Therefore, the connector can be easily attached to the unit, and can be protected from the noises generated by a high voltage member such as a charger. Further, the electronic device is prevented from being subjected to short circuit or contact failure caused by the adhesion of toner or the like. In other words, the environment in which the electronic device operates is improved in terms of noise resistance.

(19) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, a unit is provided with a dedicated space for accommodating the connector; therefore, the connector does not greatly protrude from the surface of the unit, rendering the unit clean in

configuration, and compact in overall size.

(20) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector is designed to interpose a support member between the connector main structure and a unit to which the connector main structure is attached; therefore, the same connector can be precisely and firmly attached to various units to make desirable electrical contact with a counterpart connector, which makes the connector virtually immune to ill effects which result from handling of the connector, for example, engaging or disengaging the connector.

(21) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, a developing device can be provided with means for storing various information regarding developing device conditions, without greatly increasing the size of a developing device.

(22) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiment, a toner cartridge can be provided with means for storing the information regarding toner remainder, without increasing the size of a toner cartridge.

(23) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, a process cartridge can be provided with means for storing a process cartridge history, simply by attaching the connector in accordance with the present invention to a process cartridge, without

increasing process cartridge size. Further, the connector is also compatible with the process cartridges described in Claims 24 - 26.

(24) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, the connector in accordance with the present invention is attached to a unit removably installable in the main assembly of an image forming apparatus, and the counterpart connector in accordance with the present invention is attached to the main assembly of an image forming apparatus, wherein an IC is mounted in the connector on the unit side, eliminating the need for substantially increasing unit size; therefore, it is unnecessary to increase image forming apparatus size.

(25) According to another aspect of the preceding embodiments, an IC is an electronically erasable storing means; therefore, the information regarding a unit, which is exchanged between the control circuit of the main assembly of an image forming apparatus and the unit, can be stored one after another in the IC.

While the invention has been described with reference to the structures disclosed herein, it is not confined to the details set forth and this application is intended to cover such modifications or changes as may come within the purposes of the improvements or the scope of the following claims.

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☐ Description : paged ..... to paged .....
☑ Claim(s) : paged 50 to paged 78
☑ Drawing(s) : paged 1/13 to paged 13/13
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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector, provided in a main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with a contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines.

2. A connector according to Claim 1, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

3. A connector according to Claim 1, wherein said electrical connector has a wall provided so as to enclose said electrical contacts, and free ends of said electrical contacts, are provided inside said wall in a direction of height of said wall.

4. A connector according to Claim 3, wherein

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said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

5. A connector according to Claim 3 or 4, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected electrically with said main assembly connector, an engaging portion of said main assembly connector is engaged with a space formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contacts, wherein said engaging portion is provided with a dimple, into which said electronic contacts of said electrical connector enter to be electrically connected with the electrical contacts.

6. A connector according to Claim 5, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof.

7. A connector according to Claim 1 or 4, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member,

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wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof, wherein at least one of lateral surfaces of said storing member, is exposed, and said storing member is demountable from a mounting position by inserting a tool into a lateral surface of said storing member.

8. A connector according to Claim1 or 4, wherein said electrical connector is provided with a wall provided so as to enclose said electrical contacts, wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degrees at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

9. An electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector, provided in a main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, wherein said main assembly includes an engaging portion, a groove provided in said engaging portion and a main assembly electrical contact provided in said groove, comprising:

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storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

a wall enclosing said electrical contact;

wherein free ends of said electrical contacts are provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall;

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said groove so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said groove;

wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines.

10. A connector according to Claim 9, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of

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connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

11. A connector according to Claim 9 or 10, wherein said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

12. A connector according to Claim 11, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof.

13. A connector according to Claim 9 or 4, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof, wherein at least one of lateral surfaces of said storing member, is exposed, and said storing member is demountable from a mounting position by inserting a tool into a lateral surface of said storing member.

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14. A connector according to Claim 9 or 10, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degree at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

15. An electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector, provided in a main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, wherein said main assembly includes an engaging portion, a dimple provided in said engaging portion and a main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple, comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

a wall enclosing said electrical contact Wherein free ends of said electrical contacts are provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall;;

an outer wall covering longitudinal opposite ends of said storing member;

a plurality of lead lines extended out of

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said opposite ends, wherein said lead lines are connected with said electrical contacts, respectively, by which said storing member is electrically connected with said electrical contact;

at least one lateral end of said storing member is exposed, and said storing member is removable from a mounting position by inserting a tool at the end portion; and

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said dimple so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple.

16. A connector according to Claim 15, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

17. A connector according to Claim 15 or 16,

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wherein said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

18. A connector according to Claim 15 or 16, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degrees at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

19. A process cartridge detachably mountable to a main assembly of an image forming apparatus, comprising:

a. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

b. process means actable on said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

c. an electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector, provided in a main assembly of an electrophotographic image forming apparatus;

said electrical connector comprising;

storing member for storing information;

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a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines.

20. A process cartridge according to Claim 19, wherein said process means includes at least one of a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member, a developing member for developing a latent image formed on the photosensitive member, a cleaning member for removing toner remaining said electrophotographic photosensitive member.

21. A process cartridge according to Claim 19, wherein said electrical connector is provided in a cleaning frame for supporting said electrophotographic photosensitive member, a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member and a cleaning member for removing toner remaining on said electrophotographic photosensitive member, and said electrical connector is mounted in a mounting direction when said process cartridge is mounted to a main assembly of said device.

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22. A process cartridge according to Claim 19, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

23. A process cartridge according to Claim 19, wherein said electrical connector has a wall provided so as to enclose said electrical contacts, and free ends of said electrical contacts, are provided inside said wall in a direction of height of said wall.

24. A process cartridge according to Claim 23, wherein said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

25. A process cartridge according to Claim 23 or 24, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected electrically with said main assembly connector, an engaging portion of said main assembly connector is engaged with a space formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contacts, wherein said engaging portion is provided

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with a dimple, into which said electronic contacts of said electrical connector enter to be electrically connected with the electrical contacts.

26. A process cartridge according to Claim 25, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof.

27. A process cartridge according to Claim 19 or 24, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof, wherein at least one of lateral surfaces of said storing member, is exposed, and said storing member is demountable from a mounting position by inserting a tool into a lateral surface of said storing member.

28. A process cartridge according to Claim 19 or 24, wherein said electrical connector is provided with a wall provided so as to enclose said electrical contacts, wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical

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contact, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degrees at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

29. A process cartridge according to Claim 19 or 24, wherein said electrical connector is mounted on a cartridge frame such that storing member is positioned in a space constituted by a wall member provided in said cartridge frame, wherein said wall member is provided with a rib, and said rib is contacted to a base portion of a side wall of said electrical connector.

30. A process cartridge detachably mountable to a main assembly of an image forming apparatus, wherein said main assembly includes an engaging portion, a groove provided in said engaging portion and a main assembly electrical contact provided in said groove, comprising:

a. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

b. a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

c. a cleaning member for removing toner

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remaining on said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

d. an electrical connector connectable electrically with said main assembly connector of said device when said process cartridge is mounted to main assembly of the apparatus;

said electrical connector comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

a wall enclosing said electrical contact;

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said groove so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said groove;

wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines, wherein said electrical connector is

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mounted in a mounting direction when said process cartridge is mounted to said main assembly.

31. A process cartridge according to Claim 30, wherein said process cartridge further comprises a cleaning member for removing toner remaining on said electrophotographic photosensitive member.

32. A process cartridge according to Claim 30, wherein said electrical connector is mounted to a cleaning frame for supporting said electrophotographic photosensitive member, said charging member and said cleaning member.

33. A process cartridge according to Claim 30, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

34. A process cartridge according to Claim 30 or 33, wherein said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

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35. A process cartridge according to Claim 34, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof.

36. A process cartridge according to Claim 30 or 33, further comprising an outer wall covering opposite longitudinal end portions of said storing member, wherein a plurality of said lead lines are extended out of said storing member at the opposite end portions thereof, wherein at least one of lateral surfaces of said storing member, is exposed, and said storing member is demountable from a mounting position by inserting a tool into a lateral surface of said storing member.

37. A process cartridge according to Claim 30 or 33, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degrees at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

38. A process cartridge detachably mountable

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to a main assembly of an image forming apparatus, wherein said main assembly includes an engaging portion, a dimple provided in said engaging portion and a main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple, comprising:

a. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

b. a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

c. an electrical connector connectable electrically with said main assembly connector of said device when said process cartridge is mounted to main assembly of the apparatus;

said electrical connector comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

a wall enclosing said electrical contact Wherein free ends of said electrical contacts are provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall;

an outer wall covering longitudinal opposite ends of said storing member;

a plurality of lead lines extended out of said opposite ends, wherein said lead lines are

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connected with said electrical contacts, respectively, by which said storing member is electrically connected with said electrical contact;

wherein at least one lateral end of said storing member is exposed, and said storing member is removable from a mounting position by inserting a tool at the end portion; and

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said dimple so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple.

39. A process cartridge according to Claim 38, wherein said process cartridge further comprises a cleaning member for removing toner remaining on said electrophotographic photosensitive member.

40. A process cartridge according to Claim 38, wherein said electrical connector is mounted to a cleaning frame for supporting said electrophotographic

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photosensitive member, said charging member and said cleaning member.

41. A process cartridge according to Claim 38, wherein said storing member is mounted at a position upstream of said electronic contacts in a direction of connection of said electrical connector with said main assembly connector.

42. A process cartridge according to Claim 38 or 41, wherein said wall is provided with a taper adjacent an end for connection with said main assembly connector, wherein when said electrical connector is to be connected with the main assembly connector, it is guided by said taper.

43. A process cartridge according to Claim 38 or 41, wherein said electrical contact is provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall so as to assure a such a distance that even when a probe having an angle of 25 degrees at a free end thereof is inserted into said space, said probe is not contacted to said electrical contact.

44. A process cartridge according to Claim 38 or 41, wherein said electrical connector is mounted on a cartridge frame such that storing member is

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positioned in a space constituted by a wall member provided in said cartridge frame, wherein said wall member is provided with a rib, and said rib is contacted to a base portion of a side wall of said electrical connector.

45. An electrophotographic image forming apparatus for forming an image on a recording material, to which a process cartridge is detachably mountable, comprising:

a. connector in a main assembly of the apparatus;

b. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

process means actable on said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

an electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector of said device of said electrophotographic image forming apparatus, when said process cartridge is mounted to main assembly of the apparatus;

said electrical connector comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

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wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines;

a mounting portion for detachably mounting said process cartridge;

c. A feeding member for feeding the recording material.

46. An electrophotographic image forming apparatus for forming an image on a recording material, to which a process cartridge is detachably mountable, comprising:

a. a main assembly connector having an engaging portion, a dimple provided in said engaging portion and an electrical contact of the main assembly of the apparatus provision in said dimple;

c. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

a cleaning member for removing toner remaining on said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

an electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector of said device when said process cartridge is mounted to the main assembly;

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said electrical connector comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

a wall enclosing said electrical contact Wherein free ends of said electrical contacts are provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall;

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said dimple so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple.

wherein said storing member is electrically connected with each of said electrical contacts with lead lines, and said electrical connector is mounted in a mounting direction of said process cartridge when said process cartridge is mounted to the main assembly of said device;

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a mounting portion for detachably mounting said process cartridge;

c. a feeding member for feeding the recording material.

47. An electrophotographic image forming apparatus for forming an image on a recording material, to which a process cartridge is detachably mountable, comprising:

a. a main assembly connector having an engaging portion, a dimple provided in said engaging portion and an electrical contact of the main assembly of the apparatus provision in said dimple;

b. an electrophotographic photosensitive member;

a charging member for charging said electrophotographic photosensitive member;

an electrical connector electrically connectable with a main assembly connector of said device when said process cartridge is mounted to the main assembly;

said electrical connector comprising:

storing member for storing information;

a plurality of electrical contacts for separably connecting with the contact of said main assembly connector, when they are connected electrically with said main assembly connector;

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a wall enclosing said electric contact, wherein free ends of said electrical contacts are provided inside said wall in the direction of height of said wall;

an outer wall covering longitudinal opposite ends of said storing member;

a plurality of lead lines extended out of said opposite ends, wherein said lead lines are connected with said electrical contacts, respectively, by which said storing member is electrically connected with said electrical contact;

wherein at least one lateral end of said storing member is exposed, and said storing member is removable from a mounting position by inserting a tool at the end portion; and

wherein a space is formed between an inner surface of said wall and said electrical contact, wherein said engaging portion is engaged with said space when said electrical connector is to be electrically connected with the main assembly connector, wherein when said engaging portion is engaged with said space, said electrical contacts of said electrical connector enter said dimple so that electrical contacts are electrically connected with the main assembly electrical contact provided in said dimple;

a mounting portion for detachably mounting

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said process cartridge.

c. a feeding member for feeding the recording material.

48. A couple of connectors for connection and disconnection of an electric circuit, the improvement residing in that:

one of said connectors has an IC, and said IC receives and delivers signals through the other of said connectors.

49. A couple according to Claim 48, further comprising connecting means for electrically directly connecting one of said connectors and the other thereof.

50. A couple according to Claim 48, wherein said one of connectors includes connecting means for effecting said receiving and delivering of the signals and for effecting supply of electric energy through the other of said connectors.

51. A couple according to Claim 48, further comprising connecting means for effecting said receiving and delivering of the signals, for effecting supply of electric energy and for delivering signals from sensors connected with said connector having the

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IC.

52. A couple according to Claim 48, wherein at least one of said connectors is mounted for movement to absorb deviation occurring at the time of connector engaging.

53. A couple according to Claim 48, wherein said one of said connectors having the IC has a connector body enclosing a circumference of said IC, wherein said connector body prevents said IC from being exposed to outside.

54. A couple according to Claim 53, wherein said connector body has an outer wall enclosing the IC, and the outer wall of said connector body of said one of connectors having said IC, is provided with a portion which is inside an edge of the outer wall, in a side or each of two sides of said IC not having contacts.

55. A couple according to Claim 53, further comprising a projection on a surface of said connector body faced to a bottom surface of said IC to prevent surface contact between the bottom surface of said IC and the surface of said connector body.

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56. A couple according to Claim 48, further comprising an IC, connection contacts as said connecting means, and connector body for supporting said IC and said connection contacts.

57. A couple according to Claim 56, wherein the connector body has an engaging portion for separable engagement with the counterpart connector not having the IC and made of insulating material, a base portion side outer wall portion cooperating with said engaging portion to enclose the connection contact and continuous from said engaging portion, and the IC and contact mounting portion in and over said engaging portion and said base portion outer wall, wherein said IC and said contact are mounted to said IC and contact mounting portion and are connected with each other.

58. A couple according to Claim 57, wherein electrostatic discharge preventing means in the form of an extension of said engaging portion around said contact to the counterpart connector engaging portion so as to prevent a conical probe from directly contacting to the contact from said engaging portion.

59. A couple according to Claim 57, wherein a part of the outer wall of the main assembly of said

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connector is openable, and there is provided a fixing member for sandwiching said IC, in the openable portion, and wherein when said connector is not mounted to a mounting member for the connector, said fixing member is in an open state, and when said connector is mounted thereto, said fixing member is closed state to prevent movement of said IC.

60. A couple according to Claim 48, wherein said IC functions as electrically erasable memory means.

61. A couple according to Claim 48, wherein said connector having said IC is supported on a supporting and is mounted to a connector mounting member through said supporting member.

62. A couple according to Claim 61, wherein said connector is supported on two supporting members.

63. A couple according to Claim 61, wherein said connector is integrally molded with one of said supporting members, is supported on the other supporting member.

64. A couple according to Claim 61, wherein said connector and said supporting member are

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integrally molded.

65. A unit detachably mountable relative to a main assembly of an image forming apparatus, the improvement residing in the provision of a connector having an IC for signal communication with an electronic device in the main assembly through a connector in said main assembly, said connector is disconnectably connectable with the connector in said main assembly.

66. A unit according to Claim 65, further comprising a space for connection between a part of image forming means and said connector, and connector mounting means provided in a member for defining said space.

67. A unit according to Claim 65, wherein an unit side connector is mounted to said unit mounted on a supporting member for supporting said connector.

68. A unit according to Claim 65, wherein said unit includes developing means for developing a latent image on an electrophotographic photosensitive member.

69. A unit according to Claim 65, wherein

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said unit is a toner cartridge for supplying toner to said developing means.

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