

Disk Drive Emulator And Method Of Use Thereof

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This disclosure relates to disk drive emulators and methods of testing test slots of disk drive testing systems.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Disk drive manufacturers typically test manufactured disk drives for compliance with a collection of requirements. Test equipment and techniques exist for testing large numbers of disk drives serially or in parallel. Manufacturers tend to test large numbers of disk drives simultaneously or in batches. Disk drive testing systems typically include one or more racks having multiple test slots that receive disk drives for testing.

[0003] The testing environment immediately around the disk drive is closely regulated. Minimum temperature fluctuations in the testing environment are critical for accurate test conditions and for safety of the disk drives. The latest generations of disk drives, which have higher capacities, faster rotational speeds and smaller head clearance, are more sensitive to vibration. Excess vibration can affect the reliability of test results and the integrity of electrical connections. Under test conditions, the drives themselves can propagate vibrations through supporting structures or fixtures to adjacent units. This vibration "cross-talking," together with external sources of vibration, contributes to bump errors, head slap and non-repetitive run-out (NRRO), which may result in lower yields and increased manufacturing costs.

[0004] Test slots of disk drive testing systems require routine validation and diagnostic testing to insure that the test slots are functioning and performing properly. In general, a "gold drive" is a disk drive that has been independently validated as functioning and performing properly. The gold drive may be used to test the functionality and performance of test slots. Validating and maintaining verification of the gold drive's veracity is cumbersome and expensive. Furthermore, testing data is limited.

SUMMARY

[0005] In one aspect, a disk drive emulator for testing a test slot of a disk drive testing system includes an emulator housing, a testing circuit housed in the emulator

housing, and an interface connector disposed on the emulator housing and in electrical communication with the testing circuit. The disk drive emulator includes at least one sensor in electrical communication with the testing circuit. The at least one sensor is selected from the group consisting of a temperature sensor, a vibration sensor, and a humidity sensor. The testing circuit is configured to test power delivery of the test slot to the disk drive emulator, monitor the at least one sensor, and monitor connector reliability (e.g. by monitoring connector resistance) between the test slot and the disk drive emulator.

[0006] Implementations of this aspect of the disclosure may include one or more of the following features. In some implementations, the emulator housing has a width of about 70 mm and a height of between about 9.5 mm and about 19 mm. The emulator housing is substantially rectangular shaped having top and bottom broad surfaces. A temperature sensor is disposed near each corner of the top and bottom broad surfaces. In some implementations, the emulator housing defines an electronics region, a motor region, and a head region. A temperature sensor is disposed in each region. In some examples, the interface connector comprises a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector. The electrical load element may be a heat source, which in some examples is variable. In one instance, the electrical load element is a motor; however, other heat and/or vibration generating items may be used such as a piezoelectric device, etc.

[0007] In some examples, the testing circuit includes a controller in electrical communication with the at least one temperature sensor, the at least one vibration sensor, and the at least one electrical load element. The disk drive emulator may include a humidity sensor in electrical communication with the testing circuit, which is configured to monitor a humidity level of the test slot.

[0008] In another aspect, a method of validating a test slot of a disk drive testing system includes establishing electrical communication between a disk drive emulator and the test slot and performing diagnostic testing on the test slot. The diagnostic testing includes testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator and the test slot, testing power delivery from the test slot to the disk drive emulator, monitoring a temperature level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator, and monitoring a vibration level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator.

[0009] Implementations of this aspect of the disclosure may include one or more of the following features. In some implementations, performing diagnostic testing on the test slot further includes monitoring a humidity level of the disk drive emulator. In some examples, testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator and the test slot includes testing a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector disposed in the test slot. Testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator and the test slot may include determining a connection resistance between the disk drive emulator and the test slot. In some implementations, testing power delivery from the test slot to the disk drive emulator includes testing a voltage source level of the test slot, testing a current source level of the test slot, and testing a current limiting capacity of the test slot.

[0010] In some implementations, monitoring a temperature level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator includes monitoring a temperature level of an electronics region, a motor region, and/or a head region. Monitoring a vibration level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator includes monitoring a vibration level of the head region.

[0011] The disk drive emulator, in some examples, includes an emulator housing, a testing circuit housed in the emulator housing, and an interface connector disposed on the emulator housing and in electrical communication with the testing circuit. The disk drive emulator includes at least one sensor in electrical communication with the testing circuit. The at least one sensor is selected from the group consisting of a temperature sensor, a vibration sensor, and a humidity sensor. The testing circuit is configured to test power delivery of the test slot to the disk drive emulator, monitor the at least one sensor, and monitor connector reliability (e.g. by monitoring connector resistance) between the test slot and the disk drive emulator.

[0012] The details of one or more implementations of the disclosure are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features, objects, and advantages will be apparent from the description and drawings, and from the claims.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a disk drive emulator being inserted into a test slot of a disk drive testing system.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a test slot.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a disk drive emulator.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a schematic view of a disk drive emulator with a testing circuit.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a schematic view of a load circuit.

5 [0018] FIG. 6 is a side schematic view of a disk drive emulator housing that illustrates exemplary placement of temperature and vibration sensors within the emulator housing.

[0019] FIG. 7 is a top schematic view of the disk drive emulator housing shown in FIG. 6, illustrating exemplary placement of temperature and vibration
10 sensors within the emulator housing.

[0020] Like reference symbols in the various drawings indicate like elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] A disk drive emulator 100 emulates or simulates an actual disk drive physically (e.g. in size, appearance, amount of radiated heat and/or vibration), but
15 operates as a diagnostics and testing tool for validating test slots 10 of disk drive testing systems 5. In the example shown in FIG. 1, a test slot 10 is mounted to a rack 20. A disk drive transporter 30 carries the disk drive emulator 100, and may be manipulated by a user or a robotic arm for insertion into a receptacle 12 of the test slot 10. The disk drive emulator 100 is placed in a test position engaged with a test slot
20 connector 14, shown in FIG. 2.

[0022] Referring to FIG. 3, the disk drive emulator 100 includes an emulator housing 110, a testing circuit 200 (shown through a cutaway portion of the emulator housing 110) housed in the emulator housing 110, and an interface connector 120 disposed on the emulator housing 110 and in electrical communication with the
25 testing circuit 200. In some implementations, the emulator housing 110 has a width of about 70 mm and a height of between about 9.5 mm and about 19 mm. The interface connector 120 is configured to mate with the test slot connector 14, and may be a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector. The test slot 10 communicates with the disk drive emulator 100 via Parallel AT Attachment (a hard
30 disk interface also known as IDE, ATA, ATAPI, UDMA and PATA), SATA, SAS (Serial Attached SCSI) and/or serial communications. The test slot 10 also supplies power (e.g. +5V and +12V) and ground to the disk drive emulator 100 through the interface connector 120.

[0023] The disk drive emulator 100 is configured to validate the test slot 10 and diagnose issues related to the health of the test slot 10. The disk drive emulator 100 tests the power supply and ground of the test slot 10, communications through the test slot connector 14, and an environmental control system of the test slot 10, which
5 regulates temperature, humidity, and vibrations.

[0024] Referring to the schematic view of the disk drive emulator 100 in FIG. 4, the testing circuit 200 is configured to test power delivery of the test slot 10 to the disk drive emulator 100, temperature and vibration levels of the test slot 10, and connector reliability between the test slot 10 and the disk drive emulator 100 (e.g. by
10 monitoring connector resistance). The testing circuit 200 includes a controller 210 in electrical communication with a serial communications circuit 202, which is in electrical communication with a serial communications portion 122 of the interface connector 120. The controller 210 is in electrical communication with a sensor system 300, which includes at least one temperature sensor 310 and at least one
15 vibration sensor 320. In some examples, the sensor system 300 also includes a humidity sensor 330 in electrical communication with the controller 210 and an air flow sensor 340 to detect and indicate the volume of air being provided to the test slot 10.

[0025] The testing circuit 200 includes a power supply circuit 204 in electrical
20 communication with a power portion 124 of the interface connector 120. The power supply circuit 204 includes a voltage regulator circuit 220 and first and second switches 222, 224, each controlling electrical communication with a respective load circuit 400 and a respective analog-to-digital converter (not shown). The switches 222, 224 are controlled by the controller 210. FIG. 5 provides an example of the load
25 circuit 400 which includes first and second switches 402, 404 that control current delivery to a resistor 410 and a motor 420, respectively. The controller 210 controls operation of the resistor 410 and the motor 420 via their associated switches 402, 404. The load circuits 400 are calibrated for their respective power supply (e.g. +5V or +12V). The load circuits 400 are used to test that an external power source, accessed
30 via power portion 124 of the interface connector 120, is functioning properly. The load circuits 400 or a second set of load circuits (not shown) can be used to trip a circuit breaker of the external power source, so as to test that it is functioning properly.

[0026] The disk drive emulator 100 generates heat to simulate heat dissipation of an actual disk drive by activating at least one of the load circuits 400 via its corresponding switch 222, 224 and delivering current to the resistor 410 and/or motor 420, as controlled by their respective switches 402 and 404. The load circuit 400 may be operated to provide constant or variable heat generation. The disk drive emulator 100 generates vibrations to simulate vibration characteristics of an actual disk drive by activating at least one of the load circuits 400 and delivering current to the motor 420 via switch 404. In some examples, the motor 420 includes a cam 424 coupled off-centered to a drive shaft 422 of the motor 420 to generate or accentuate vibrations. The load circuit 400 is positioned in the housing 110 in a location where an actual disk drive typically generates heat and/or vibrations, such as in an electronics region 130, a motor region 140, and/or a head region 150 of the housing 110 (see FIGS. 6-7).

[0027] The testing circuit 200 includes a high speed communications circuit 206 in electrical communication with a corresponding high speed communications portion 126 of the interface connector 120 (e.g. PATA, SATA, SAS). The high speed communication circuit 206 is in electrical communication with a field-programmable gate array (FPGA) 230, which is in electrical communication with the controller 210.

[0028] The temperature sensors 310 and the vibration sensors 320 are positioned in the housing 110 in a location where an actual disk drive typically generates and experiences heat and vibrations, respectively. In the examples illustrated in FIGS. 6-7, the housing 110 has inside top and bottom surfaces 112, 114, an inside front surface 116 supporting the interface connector 120, an inside back surface 118, and inside left and right side surfaces 117 and 119. FIGS. 6-7 illustrate exemplary placements of the temperature sensors 310 and the vibration sensor 320 inside the housing 110. Two temperature sensors 310T are positioned on the inside top housing surface 112 near each corner adjacent the inside front housing surface 116. Similarly, two temperature sensors 310B are positioned on the inside bottom housing surface 114 near each corner adjacent the inside front housing surface 116. One temperature sensor 310B is positioned on the inside bottom housing surface 114 in the electronics region 130 (e.g. for sensing a temperature of nearby electronics). One temperature sensor 310T is positioned on the inside top housing surface 112 in the motor region 140. One temperature sensor 310B is positioned on the inside bottom housing surface 114 in the head region 150. One temperature sensor 310M is

positioned on the inside back side housing surface 118 near the head region 150. One or more temperature sensors 310T may be positioned near corners of the inside top housing surface 112. One or more temperature sensors 310B may be positioned near corners of the inside bottom housing surface 114. A vibration sensor 320 is positioned on the inside bottom housing surface 114 in the head region 150.

[0029] A method of validating a test slot 10 of a disk drive testing system 5 includes establishing electrical communication between a disk drive emulator 100 and the test slot 10, and performing diagnostic testing on the test slot 10 (e.g. via the testing circuit 200 of the disk drive emulator 100 described above). The diagnostic testing includes testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator 100 and the test slot 10, testing power delivery from the test slot 10 to the disk drive emulator 100, monitoring a temperature level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator 100, and monitoring a vibration level of at least one region of the disk drive emulator 100. In some implementations, performing diagnostic testing on the test slot 10 also includes monitoring a humidity level of the disk drive emulator 100.

[0030] In some implementations, testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator 100 and the test slot 10 includes testing a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector 14 disposed in the test slot 10. In additional implementations, testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator 100 and the test slot 10 includes determining a connection resistance between the disk drive emulator 100 and the test slot 10 (e.g. between the test slot connector 14 and the interface connector 120 of the disk drive emulator 100).

[0031] In some examples, testing power delivery from the test slot 10 to the disk drive emulator 100 includes testing a voltage source level, a current source level, and a current limiting capacity of the test slot 10. For example, the connected testing circuit 200 (via the interface connector 120) evaluates and/or monitors the voltage source level, the current source level, and the current limiting capacity of the test slot 10 through power pins of the test slot connector 14 (see FIG 2).

[0032] While performing diagnostic testing on the test slot 10, the method may include monitoring a temperature level of the electronics region 130, the motor region 140, and/or the head region 150. The head region 150 may also be monitored for a vibration level. The testing circuit 200 monitors the temperature and vibration

levels, and optionally humidity levels, though the associated temperature sensors 310, vibration sensor(s) 320, and humidity sensor(s) 330 of the sensor system 300.

[0033] A number of implementations have been described. Nevertheless, it will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. Accordingly, other implementations are within the scope of the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A disk drive emulator (100) for testing a test slot (10) of a disk drive testing system (5), the disk drive emulator (100) comprising:
 - an emulator housing (110);
 - 5 a testing circuit (200) housed in the emulator housing (110);
 - an interface connector (120) disposed on the emulator housing (110) and in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200);
 - at least one sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T, 320, 330) in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200), the at least one sensor (310, 310B,
 - 10 310M, 310T, 320, 330) selected from the group consisting of a temperature sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T), a vibration sensor (320), and a humidity sensor (330); and
 - at least one electrical load element (400) in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200);
 - wherein the testing circuit (200) is configured to test power delivery of the test
 - 15 slot (10) to the disk drive emulator (100), monitor the at least one sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T, 320, 330), and monitor connector reliability between the test slot (10) and the disk drive emulator (100).
2. The disk drive emulator (100) of claim 1, wherein the emulator housing (110)
- 20 has a width of about 70 mm and a height of between about 9.5 mm and about 19 mm.
3. The disk drive emulator (100) of any of the previous claims, wherein the emulator housing (110) is substantially rectangular shaped having top and bottom broad surfaces (112, 114), a temperature sensor (310T) being disposed near each
- 25 corner of the top broad surface (112) and a temperature sensor (310B) being disposed near each corner of the bottom broad surface (114).
4. The disk drive emulator (100) of any of the previous claims, wherein the emulator housing (110) defines an electronics region (130), a motor region (140), and
- 30 a head region (150), a temperature sensor (310, 310B, 310T) being disposed in each region (130, 140, 150).

5. The disk drive emulator (100) of any of the previous claims, wherein the interface connector (120) comprises a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector.

5 6. The disk drive emulator (100) of any of the previous claims, wherein the electrical load element (400) comprises a heat source or a motor.

7. The disk drive emulator (100) of claim 6, wherein the electrical load element (400) is variable.

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8. The disk drive emulator (100) of any of the previous claims, wherein the testing circuit (200) comprises a controller (210) in electrical communication with the at least one sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T, 320, 330) and the at least one electrical load element (400).

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9. A method of validating a test slot (10) of a disk drive testing system (5), the method comprising:

establishing electrical communication between a disk drive emulator (100) and the test slot (10); and

20 performing diagnostic testing on the test slot (10), the diagnostic testing comprising:

testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator (100) and the test slot (10);

25 testing power delivery from the test slot (10) to the disk drive emulator (100);

monitoring a temperature level of at least one region (130, 140, 150) of the disk drive emulator (100); and

monitoring a vibration level of at least one region (130, 140, 150) of the disk drive emulator (100).

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10. The method of claim 9, wherein performing diagnostic testing on the test slot (10) further comprises monitoring a humidity level of the disk drive emulator (100).

11. The method of claim 9 or claim 10, wherein testing connectivity between the disk drive emulator (100) and the test slot (10) comprises testing a universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter connector (14) disposed in the test slot (10) and/or determining a connection resistance between the disk drive emulator (100) and the test slot (10).
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12. The method of any of claims 9-11, wherein testing power delivery from the test slot (10) to the disk drive emulator (100) comprises:
testing a voltage source level of the test slot (10);
10 testing a current source level of the test slot (10); and
testing a current limiting capacity of the test slot (10).
13. The method of any of claims 9-12, wherein monitoring a temperature level of at least one region (130, 140, 150) of the disk drive emulator (100) comprises
15 monitoring a temperature level of an electronics region (130), a motor region (140), and/or a head region (150).
14. The method of any of claims 9-13, wherein monitoring a vibration level of at least one region (130, 140, 150) of the disk drive emulator (100) comprises
20 monitoring a vibration level of a head region (150).
15. The method of any of claims 9-14, wherein the disk drive emulator (100) comprises:
an emulator housing (110);
25 a testing circuit (200) housed in the emulator housing (110);
an interface connector (120) disposed on the emulator housing (110) and in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200);
at least one sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T, 320, 330) in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200), the at least one sensor (310, 310B,
30 310M, 310T, 320, 330) selected from the group consisting of a temperature sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T), a vibration sensor (320), and a humidity sensor (330); and
at least one electrical load element (400) in electrical communication with the testing circuit (200);

wherein the testing circuit (200) is configured to test power delivery of the test slot (10) to the disk drive emulator (100), monitor the at least one sensor (310, 310B, 310M, 310T, 320, 330), and monitor connector reliability between the test slot (10) and the disk drive emulator (100).