

Description

The present invention relates to a mounting assembly for optical equipment. In particular it relates to a multiple tray storage system for use in optical communication systems. One such system is described in EP-A-55231.

It is known in the field of optical communications to mount optical components, such as opto-electronic components, on boards. One or two components may be mounted on a board, with associated circuitry, and there is commonly an associated fibre splice organiser tray. The splice organiser tray accommodates the splices between optical fibre tails attached to individual components, and optical fibres carrying signals to or away from those components. Each fibre splice necessarily has a length of spare fibre associated with it so that the splice can be broken and remade as required. This spare fibre is also stored on the splice organiser tray.

Where several splice organiser trays are required, they may conveniently be hinged together into a stack. This gives a relatively compact storage arrangement, access to particular trays being made possible by the hinges which allow the stack to be opened like a book.

It has now been realised, in making the present invention, that it is possible to design a mounting assembly for optical equipment which is particularly versatile and convenient with regard to component access.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a mounting assembly for optical equipment which can provide good access to the equipment, for instance for either installation or maintenance.

It has been found that a mounting assembly according to an embodiment of the present invention can also simplify the provision of optical fibre tails to components, and the storage of associated fibre splices.

The present invention provides a mounting assembly for optical equipment, the assembly comprising a plurality of stackable trays which are provided with means for mounting optical components, where-in the trays are provided with connecting hinges that enable the trays to be hingedly connected to one another or disconnected from one another, characterized in that each tray has demountable connecting hinges on two opposite edges such that the trays can easily be disconnected and thereafter reconnected in a different way so that the re-assembled stack of trays has a different geometric configuration when the stack of trays is opened out.

By using detachable connecting hinges it is possible to increase greatly the versatility of a mounting assembly. This has major advantages. For instance, if the trays each have effectively two opposing edges and can be stacked so that the edges are aligned, by

providing connecting hinges at both edges of the trays it becomes possible to select a configuration in which a stack of trays can be opened either like a book, each tray constituting a page of the "book", or, by reconfiguring the hinges, in a zig-zag fashion. This is useful at installation because, by opening the stack zig-zag fashion, it is possible to expose a single large surface on which optical components and their associated fibre splices and spare fibre can be optimally arranged. However, it is also subsequently useful, for maintenance purposes, to reconfigure the hinges so that the stack can then be opened like a book to expose any selected component with minimal disturbance to the rest of the stack.

Preferably, instead of there being a splice organiser tray on which a plurality of optical fibre splices are arranged, each component having an associated fibre splice is mounted on a tray with that splice.

This has obvious advantages for maintenance purposes in an assembly according to the present invention since where it becomes possible to open a stack of trays selectively at a particular component, it is clearly advantageous that an associated fibre splice is also immediately accessible so that the component can be conveniently replaced if necessary. It also has the advantage that because the component and splice are on a common tray, there is no need to provide a ruggedised fibre tail from the component to the splice. This has been necessary in the past to protect the fibre tail where it is being taken between two separate and relatively movable storage arrangements, these being a component board and a splice organiser tray.

The invention also provides a tray for use in a mounting assembly as defined above, the tray being provided with means for mounting at least one optical component, and with connecting hinges positioned so that the tray can be demountably hingedly connected to another tray. Preferably, the tray is further provided with means for mounting an optical fibre splice associated with said at least one optical component.

A mounting assembly for optical equipment will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying Figures in which:

Figures 1a and 1b show the mounting assembly, schematically, in each of two different hinge configurations;

Figure 2 shows a plan view of a tray for use in the mounting assembly of Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows an end elevation of the tray of Figure 2;

Figure 4 shows a cross-section taken along the line A-A of Figure 2, viewed in the direction indicated by the arrows;

Figure 5 shows a plan view of an alternative tray to that of Figure 2;

Figure 6 shows a side elevation of the tray of Fig-

ure 5;

Figure 7 shows a cross section of the tray of Figure 5 taken along the line C-C and viewed in the direction indicated by the arrows;

Figure 8 shows a cross section of the tray of Figure 5 taken along the line B-B and viewed in the direction indicated by the arrows; and

Figure 9 shows a plan view of another alternative tray to that of Figure 2.

It should be noted that where a cross section is shown in the Figures, instead of being hatched the cross section portions are shown as a solid area.

Referring to Figures 1a and 1b, the mounting assembly 1 comprises a plurality of trays 2 with demountable hinges 3 at their corners. The trays 2 are stacked together, adjacent trays 2 being attached to each other by means of the hinges 3. At each end of the assembly 1, a cover 21 is provided.

Two alternative configurations are shown, in Figures 1a and 1b respectively. In a first configuration, shown in Figure 1a, each of the trays 2 is hinged to each adjacent tray 2 at the same edge 4 with respect to the stack. The opposing edge 5 of each tray 2 is unattached. Hence the stack can be opened like a book, between any pair of adjacent trays, each tray 2 constituting a page of the "book". This gives access to either face 6 of all the trays 2 in the assembly 1.

In a second configuration, shown in Figure 1b, each of the trays 2 is hinged to its adjacent trays at alternate edges 4, 5 with respect to the stack. Hence the stack can be opened zig-zag fashion to expose a preselected surface area. That area may range from being as small as the area of the faces 6 of two adjacent trays 2, to being as large as the total area of one side of all the trays 2, put together, if the assembly 1 is fully opened out.

By using demountable hinges 3, it is possible to go from one configuration to the other, and indeed to any further configuration required, which might be a combination of the first and second. This can be achieved simply by disconnecting certain hinges 3 and connecting a different combination.

The trays 2 and the hinges 3 will now be described in more detail, with reference to Figures 2, 3 and 4.

Referring to Figure 2, each tray 2 comprises substantially a moulded plastic plate provided with optical fibre guides 8 and with mounting points for components 9. Optical fibre 10 can be brought onto the tray 2 at either long side, the tray 2 being roughly rectangular with rounded corners. The fibre 10 is guided and retained on the tray 2 by means of fibre guides 8, spare fibre being stored around the edge of the tray 2.

At each corner of the tray 2 are the detachable connecting hinges 3. Referring to Figure 3, each hinge 3 comprises two complementary parts 3a, 3b, mounted on respective trays 2 so that when the trays

2 are stacked together, a hinge part 3a on one tray 2 can be connected with a complementary hinge part 3b on the adjacent tray 2 to complete a detachable connecting hinge 3. The hinge parts 3a, 3b comprise a collar 3a and a peg 3b respectively, the peg 3b fitting into the collar 3a to complete a hinge 3. The collar 3a in each case is mounted on a slightly resilient neck 3c, this allowing the hinge 3 to be either made or unmade.

Referring to Figures 2 and 4, the tray 2 is provided with mounting points 9 for components (not shown) of different types. The centre 12 of the tray 2 is hollow and can accommodate a component whose depth is of the same order as that of the tray 2, without the component protruding from the tray 2. Towards the edge of the tray 2 are provided further mounting points 9 which can accommodate shallower components, on either face. Other mounting points may also be provided.

It would be possible to accommodate particularly large components by using adjacent trays 2 in an assembly with complementary cut-out sections, or depressions, which co-operate to provide a suitable cavity.

The dimensions of each tray 2 are 10 x 21 x 1 cm. This allows the optical fibre to be guided round curves of minimum bend radius 3.5cm. The fibre enters and leaves the tray 2 at a long side 22 of the tray 2.

Referring to Figure 5, a tray 2 may have a number of alternative features.

When two adjacent trays 2 are hinged together, clearly any fibre going from one tray 2 to the other must do so at the long side between the hinges 3. To avoid overbending the fibre during manipulation of a tray assembly, the fibre is guided so that it enters or leaves a tray 2 following a line which is substantially along the hinge axis. It is convenient to provide cut-outs 13 at the point where a fibre enters or leaves a tray 2. This allows a fibre to go easily from one face to the other of a particular tray 2, or to be led onto either face of a tray 2, from elsewhere. To improve guidance of the fibre, as well as fibre guides 8, channels 23 may be provided particularly at the long sides 22 of a tray 2.

The trays 2 may be provided with a multiplicity of holes 14 of different sizes. The smallest of these 14a are equivalent to the conventional holes provided on a printed circuit board. This allows standard mounting techniques for electrical components to be applied. The other holes 14 may be used for instance to mount components, or to insert detachable optical fibre guides 8a so that the configuration of optical fibres on the tray can be changed in a flexible manner.

Referring to Figures 6 and 7, the general principle of the fibre guides 8 and component mounting points 9 is that they comprise pairs of tabs lying beside one another, each mounted in the plane of an opposite re-

spective face of the tray 2. This is convenient in design, providing in each case a tray with the same mounting and guiding facilities on each face.

Referring to Figures 7 and 8, it is possible to see that the centre 12 of the tray 2 of Figure 5 is again an aperture, allowing accommodation of particularly large components if necessary.

Referring to Figure 9, in which only a portion of the optical fibre 10 which might be stored on the tray 2 is shown, a tray 2 can be used to provide multiple mounting points for optical fibre splices 26 if this should be convenient. Such an arrangement may be particularly convenient if the tray 2 is to be used for mounting a plurality of optical fibre couplers 27 (shown only schematically) with all their associated fibre splices 26. A tray 2 having a hollow centre 12 may be converted for mounting fibre splices 26 in the centre 12 by installing a central card 28 on which the splices 26 can be mounted. Further splices 29 may also be mounted elsewhere on the tray 2, using a dedicated splice chip 30 to hold them in place.

If it is convenient, a cover (not shown) might be provided for one or other face of a tray 2. This might be convenient where a tray 2 is to be supplied to a user with components such as couplers already mounted on one face. Fibre tails from the couplers could be brought through the tray 2 to splices mounted on the opposite face of the tray 2, where they could be accessed for installation purposes by the user. The components or couplers however could be protected, for instance from mechanical damage, by a cover since it may be unlikely that the user will require to access the components themselves.

The versatility of mounting assemblies according to embodiments of the present invention is particularly useful in first installing optical equipment and fibre onto the trays of an assembly 1, then later in performing maintenance tasks. The equipment and fibre can be installed onto the trays 2 when they are in a zig-zag configuration as shown in Figure 1b, large surface areas then being exposable. This allows layouts to be designed and carried out in a convenient manner. Subsequently it may become important to be able to access particular components for repair, maintenance or redesign. It may then be more convenient that the assembly can be opened book fashion to expose a face of a particular tray 2. This can be simply done by merely reconfiguring the hinges 3, disconnecting all those on one side of the assembly 1 and connecting those hitherto unconnected on the other side of the assembly 1, achieving a configuration as shown in Figure 1a.

It may be desirable, once components and fibre have been installed, to reconfigure the hinges 3 and then to make them permanent in the reconfigured arrangement. This can make the assembly 1 more robust in use. For instance, by heating the end of the peg 3b of each hinge 3, a thickening can be created

which prevents its extraction from the associated collar 3a. Alternatively, a nut or cap could be mounted on the end of the peg 3b.

An advantage of making hinges permanent in a reconfigured arrangement is that this can be used to prevent damage to optical fibres which are guided to lie across a hinged joint, for instance between trays.

It will be realised that electrical conductors may also be mounted on trays of an assembly. This allows electrical connections to be made for instance to supply power to opto-electronic components. The electrical conductors may be guided in the same manner as optical fibres, both in accessing a tray and in being mounted on a face of a tray.

Claims

1. A mounting assembly for optical equipment, the assembly comprising a plurality of stackable trays (2) which are provided with means (9) for mounting optical components, wherein the trays are provided with connecting hinges (3) that enable the trays to be hingedly connected to one another or disconnected from one another, characterized in that each tray has demountable connecting hinges on two opposite edges such that the trays can easily be disconnected and thereafter reconnected in a different way so that the re-assembled stack of trays has a different geometric configuration when the stack of trays is opened out.
2. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein, when the trays (2) are stacked in a first configuration, the trays can be accessed by opening them out zig-zag fashion; and, when the trays are stacked in a second configuration, the trays can be accessed by opening them out in a book fashion.
3. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein each of the hinges (3) comprises first and second co-operating parts (3a, 3b) which are mounted on different respective trays (2) in the assembly.
4. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 3, wherein the first co-operating part of a hinge (3) comprises a peg (3b), and the second co-operating part of that hinge comprises a collar (3a).
5. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 4, wherein one of the co-operating parts (3a) of a given hinge (3) is mounted on a resilient neck (3c), thereby to facilitate connection and disconnection of the associated trays (2).
6. A mounting assembly as claimed in any one of



spective face of the tray 2. This is convenient in design, providing in each case a tray with the same mounting and guiding facilities on each face.

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If it is convenient, a cover (not shown) might be provided for one or other face of a tray 2. This might be convenient where a tray 2 is to be supplied to a user with components such as couplers already mounted on one face. Fibre tails from the couplers could be brought through the tray 2 to splices mounted on the opposite face of the tray 2, where they could be accessed for installation purposes by the user. The components or couplers however could be protected, for instance from mechanical damage, by a cover since it may be unlikely that the user will require to access the components themselves.

The versatility of mounting assemblies according to embodiments of the present invention is particularly useful in first installing optical equipment and fibre onto the trays of an assembly 1, then later in performing maintenance tasks. The equipment and fibre can be installed onto the trays 2 when they are in a zig-zag configuration as shown in Figure 1b, large surface areas then being exposable. This allows layouts to be designed and carried out in a convenient manner. Subsequently it may become important to be able to access particular components for repair, maintenance or redesign. It may then be more convenient that the assembly can be opened book fashion to expose a face of a particular tray 2. This can be simply done by merely reconfiguring the hinges 3, disconnecting all those on one side of the assembly 1 and connecting those hitherto unconnected on the other side of the assembly 1, achieving a configuration as shown in Figure 1a.

It may be desirable, once components and fibre have been installed, to reconfigure the hinges 3 and then to make them permanent in the reconfigured arrangement. This can make the assembly 1 more robust in use. For instance, by heating the end of the peg 3b of each hinge 3, a thickening can be created

which prevents its extraction from the associated collar 3a. Alternatively, a nut or cap could be mounted on the end of the peg 3b.

An advantage of making hinges permanent in a reconfigured arrangement is that this can be used to prevent damage to optical fibres which are guided to lie across a hinged joint, for instance between trays.

It will be realised that electrical conductors may also be mounted on trays of an assembly. This allows electrical connections to be made for instance to supply power to opto-electronic components. The electrical conductors may be guided in the same manner as optical fibres, both in accessing a tray and in being mounted on a face of a tray.

Claims

1. A mounting assembly for optical equipment, the assembly comprising a plurality of stackable trays (2) which are provided with means (9) for mounting optical components, wherein the trays are provided with connecting hinges (3) that enable the trays to be hingedly connected to one another or disconnected from one another, characterized in that each tray has demountable connecting hinges on two opposite edges such that the trays can easily be disconnected and thereafter reconnected in a different way so that the re-assembled stack of trays has a different geometric configuration when the stack of trays is opened out.
2. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein, when the trays (2) are stacked in a first configuration, the trays can be accessed by opening them out zig-zag fashion; and, when the trays are stacked in a second configuration, the trays can be accessed by opening them out in a book fashion.
3. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein each of the hinges (3) comprises first and second co-operating parts (3a, 3b) which are mounted on different respective trays (2) in the assembly.
4. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 3, wherein the first co-operating part of a hinge (3) comprises a peg (3b), and the second co-operating part of that hinge comprises a collar (3a).
5. A mounting assembly as claimed in claim 4, wherein one of the co-operating parts (3a) of a given hinge (3) is mounted on a resilient neck (3c), thereby to facilitate connection and disconnection of the associated trays (2).
6. A mounting assembly as claimed in any one of



claims 1 to 5, wherein at least one of the trays (2) is provided with means for mounting an optical and/or an opto-electronic component, and for mounting an optical fibre splice with associated spare fibre.

7. A tray (2) for use in a mounting assembly as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the tray is provided with means (9) for mounting at least one optical component, and with connecting hinges (3) positioned so that the tray can be demountably hingedly connected to another tray.
8. A tray (2) as claimed in claim 7, further provided with means for mounting an optical fibre splice (10) associated with said at least one optical component.

Patentansprüche

1. Montage-Aufbau für eine optische Apparatur, wobei der Aufbau aufweist:
eine Vielzahl von stapelbaren Fächern (2), die mit einer Einrichtung (9) zum Anordnen optischer Komponenten versehen sind, wobei die Fächer mit Verbindungsscharnieren (3) ausgestattet sind, die den Fächern ermöglichen, schwenkbar miteinander verbunden oder voneinander getrennt zu werden,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß
jedes Fach abnehmbare Verbindungsscharniere an zwei gegenüberliegenden Rändern aufweist, so daß die Fächer einfach getrennt und danach in einer unterschiedlichen Weise wieder verbunden werden können, so daß der wieder zusammengesetzte Stapel von Fächern eine unterschiedliche geometrische Konfiguration aufweist, wenn der Stapel von Fächern geöffnet ist.
2. Montage-Aufbau nach Anspruch 1, wobei, wenn die Fächer (2) in einer ersten Konfiguration gestapelt sind, die Fächer zugänglich sind, indem sie in einer Zick-Zack-Weise geöffnet werden und, wenn die Fächer in einer zweiten Konfiguration gestapelt sind, die Fächer zugänglich sind, indem sie in der Art eines Buches geöffnet werden.
3. Montage-Aufbau nach Anspruch 1 oder Anspruch 2, wobei jedes der Scharniere (3) erste und zweite zusammenwirkende Abschnitte (3a, 3b) aufweist, die an jeweils unterschiedlichen Fächern (2) in dem Aufbau montiert sind.
4. Montage-Aufbau nach Anspruch 3, wobei der erste zusammenwirkende Abschnitt eines Schar-

niers (3) einen Zapfen (3b) und der zweite zusammenwirkende Abschnitt jenes Scharniers einen Ansatz (3a) aufweist.

5. Montage-Aufbau nach Anspruch 4, wobei einer der zusammenwirkenden Abschnitte (3a) eines gegebenen Scharniers (3) an einem nachgiebigen Steg (3c) angeordnet ist, um das Verbinden und das Lösen der zugeordneten Fächer (2) zu erleichtern.
6. Montage-Aufbau nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, wobei wenigstens eines der Fächer (2) mit einer Einrichtung zum Anordnen einer optischen und/oder einer opto-elektronischen Komponente und zum Montieren einer optischen Faserpleiße mit zugeordnet Reservefaser versehen ist.
7. Fach (2) zur Verwendung in einem Montage-Aufbau nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6, wobei das Fach mit einer Einrichtung (9) zum Montieren wenigstens einer optischen Komponente und mit Verbindungsscharnieren (3) versehen ist, die so angeordnet sind, daß das Fach lösbar mit einem anderen Fach schwenkbar verbunden werden kann.
8. Fach (2) nach Anspruch 7, mit einer Einrichtung zum Montieren einer optischen Faserpleiße (10), die wenigstens einen optischen Komponente zugeordnet ist.

Revendications

1. Un ensemble de montage destiné à un équipement optique, l'ensemble comprenant plusieurs plateaux susceptibles d'être empilés (2) qui sont pourvus de moyens (9) de montage de composants optiques, dans lequel les plateaux sont pourvus de charnières de connexion (3) qui permettent aux plateaux d'être connectés à charnière l'un à l'autre ou d'être déconnectés l'un de l'autre, caractérisé en ce que chaque plateau comprend, sur deux côtés opposés, des charnières de connexion démontables de sorte que les plateaux peuvent facilement être déconnectés et être ensuite connectés de nouveau d'une façon différente, d'une manière telle que la pile de plateaux assemblée de nouveau présente une configuration géométrique différente lorsque la pile de plateaux est ouverte.
2. Un ensemble de montage selon la revendication 1, dans lequel il est possible d'accéder aux plateaux en les ouvrant en zigzag lorsque les plateaux (2) sont empilés dans une première configuration; et il est possible d'accéder aux plateaux



en les ouvrant à la manière d'un livre lorsque les plateaux sont empilés selon une deuxième configuration.

3. Un ensemble de montage selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2 dans lequel chacune des charnières (3) comprend un premier et un deuxième éléments coopérants (3a, 3b) qui sont montés sur des plateaux respectifs différents (2) de l'ensemble. 5
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4. Un ensemble de montage selon la revendication 3, dans lequel le premier élément coopérant d'une charnière (3) comprend une cheville (3b), et le deuxième élément coopérant de cette charnière comprend une collerette (3a). 15
5. Un ensemble de montage selon la revendication 4, dans lequel l'un des éléments coopérants (3a) d'une charnière donnée (3) est monté sur un collet élastique (3c) afin de faciliter ainsi la connexion et la déconnexion des plateaux associés (2). 20
6. Un ensemble de montage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel au moins l'un des plateaux (2) est pourvu de moyens de montage d'un composant optique et/ou optoélectronique et de montage d'une épissure de fibre optique pourvue d'une fibre associée additionnelle. 25
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7. Un plateau (2) à utiliser dans un ensemble de montage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6, dans lequel le plateau est pourvu de moyens (9) de montage d'au moins un composant optique et de charnières de connexion (3) positionnées d'une manière telle que le plateau peut être connecté à charnière à un autre plateau d'une façon démontable. 35
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8. Un plateau (2) selon la revendication 7, pourvu en outre de moyens de montage d'une épissure de fibre optique (10) associée avec ledit composant optique au moins unique. 45

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