

Description

Field of the Invention

This invention generally relates to the art of electrical connectors and, particularly, to an IC card connector for connecting an IC card in an IC card reader system or the like.

Such IC card connectors are known from EP-A-0214478.

Background of the Invention

IC cards have been developed and contain IC's (integrated circuits) including memory circuits, such as RAMs (random access memories), and control circuits, such as CPUs (central processing units). The IC cards normally include a terminal array for connection through a card reader system to external equipment such as a printed circuit board. The connector usually includes some form of IC card socket and a plurality of electrodes or contacts exposed in the socket for engaging the terminal array of the IC card. The card is inserted and removed from the socket, and the connector contacts are resilient or comprise springy contacts for yieldably engaging the terminal array of the card when the card is inserted into the socket.

With the ever-increasing miniaturization of IC cards and their respective connectors, various problems continue to arise. For instance, the very handling of the miniature IC cards is difficult, and proper positioning of the cards in the connector presents corresponding problems when the card is inserted into and removed from the card-receiving cavity or other receptacle means of the connector. In addition, the terminal array on the card can become contaminated or soiled which can result in incomplete connections between the terminal array on the card and the contacts of the connector which, in turn, results in incomplete or deficient connections to the external equipment. In fact, the integrated circuits can be harmed or even destroyed by static electricity resulting from contaminated circuits when the terminal array on the card comes in contact with the hand of a user when the user attempts to position the tiny card into the socket of the connector in proper engagement with the connector contacts.

In addition, in some applications, it is desirable to provide EMI/RF shielding for the IC card and its terminal array. Still further, with the ever-increasing miniaturization of IC cards and their respective connectors, it is desirable to provide very thin envelopes for the overall IC card connector assemblies. Also, providing shielding means for the IC cards often increases the overall dimensions of the assemblies undesirably.

This invention is directed to solving the above

problems in a miniature IC card connector which is extremely simple to manufacture and assemble.

Summary of the Invention

An object, therefore, of the invention is to provide a new and improved IC card connector for connecting an IC card having a terminal array, in an IC card reader system or the like.

In the exemplary embodiment of the invention which is defined in claim 1, the IC card connector includes a base member having a plurality of electrically conductive contacts exposed on one side thereof. A cover is hinged to the base member for movement toward and away from the one side. The cover has receptacle means for securing the IC card thereon for movement therewith, whereby closing the cover onto the base member effects engagement of the IC card terminals with the contacts on the base member.

In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the base member is provided as a unitarily molded component of dielectric material such as plastic or the like. The cover is fabricated of metal material to provide shielding for the IC card. The cover is fabricated in one-piece from stamped and formed sheet metal material. The cover has flanges providing means for slidably receiving the IC card in an edge-wise fashion.

The card reader system may include a printed circuit board and, in such an application, the base member is illustrated herein as including means for mounting the base member to the printed circuit board with the contacts engageable with circuit traces on the board. The contacts have resilient portions exposed on the one side of the base member for engaging the terminal array of the IC card.

Another feature of an embodiment of the invention is the provision of complementary interengaging latch means between the unitarily molded base member and the one-piece cover to hold the cover in a closed position with the IC terminal array in engagement with the contacts on the base member.

Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The features of this invention which are believed to be novel are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention, together with its objects and the advantages thereof, may be best understood by reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference numerals identify like elements in the figures and in which:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of an IC card connector embodying the concepts of the invention,

and illustrating an IC card about to be inserted edge-wise into the cover of the connector;
 FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of the base member of the connector, showing contacts on the base member exposed on the top side thereof;
 FIGURE 3 is a perspective view of the cover of the connector;
 FIGURE 4 is a bottom plan view of the base member; and
 FIGURE 5 is a vertical section taken generally along line 5-5 of Figure 1.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment

Referring to the drawings in greater detail, and first to Figure 1, the concepts of the invention are embodied in an IC card connector, generally designated 10, which is extremely simple and includes only two basic components, namely a base member, generally designated 12, and a cover, generally designated 14. As described in greater detail hereinafter, Figure 1 shows an IC card 16 about to be inserted into cover 14 in the direction of arrow "A". The IC card is a miniature card of conventional or known construction and includes a terminal array on the bottom side thereof (not visible in Figure 1).

Referring to Figure 2 in conjunction with Figure 1, base member 12 includes a generally flat base portion 18 having a raised area 20. Hinge means, including a pair of rearwardly projecting trough portions 22 and hook portions 24, are provided at the rear of base portion 18. A latch flange 26 projects forwardly of base portion 18 and defines a latch shoulder 28. A plurality of mounting pegs 30 depend from the underside of base portion 18 for mounting in appropriate mounting holes in a printed circuit board, for instance. Lastly, a plurality of slots 32 and a plurality of through apertures 34 are provided for mounting a plurality of contacts, generally designated 36, on base member 12, as will be described in greater detail hereinafter, whereby portions of the contacts are exposed on the top side of the base member as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Base member 12, including all of the elements thereof described above, including trough portions 22, hook portions 24, latch flange 26, and mounting pegs 30, comprises a unitarily molded single component of dielectric material, such as plastic or the like.

Referring to Figures 4 and 5 in conjunction with Figures 1 and 2, Figure 4 shows the bottom of base member 12 and Figure 5 shows a section through the base member taken generally along line 5-5 of Figure 1. These figures best illustrate the configuration and mounting of contacts 36 on the base member. More particularly, it can be seen that each contact 36 includes a generally horizontal leg 36a terminating at one end in a foot 36b. The contacts are formed with a resilient or springy leg 36c which is bent back over

horizontal leg 36a whereby the resilient leg projects upwardly beyond the top surface of the base member so as to be exposed on the top side thereof. Each contact 36 is mounted on the base member by a mounting flange or boss portion 36d which is press-fit into a respective aperture 34 in the base member. The base member is shown in Figure 5 as being mounted to a printed circuit board 40 by means of mounting pegs 30 inserted through appropriate mounting holes in the printed circuit board. When contacts 36 are properly mounted within base member 12, and the base member is properly mounted to printed circuit board 40, as illustrated in Figure 5, feet 36b of the contacts are maintained in surface contact with appropriate circuit traces on the top of the printed circuit board.

Referring to Figure 3 in conjunction with Figure 1, cover 14 is a one-piece component fabricated of either stamped and formed sheet metal material or molded dielectric material, such as plastic or the like. The cover includes a thin, flat body 44, a guide tongue 46 projecting from the rear of the body, a rear slot 48 extending transversely of the body, a latch arm 50 disposed at the front of the body, a pair of side flanges 52 formed to be spaced slightly above the top of the body and a similar rear flange 54. Flanges 52 and 54 all project toward the middle of the body to define receptacle means, as indicated by arrows "B" for IC card 16 between the top of body 44 and the undersides of flanges 52 and 54.

In assembly of cover 14 to base member 12, the rear edge 56 of the cover is seated into trough areas 58 (Fig. 2) of trough portions 22 of base member 12, with the cover projecting rearwardly away from the base member. The cover then is pivoted forwardly in the direction of arrow "C" (Fig. 1), and distal ends 24a of hook portions 24 of the base member will move into slot 48 of the cover, capturing the cover onto the hook portions. Lateral positioning of the cover relative to the base member is facilitated by guide tongue 46 on the cover positioned within a rearwardly opening recess 60 (Fig. 2) of the base member. An edge of guide tongue 46 will contact one side of protrusion 61 to maintain the cover 14 in the preload position which appears in Fig. 1.

Cover 14, being assembled to base member 12 as shown in Figure 1, provides a carrier for IC card 16 whereby the cover itself is the moving medium for the IC card, rather than having to position the card in a receptacle of the base member by manual manipulation, as is prevalent in the prior art. In particular, an operator simply grasps the IC card by its edges, to preclude the possibility of touching the terminal array of the card, and inserts the card edge-wise in the direction of arrow "A" beneath and between side flanges 52 of the cover in the preload position as shown in Fig. 1 until a leading edge 16a of the IC card becomes seated beneath rear flange 54 of the cover.

After force is placed on cover 14 necessary for

guide tongue 46 to ride over protrusion 61, cover 14 and its received IC card 16 then can be closed downwardly onto the top of base member 12, as indicated by arrow "D" in Figure 1, without any further touching of the IC card by an operator. When completely closed, the terminal array on the underside of the IC card engage resilient legs 36c of selective ones of contacts 36, the resilient legs being springy and yieldable to maintain a secure contact engagement between the terminals and the contacts. When fully closed, latch arm 50 at the front of cover 14 snaps behind shoulder 28 of latch flange 26 of the base member to latch the cover in fully closed condition and with the IC card terminal array securely terminated to contacts 36. The latch arm is cantilevered, as shown, and its resiliency draws the cover into secure engagement with hook portions 24 of the base member.

In order to open cover 14 and move the IC card therewith away from base member 12 and contacts 36, an operator simply releases latch arm 50 from beneath shoulder 28 of latch flange 26, and the connector is opened, whereupon IC card 16 can be removed, with all of these manipulations being effected by the operator touching only the edges of the IC card.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that an extremely simple IC card connector has been provided by only two basic components, namely base member 12 and cover 14, along with the contacts 36 mounted on the base member. An IC card is positioned on the cover for movement therewith to eliminate touching the IC card except at its edges as it is inserted between and beneath flanges 52 and 54 of the cover. No touching whatsoever is required of the IC card to move the card into engagement with contacts 36 and/or mount the IC card onto the base member.

Claims

1. An IC card connector (10) for connecting an IC card (16) having a terminal array in an IC card reader system or the like external equipment, comprising:
a base member (12) including a plurality of electrically conductive contacts (36) exposed at least on one side of the base member for engaging the terminal array of the IC card; and
a cover (14) mounted on the base member for movement toward and away from said one side thereof, the cover having receptacle means (52, 54) for securing the IC card thereon for movement therewith whereby closing of the cover onto the base member effects engagement of the IC card terminal array with the contacts on the base member.
2. The IC card connector of claim 1 wherein the card reader system includes a print-

ed circuit board (40), and said base member or external equipment (12) includes means (30) for mounting the base member to the printed circuit board with said contacts (36) engageable with circuit traces on the board.

3. The IC card connector of claim 1 or 2 wherein said cover (14) is fabricated of metal material to provide shielding for the IC card.
4. The IC card connector of claim 3 wherein said cover (14) is fabricated in one-piece from stamped and formed sheet metal material.
5. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 4 wherein said base member (12) is unitarily molded of dielectric material.
6. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 5 including complementary interengaging latch means (26, 28, 50) between base member (12) and the cover (14) to hold the cover in a closed position with the IC terminal array in engagement with the contacts (36) on the base member.
7. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 6 wherein said contacts (36) include resilient portions (36c) exposed on said one side of the base member (12) for engaging the terminal array of the IC card (16).
8. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 7 wherein said receptacle means (52, 54) comprise means for slidably receiving the IC card (16).
9. The IC card connector of claim 6 wherein said latch means (26, 28, 50) include a rigid latch portion (26, 28) on the unitarily molded base member and a resilient latch arm (50) on the stamped and formed cover.
10. The IC card connector of claim 8 wherein said receptacle means (52, 54) comprise a plurality of stamped and formed flanges projecting inwardly of the cover and beneath which the IC card is slidably received.
11. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 10 comprising hinge means (22, 24, 48, 56, 58) for mounting said cover (14) to said base member (12).
12. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 11 wherein said base member (12) is generally flat and said cover (14) relative thin.



guide tongue 46 to ride over protrusion 61, cover 14 and its received IC card 16 then can be closed downwardly onto the top of base member 12, as indicated by arrow "D" in Figure 1, without any further touching of the IC card by an operator. When completely closed, the terminal array on the underside of the IC card engage resilient legs 36c of selective ones of contacts 36, the resilient legs being springy and yieldable to maintain a secure contact engagement between the terminals and the contacts. When fully closed, latch arm 50 at the front of cover 14 snaps behind shoulder 28 of latch flange 26 of the base member to latch the cover in fully closed condition and with the IC card terminal array securely terminated to contacts 36. The latch arm is cantilevered, as shown, and its resiliency draws the cover into secure engagement with hook portions 24 of the base member.

In order to open cover 14 and move the IC card therewith away from base member 12 and contacts 36, an operator simply releases latch arm 50 from beneath shoulder 28 of latch flange 26, and the connector is opened, whereupon IC card 16 can be removed, with all of these manipulations being effected by the operator touching only the edges of the IC card.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that an extremely simple IC card connector has been provided by only two basic components, namely base member 12 and cover 14, along with the contacts 36 mounted on the base member. An IC card is positioned on the cover for movement therewith to eliminate touching the IC card except at its edges as it is inserted between and beneath flanges 52 and 54 of the cover. No touching whatsoever is required of the IC card to move the card into engagement with contacts 36 and/or mount the IC card onto the base member.

Claims

1. An IC card connector (10) for connecting an IC card (16) having a terminal array in an IC card reader system or the like external equipment, comprising:
a base member (12) including a plurality of electrically conductive contacts (36) exposed at least on one side of the base member for engaging the terminal array of the IC card; and
a cover (14) mounted on the base member for movement toward and away from said one side thereof, the cover having receptacle means (52, 54) for securing the IC card thereon for movement therewith whereby closing of the cover onto the base member effects engagement of the IC card terminal array with the contacts on the base member.
2. The IC card connector of claim 1 wherein the card reader system includes a print-

ed circuit board (40), and said base member or external equipment (12) includes means (30) for mounting the base member to the printed circuit board with said contacts (36) engageable with circuit traces on the board.

3. The IC-card-connector of claim 1 or 2 wherein said cover (14) is fabricated of metal material to provide shielding for the IC card.
4. The IC card connector of claim 3 wherein said cover (14) is fabricated in one-piece from stamped and formed sheet metal material.
5. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 4 wherein said base member (12) is unitarily molded of dielectric material.
6. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 5 including complementary interengaging latch means (26, 28, 50) between base member (12) and the cover (14) to hold the cover in a closed position with the IC terminal array in engagement with the contacts (36) on the base member.
7. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 6 wherein said contacts (36) include resilient portions (36c) exposed on said one side of the base member (12) for engaging the terminal array of the IC card (16).
8. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 7 wherein said receptacle means (52, 54) comprise means for slidably receiving the IC card (16).
9. The IC card connector of claim 6 wherein said latch means (26, 28, 50) include a rigid latch portion (26, 28) on the unitarily molded base member and a resilient latch arm (50) on the stamped and formed cover.
10. The IC card connector of claim 8 wherein said receptacle means (52, 54) comprise a plurality of stamped and formed flanges projecting inwardly of the cover and beneath which the IC card is slidably received.
11. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 10 comprising hinge means (22, 24, 48, 56, 58) for mounting said cover (14) to said base member (12).
12. The IC card connector of any of claims 1 through 11 wherein said base member (12) is generally flat and said cover (14) relative thin.



Patentansprüche

1. IC-Kartenverbinder (10) zur Verbindung einer IC-Karte (16) mit einer Klemmenanordnung in einem IC-Kartenlesesystem oder dergleichen externen Einrichtung, mit folgenden Merkmalen:
ein Basisteil (12) weist eine Mehrzahl von elektrisch leitenden Kontakten (36) auf, die mindestens an einer Seite des Basisteils freiliegen, um an der Klemmenanschlußanordnung der IC-Karte anzuliegen;
ein Deckel (14) ist an dem Basisteil zur Bewegung auf die erwähnte Seite und von dieser weg angebracht; der Deckel weist eine Aufnahmeeinrichtung (52, 54) zur Befestigung der IC-Karte und zu deren Mitnahme in der Bewegung auf, wobei das Schließen des Deckels über dem Basisteil die Anlage der Anschlußklemmenanordnung der IC-Karte an den Kontakten des Basisteils bewirkt.
2. IC-Kartenverbinder nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Kartenlesesystem eine gedruckte Schaltungsplatte (40) umfaßt, und daß das Basisteil oder die äußere Einrichtung (12) eine Einrichtung (30) zum Anbringen des Basisteils an der gedruckten Schaltungsplatte aufweist, wobei die Kontakte (36) an Leitungen der Schaltungsplatte anliegen.
3. IC-Kartenverbinder nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Deckel (14) aus Metall hergestellt ist, um eine Abschirmung der IC-Karte darzubieten.
4. IC-Kartenverbinder nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Deckel (14) einstückig aus Metallblech gestanzt und geformt ist.
5. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Basisteil (12) einheitlich aus dielektrischem Material hergestellt ist.
6. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß einander entsprechende ineinandergreifende Riegeleinrichtungen (26, 28, 50) zwischen dem Basisteil (12) und dem Deckel (14) vorgesehen sind, um den Deckel in geschlossener Stellung zu halten, wobei die IC-Anschlußklemmenanordnung in Eingriff mit den Kontakten (26) des Basisteils gehalten werden.
7. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Kontakte (36) federnde Teile (36c) umfassen, die auf einer Seite des Basisteils (12) freiliegen, um an der Anschlußklemmenanordnung der IC-Karte (16) anzuliegen.
8. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Aufnahmeeinrichtung (52, 54) eine Einrichtung zur Einschubaufnahme der IC-Karte (16) darstellt.
9. IC-Kartenverbinder nach Anspruch 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Riegeleinrichtung (26, 28, 50) einen steifen Riegelteil (26, 28) an dem einheitlich gegossenen Basisteil und einen federnden Riegelarm (50) am stanzgeformten Deckel aufweist.
10. IC-Kartenverbinder nach Anspruch 8, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Aufnahmeeinrichtung (52, 54) eine Mehrzahl von stanzgeformten Flanschen aufweist, die nach innen des Deckels vorstehen und unterhalb denen die IC-Karte in Gleitführung aufgenommen wird.
11. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 10, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine Scharniereinrichtung (22, 24, 48, 56, 58) zur Befestigung des Deckels (14) an dem Basisteil (12) vorgesehen ist.
12. IC-Kartenverbinder nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 11, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Basisteil (12) im Großen und Ganzen flach und der Deckel (14) relativ dünn ausgebildet sind.

Revendications

1. Connecteur de carte à puce (10) pour connecter une carte à puce (16) possédant un réseau de bornes dans un équipement externe de système de lecture de carte à puce, ou analogue, comprenant :
un élément base (12) comportant une pluralité de contacts conducteurs de l'électricité (36) dénudés au moins sur un côté de l'élément base pour se connecter au réseau de bornes de la carte à puce ; et
un couvercle (14) monté sur l'élément



- base pour se rapprocher dudit un côté de celui-ci et pour s'en éloigner, le couvercle comportant un moyen réceptacle (52, 54) pour y fixer la carte à puce pour se déplacer avec lui, ce par quoi en fermant le couvercle sur l'élément base, on effectue la connexion du réseau de bornes de carte à puce avec les contacts sur l'élément base.
2. Connecteur de carte à puce, selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le système de lecture de carte comprend une carte de circuit imprimé (40), et ledit élément base ou équipement externe (12) comprend un moyen (30) pour monter l'élément base sur la carte de circuit imprimé, lesdits contacts (36) pouvant être en connexion avec des rubans de circuit sur la carte. 5 10
 3. Connecteur de carte à puce selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel ledit couvercle (14) est fait d'une matière métallique pour réaliser un blindage pour la carte à puce. 15 20
 4. Connecteur de carte à puce selon la revendication 3, dans lequel ledit couvercle (14) est fait d'une seule pièce à partir d'une matière métallique en feuille emboutie et formée. 25
 5. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel ledit élément base (12) est moulé d'un seul tenant à partir d'une matière diélectrique. 30
 6. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, incluant un moyen de verrouillage réciproque complémentaire (26, 28, 50) entre l'élément base (12) et le couvercle (14) pour maintenir le couvercle en position fermée, le réseau de bornes de carte à puce étant en contact avec les contacts (36) sur l'élément base. 35 40
 7. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6, dans lequel lesdits contacts (36) comportent des parties élastiques (36c) dénudées dudit un côté de l'élément base (12) pour connexion avec le réseau de bornes de la carte à puce (16). 45
 8. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 7, dans lequel ledit moyen réceptacle (52, 54) comprend un moyen pour recevoir de manière coulissante la carte à puce (16). 50
 9. Connecteur de carte à puce selon la revendication 6, dans lequel ledit moyen de verrouillage (26, 28, 50) comprend une partie de verrouillage rigide (26, 28) sur l'élément base moulé d'un seul 55
 10. Connecteur de carte à puce selon la revendication 8, dans lequel ledit moyen réceptacle (52, 54) comprend une pluralité de rebords emboutis et formés dépassant vers l'intérieur du couvercle et sous lesquels la carte à puce est logée de manière coulissante.
 11. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 10, comprenant un moyen formant charnière (22, 24, 48, 56, 58) pour monter ledit couvercle (14) sur ledit élément base (12).
 12. Connecteur de carte à puce selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 11, dans lequel ledit élément base (12) est globalement plat et ledit couvercle (14) est relativement mince.