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**METHOD OF STRAIGHTENING SKEW IN CUT SHEET
AND APPARATUS THEREFOR**

BACKGROUND

The invention relates to a method of straightening a skew in a cut sheet and an apparatus to which such method is applied.

5 In a sheet feed unit for feeding piled cut sheets toward a print section or the like on a single sheet basis, widthwise displacement of the cut sheet at an initial stage of sheet feeding leads to skew feeding, which causes the problem of wrinkling or jamming the sheet thereafter.

10 To overcome such problem, an apparatus is disclosed in
U.S. Patent No. 4,248,415, which operates as follows. A sheet
fed by a sheet feed roller is suspended by a pair of sheet
forward rollers that are rotating backwardly on a downstream
side in a sheet forward direction of the sheet feed roller, so
15 that the position of a front end of the sheet can be corrected
by reaction derived from the flexion of the sheet which is
caused by such suspension. Further, an apparatus proposed in
Japanese Patent Examined Publication No. 62-38261 is designed
to correct the position of the front end of the sheet by
20 utilizing reaction derived from the flexion of the sheet which
is caused by discharging the sheet while reversely rotating a



sheet forward roller when the front end of the sheet has been nipped by the sheet forward roller completely.

These apparatuses are simple in design in that the hardness of a sheet is utilized to correct the position of the sheet. However, both apparatuses entail much time in straightening a skew in a cut sheet because they require that the sheet be flexed. In addition, these apparatuses have the problems that they are not sufficiently effective in straightening the skew because the reaction is small even if the sheet is flexed in the case of a soft sheet, and that the sheet cannot be flexed at all in the case of a hard sheet.

The invention has been made in view of the above circumstances. Accordingly, the object of the invention is to provide a novel skew straightening method and a apparatus therefor, which ensure a quickest operation and which are effective, reliable, and applicable to any kinds of paper, either hard or soft.

SUMMARY

To accomplish the above mentioned object, the present invention provides a method of straightening skew in a cut sheet comprising the steps of: feeding the cut sheet toward a sheet feed roller which is rotating forwardly in a sheet forward direction by a sheet feed roller; rotating the sheet forward roller backwardly immediately after a front end of the cut sheet has been nipped by the sheet forward roller;



adjusting a position of the front end of the cut sheet in a direction orthogonal to the sheet forward direction by a difference between widthwise sheet nipping amounts on both right and left ends of the cut sheet; and feeding the cut sheet by rotating the sheet forward roller forwardly again.

Furthermore, the present invention provides an apparatus to which the above-mentioned steps apply.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1(a) to 1(d) are diagrams of a skew straightening method according to the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a top view showing a drive mechanism of an apparatus to which the method is applied.

FIG. 3 is a side view showing linkages of the drive mechanism.

FIG. 4 is a side view showing a main portion of the apparatus in enlarged form.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

An embodiment of the invention will now be described with reference to the drawings.

FIGS. 1(a) to 1(d) show a method of straightening skew in cut sheet operation according to the present invention, and FIGS. 2 to 4 show an apparatus according to the present invention by which such method is performed.



The apparatus will be described first. Reference numeral 1 designates a sheet feed mechanism. The sheet feed mechanism 1 includes a drive motor 2, a reduction gear 4, a platen gear 7, a sheet feed roller transmission gear 10 and an idler gear 15. The drive motor 2 is controlled by a not shown control circuit so that the motor first rotates in a forward direction in response to a sheet feed command signal, then switches the rotation in a backward direction immediately after a cut sheet s has been nipped, and lastly switches the rotation back in the forward direction again. The reduction gear 4 is meshed with a pinion 3 of the drive motor 2. Reference numeral 12 is a platen serving as a sheet forward roller. The platen gear 7 drives the platen 12 while meshed with a pinion 6 integrated with the reduction gear 4. The sheet feed roller transmission gear 10 is meshed with the reduction gear 4 through two intermediate gears 8, 9. The idler gear 15 is arranged on one end of a carriage 14.

Reference numeral 5 designates knurls formed over the circumference of the reduction gear 4 for manual operation from outside the printer body.

Reference numeral 20 designates a sheet feed roller unit that is operated by a sheet feed roller drive gear 11. A sheet feed roller holder 22, which holds a sheet feed holder 21, is pivotably supported on the sheet feed roller unit 20 such a manner that the sheet feed roller holder 22 is urged toward a cut sheet s. A sheet feed roller transmission gear 10



is rotatably supported on a large portion of a drive shaft 23 which is described below.

5 The sheet feed roller holder 22 is pivotably mounted on an end portion of a long drive shaft 23, which extends from the sheet feed roller drive gear 11 to the middle of the cut sheet s in the widthwise direction. A small radius sun gear 24 fixed to the end of the drive shaft 23 meshes a gear 25 integrated with the sheet feed roller 21. The sheet feed roller holder 22 is urged toward the cut sheet s by the force of a spring 40 at
10 all times.

Reference numeral 30 in FIG. 4 designates one of sheet urging roller units disposed on both sides so as to interpose the sheet feed roller unit 20 therebetween. The sheet urging roller unit 30 includes a roller holder 32 mounted on a part of
15 a base plate 31, and a T-shaped lever 34 engageably supported by the roller holder 32 so as to pivot through a pin 33. The pair of sheet urging units is arranged symmetrically in widthwise as shown in FIG. 1(a).

20 The sheet urging roller 35 that rotates in pressure contact with the surface of the platen 12 is journaled on the upper end of the lever 34, whereas an auxiliary sheet urging roller 36 that faces the sheet guide surface is journaled on the lower end thereof. These rollers 35, 36 are designed to guide the cut sheet s from a sheet feed cassette 27 to the
25 platen 12 while urged by a coil spring 37 within the roller



holder 32, the coil spring 37 acting on the rollers 35, 36 through the lever 34.

A series of sheet feed operations including the operation of preventing the cut sheet s from skewing using this apparatus will be described with reference to FIGS. 1(a) to 1(d) and FIG. 2.

When a sheet feed command signal is applied from the not shown control circuit, the carriage 14 is moved toward a standby side. And then the sheet operation sets to a standby state by inserting the idler gear 15 mounted on the lateral surface of the carriage 14 into a not shown hole arranged on a lateral plate of a case, and by meshing the sheet feed roller transmission gear 10 with the sheet feed roller drive gear 11.

Then, when the drive motor 2 starts rotating in the forward direction, the platen gear 7 meshed with the reduction pinion 6 causes the platen 12 integrated with the platen gear 7 to rotate in the forward direction. The sheet feed roller transmission gear 10 transmits rotation in a direction opposite to the sheet feed direction to the sheet feed roller drive gear 11 through the idler gear 15 on the carriage 14.

The sun gear 24 integrated with the sheet feed roller drive gear 11 transmits rotation in the sheet feed direction to the sheet feed roller gear 25 meshed therewith. And the sheet feed roller holder 22 mounted on the drive shaft 23 is turned to a position shown in FIG. 1(a) by the rotating torque derived from such rotation and the pressure of the spring 40. Thereby



it causes the sheet feed roller 21 to come in contact with the cut sheet s in the middle of the sheet in the widthwise direction, the cut sheet s being accommodated in the sheet feed cassette 27. The cut sheet s is then fed toward the platen 12 with the rotation of the sheet feed roller 21 (FIG. 1(a)).

As a result, the cut sheet s fed by the sheet feed roller 21 first has its front end detected by a sheet detecting sensor 41 disposed at a portion along the sheet feed passage, and then reaches the platen 12 that is rotating in the forward direction.

By the way, the not shown control circuit controls the drive motor 2 so that the drive motor 2 rotates in the backward direction immediately after the front end of the cut sheet s has been nipped by the platen 12 based on the detection signal from the sheet detecting sensor 41. Therefore, if the sheet s is skew in the widthwise direction because of a certain cause during feeding, for example the cut sheet s is fed obliquely as shown in FIG. 1(b), the platen 12 rotates in the backward direction upon nipping a portion a of the cut sheet s which has reached the platen 12 first, i.e., the right front end of the cut sheet a as shown in FIG. 1(b), thereby immediately withdraw the right front end portion a that has been nipped.

On the other hand, since a not shown carriage drive motor drives the carriage 14 to the middle of the print area through a timing belt so that the carriage 14 can serve as a paper bail, the sheet feed roller drive gear 11 and the sheet



feed roller transmission gear 10 are disengaged from each other to free the sheet feed roller holder 22, thereby causing the sheet feed roller 21 to be free from rotation.

The cut sheet s whose right front end portion a has been withdrawn from the platen 12 is instantly adjusted to a correct position while turned in an arrow direction as shown in FIG. 1(c), and is fed toward a not shown record head by the platen 12 whose rotation is switched to the forward direction immediately thereafter.

By the way, while the above-mentioned embodiment is designed so that the timing of the operation of switching the rotation of the platen 12 between the forward and the backward directions is controlled by the signal from the sheet detecting sensor 41, such operation may be controlled by a print start signal.

Further, by applying the skew straightening operation to sheet forward rollers other than the platen, the skew in sheets encountered by copying machines and ordinary printing machines may be effectively prevented.

As described in the foregoing, the operation according to the present invention includes reversely rotating the sheet forward roller immediately after the front end of a cut sheet is nipped. Therefore, if the cut sheet is subjected to skew feeding, the cut sheet can be turned in the sheet forward direction instantly simultaneously with the rotation of the sheet forward roller by taking advantage of a difference



between the widthwise nipping amounts on the right and the left ends of the sheet. As a result, the operation of correcting the skew of this type can be performed very quickly.

5 In addition, since the skew straightening operation of the invention is not based on the reaction of the sheet itself, the applicability of the invention to a variety of kinds of paper, whether hard or soft, can be widened, thus ensuring effective and reliable skew correction.





WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of straightening skew in a cut sheet
2 comprising the steps of:

3 feeding the cut sheet toward a sheet forward roller
4 which is rotating forwardly in a sheet forward direction by a
5 sheet feed roller;

6 rotating the sheet forward roller backwardly
7 immediately after a front end of the cut sheet has been nipped
8 by said sheet forward roller;

9 adjusting a position of the front end of the cut sheet
10 in a direction orthogonal to said sheet forward direction by a
11 difference between widthwise sheet nipping amounts on both
12 right and left ends of the cut sheet; and

13 feeding the cut sheet by rotating said sheet forward
14 roller forwardly again.

1 2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising
2 the step of;

3 straightening a skew in the cut sheet by rotating the
4 cut sheet around said sheet forward roller in contact with a
5 surface of said cut sheet in accordance with said sheet forward
6 roller rotating backwardly.

1 3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising
2 the step of;





3 severing said sheet feed roller from driving while said
4 sheet forward roller is rotating backwardly.

1 4. A method of straightening skew in a cut sheet
2 comprising the steps of:

3 feeding the cut sheet toward a sheet forward roller
4 which is rotating forwardly in a sheet forward direction by a
5 sheet feed roller when the sheet feed roller is rotating
6 forwardly;

7 urging the cut sheet toward said sheet forward roller
8 by a pair of sheet urging units which are arranged
9 symmetrically each other in widthwise and on the opposite side
10 of the cut sheet against said sheet forward roller;

11 rotating the sheet forward roller backwardly
12 immediately after a front end of the cut sheet has been nipped
13 between said sheet forward roller and said sheet urging units;

14 adjusting a position of the front end of the cut sheet
15 in a direction orthogonal to said sheet forward direction by a
16 difference between widthwise sheet nipping amounts on both
17 right and left front ends of the cut sheet; and

18 feeding the cut sheet by rotating said sheet forward
19 roller forwardly again and urging the cut sheet toward said
20 sheet forward roller by said sheet urging units.

1 5. An apparatus for straightening a skew in a cut
2 sheet comprising:





3 a sheet feed roller for feeding the cut sheet forward
4 a sheet forward roller; and

5 said sheet forward roller disposed on a downstream side
6 in a sheet forward direction of the sheet feed roller and
7 controlled so that rotation of the sheet forward roller is
8 switched from a forward direction to a backward direction at
9 when a front end of the cut sheet is nipped, and switched back
10 to the forward direction thereafter.

1 6. An apparatus for straightening a skew in a cut
2 sheet according to claim 5, wherein a skew in the cut sheet is
3 straightened by rotating the cut sheet around said sheet
4 forward roller in contact with a surface of said cut sheet in
5 accordance with said sheet forward roller rotating backwardly.

1 7. An apparatus for straightening a skew in a cut
2 sheet according to claim 5, wherein said sheet feed roller is
3 severed from driving while said sheet forward roller is
4 rotating backwardly.

1 8. An apparatus for straightening a skew in a cut
2 sheet according to claim 5, further comprising;

3 a pair of sheet urging units arranged symmetrically
4 each other in widthwise and on the opposite side of the cut
5 sheet against said sheet forward roller.

