



BASEBOARD WITH MOVABLE ELECTRICAL OUTLET

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to the field of continuous electrical distribution systems whereby an electrical outlet can be positioned at any one of a number of locations along a wall.

In conventional residential and commercial construction, outlets for electricity and telephone lines are installed in the walls of a room at fixed, spaced locations around the room. When changes are made in the location of the apparatus using these outlets, it is often necessary to change the location of the outlet, which involves installing a new outlet in the wall, repairing the drywall and repainting at the previous location. This is particularly time-consuming and expensive in the commercial office situation where moves are relatively frequent.

Various systems have been designed to provide a conductive track along which a receptacle may be moved. One of the primary considerations in such a design is that the conductive elements must be guarded against accidental contact by a child or user. For example, United States Patent no. 1,812,956 issued July 7, 1931 to Howk discloses an electrical outlet comprising an elongated housing having a lengthwise slot and a conductor extending along the length of the housing. An electrical receptacle rides along the slot by means of rollers which contact the conductor. The receptacle is not provided with a ground connection as is required in modern electrical systems, and in order to change the position of the receptacle it is necessary to roll it completely around the track from one location to the other. This may cause unnecessary complications where there are a number of receptacles along a track and only one needs to be moved to another location. Further, apparently the Howk receptacle cannot be rigidly secured at the selected location.



Another movable electrical receptacle is disclosed in Kelley U.S. patent no. 2,042,105 issued May 26, 1936. Here various means are used to guard the conductors, including a zipper arrangement, a pair of overlapping ribbons and a recessed rib. The same disadvantage noted for the Howk design also apply to these designs.

Other electrical systems permitting the movement of receptacles are shown in United States patents no. 2,076,558; 2,279,383; 2,617,849; 2,669,632; 3,089,042. These various designs all require the sliding of the receptacle along the track to reach the desired position.

United States patent no. 4,479,687 issued October 30, 1984 to Electrak International Limited discloses an electrical distribution system in which a specially designed plug may be inserted in any one of a number of apertures along a continuous conductor. However it does not allow for the use of conventional plugs. United States patent no. 4,690,474 issued September 1, 1987 discloses a safety wall plug in which the plug is slid from the peripheral edge of the wall outlet to the inner edge of a passage in the wall outlet. It does not permit the movement of the position of the electrical outlet.

German patent no. 695,394 Eich discloses an electrical distribution system comprising a hollow, elongated housing with a single elongated slot in its front panel, and a plurality of movable receptacles. International application, publication no. WO 87/01524 Barrier Shelf Co. discloses an electrical distribution system having an elongate housing, a plurality of movable receptacles and a plurality of parallel slots, wherein the electrical connectors are recessed in the top of each slot to permit spilled liquid to drain and hinder access by children.

There is therefore a need for a continuous electrical distribution system which allows a receptacle to be installed at any location along a track, without requiring that the receptacle be slid from one location to another along the track, and without exposing the conductors to the possibility of contact by a user.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an electrical distribution system comprising: a) an elongated housing having a front panel defining a hollow interior within said housing, and an elongated slot formed along the length of said front panel, said front panel having an inner and outer surface; b) first and second electrical conduction means fixed to the inner surface of the front panel, at spaced locations respectively above and below said slot; c) means for providing an electrical differential between said first and second conduction means; and wherein d) said hollow interior of said housing is provided with a partition extending parallel to said conduction means to provide a compartment accessible from the exterior of said housing for removably carrying electrical conductive insulated cables parallel to and separated from said conduction means;

characterized in that said electrical distribution system further comprises:

e) movable receptacle means for releasably engaging said housing, each receptacle means comprising a face having electrical receptacle means, means for releasably securing said movable receptacle to said housing and means for engaging said conduction means, said conduction engaging means being adapted to engage said conduction means when said receptacle means is installed in said slot, and wherein said compartment is accessible along a continuous opening by means of a removable strip which removably covers said opening.

A plurality of parallel slots may be provided and the multiple receptacles may include standard electrical outlets, telephone jacks, co-axial cable outlets or other types of electrical outlets.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In drawings which illustrate a preferred embodiment of the invention:

Fig. 1 is an isometric view of the invention;

Fig. 2 is an isometric view of the invention as shown in Figure 1 with the receptacle removed;

Fig. 3 is a front view of the receptacle shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a rear view taken of the receptacle shown in Figure 1;

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the invention shown in Figure 1 taken along lines 5-5 of Figure 4;

Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the invention shown in Figure 1 taken along lines 6-6 of Figure 4;

Fig. 7 is an isometric view of a connector piece for connecting the baseboard tracks of the invention;

Fig. 8 is an isometric view of a connector piece for connecting the baseboard tracks of the invention at an outside corner;

Fig. 9 is an isometric view of a connector piece for connecting the baseboard tracks of the invention at an inside corner;

Fig. 10 is a side view of an end cap for the baseboard track units of the invention; and

Fig. 11 is a rear view of a power connection end cap for the baseboard track units of the invention;

Fig. 12 is an isometric view of the invention with telephone, electrical and television receptacles;

Fig. 13 is an isometric view of the invention shown in Fig. 12 with an additional duplex receptacle;

Fig. 14 is an isometric view of the invention shown in Fig. 13 with an additional audio receptacle;

Fig. 15 is an isometric view of the invention as shown in Figure 14 with the receptacles removed;

Fig. 16 is an isometric view a floor raceway according to the invention;

Fig. 17 is a front view of the telephone receptacle;

Fig. 18 is a rear view of the telephone receptacle;

Fig. 19 is a front view of the duplex receptacle;

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Fig. 20 is a rear view of the duplex receptacle;
Fig. 21 is a front view of the television receptacle;

Fig. 22 is a rear view of the television receptacle;

Fig. 23 is a cross-sectional view of the telephone receptacle shown in Figure 17 taken along lines 23-23 of Figure 18;

Fig. 24 is a cross-sectional view of the telephone receptacle shown in Figure 17 taken along lines 24-24 of Figure 18;

Fig. 25 is a cross-sectional view of the duplex receptacle shown in Figure 19 taken along lines 25-25 of Figure 20;

Fig. 26 is a cross-sectional view of the duplex receptacle shown in Figure 19 taken along lines 26-26 of Figure 20;

Fig. 27 is a cross-sectional view of the television receptacle shown in Figure 21 taken along lines 27-27 of Figure 22;

Fig. 28 is a cross-sectional view of the television receptacle shown in Figure 21 taken along lines 28-28 of Figure 22;

Fig. 29 is a front view of a computer receptacle;

Fig. 30 is a rear view of the computer receptacle;

Fig. 31 is a front view of the computer coaxial telephone receptacle;

Fig. 32 is a rear view of the computer coaxial telephone receptacle;

Fig. 33 is a front view of the audio receptacle;

Fig. 34 is a rear view of the audio receptacle;

Fig. 35 is a cross-sectional view of the computer receptacle shown in Figure 29 taken along lines 35-35 of Figure 30;

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Fig. 36 is a cross-sectional view of the computer receptacle shown in Figure 29 taken along lines 36-36 of Figure 30;

Fig. 37 is a cross-sectional view of the duplex computer/telephone receptacle shown in Figure 31 taken along lines 37-37 of Figure 32;

Fig. 38 is a cross-sectional view of the duplex computer/telephone receptacle shown in Figure 19 taken along lines 38-38 of Figure 32;

Fig. 39 is a cross-sectional view of the audio receptacle shown in Figure 33 taken along lines 39-39 of Figure 34;

Fig. 40 is a cross-sectional view of the audio receptacle shown in Figure 33 taken along lines 40-40 of Figure 34;

Fig. 41 is an isometric view of a multiple power receptacle;

Fig. 42 is an isometric view of a multiple telephone receptacle;

Fig. 43 is an isometric view of a connector piece;

Fig. 44 is an isometric view of a connector piece for an outside corner;

Fig. 45 is an isometric view of a connector piece for an inside corner;

Fig. 46 is a side view of an end cap;

Fig. 47 is a rear view of the power connections;

Fig. 48 is an isometric view of a floor raceway;

Fig. 49 is an isometric view of a second floor raceway;

Fig. 50 is an isometric view of a second floor raceway;

Fig. 51 is a cross-sectional view of an expansion connector;

Fig. 52 is an isometric view of an expansion raceway; and

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Fig. 53 is an isometric view of a raceway utilizing conductive inserts.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference to Figure 1, the movable electrical receptacle is designated as 1 and the supporting baseboard structure as 2. Baseboard 2 has an elongated slot 3 in which receptacle 1 seats. Baseboard 2 is constructed to resemble a standard wooden baseboard but in fact is constructed of moulded plastic, bakelite or similar material. It is constructed of a back panel 23, front panels 20 and 21 and horizontal dividers 24 and 25 which separate the hollow interior into compartments 40, 9 and 30 which extend along the length of the baseboard. Compartment 40 serves to hold cables such as telephone, cable television and computer network cables. Compartment 40 is accessible by a removable strip 5.

As further illustrated in Figure 2, conductors 6, 7 and 8 are fixed along the inner surface of compartment 9. Conductor 6 preferably carries a positive potential, while conductor 7 is the negative terminal and conductor 8 is grounded. In this way polarized plugs may be used to reduce the possibility of a child accidentally being electrocuted. Slot 3 is preferably about 3/8" wide.

Figure 3 illustrates the receptacle in front view, having two polarized plug receptacles 50, consisting of ground receptacle 51, negative receptacle 52 and positive receptacle 53, and four tightening screws 17 and 18.

As shown in Figures 5 and 6, the conductive contacts 10, 11 and 12 are carried on rigid T-shaped assembly 14, and are connected to the plug receptacle via conductors 31, 32 and 33. The dimensions of assembly 14 are chosen so that width w, shown in Figure 4, is less than the width of slot 3, so that assembly 14 can be inserted through slot 3 and rotated by turning receptacle 1. When rotated through 90 degrees, contacts 10, 11 and 12 then

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come into firm sliding contact with conductors 6, 7 and 8. The height of the lower part of the T, carrying contacts 11 and 12, is greater than the height of the upper part of the T carrying contact 10. Since similarly the height of the portion of compartment 9 below groove 3 is greater than the height of the portion of compartment 9 above the groove 3, the T-shaped element can only be rotated in such a way that the three conductors are properly aligned with the respective contact.

Once receptacle 1 has been inserted into slot 3 as noted, and rotated to bring the conductors into contact, the receptacle is tightened into place by tightening screws 17 and 18. Bars 19 are threaded to move on screws 17 and 18 as they are rotated and in this way bars 19 are pressed against faces 20 and 21 when the receptacle is in position. Tenon or protrusion 16 is sized to fit snugly in slot 3 when the bar 19 is extended in order to secure the receptacle firmly in position and keep it from wobbling.

To change the position of the receptacle, the screws 17 and 18 are loosened, drawing bars 19 away from baseboard 2 and drawing tenon 16 out of slot 3. The receptacle 1 is then rotated 90 degrees to permit assembly 14 to be withdrawn from slot 3. The receptacle can then be moved to another location on the baseboard.

Figure 7 illustrates a piece to connect two lengths of the baseboard 2. One end of body 61 slides inside the open end of compartment 9 of one baseboard unit, while the other end of body 61 slides into the similar compartment 9 of the second baseboard unit. The body 61 is secured to each respective baseboard unit 2 using screws 62. Spring type conduction connectors 60 make contact with conductors 6, 7 and 8 of each unit, completing the connection between the corresponding conductor of each unit. The connectors 60 are continuous from one end of the body 61 to the other, but are only exposed at either end to make contact with the conductors in the baseboard units.

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Figures 8 and 9 similarly illustrate connector pieces which allow the baseboard tracks of the invention to span a corner, either with the track on the outside of the corner (Figure 8) or the inside (Figure 9). A corner post 63 supports two body units 61 at right angles. Each body unit 61 is constructed as in Figure 7 to fit into compartment 9 of the respective baseboard units 2, to be secured using screws 62. Connectors 60 contact conductors 6, 7 and 8 to connect them to the corresponding conductor of the other baseboard unit. Apertures 68 and 69 permit continuation of compartments 40 and 30 respectively around the corner.

Figure 10 illustrates an end cap 64 for use to close the ends of a baseboard unit 2 and prevent access to the conductors. It has two rectangular projections 65 and 66 which are inserted in a friction fit into the ends of compartments 30 and 40, and can be glued in place for added security.

Figure 11 illustrates an end cap 70 for power connection. Extension 71 slides into the open end of compartment 9 of the baseboard unit 2 of interest. Connectors 60 make contact with the conductors 6, 7 and 8, and the ends of these conductors are connected to terminals 76, 77 and 78 for connection of an electrical power source to power the baseboard track units of the invention.

While the invention has been described using conductors to carry electrical power, similar construction could be used for the telephone circuit. The coaxial cables are carried in compartment 40.

Fig. 12 through 15 illustrate embodiments of the invention with multiple raceways for telephone, electrical and television receptacles. Baseboard 80 has slots 81, 82 and 83 for receiving telephone receptacle 84, electrical receptacle 85 (same as receptacle 1 above) and coaxial television receptacle 86. Fig. 13 illustrates a further variation of the invention shown in Fig. 12 with an additional slot 87 for a duplex receptacle 88. Fig. 14 illus-

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trates yet a further extension of the invention shown in Fig. 13 with an additional slot 89 for receiving an audio receptacle 90. Fig. 15 illustrates the multiple raceway shown in Figure 14 with the receptacles removed. Appropriate conductors are provided along the inner surface of compartments 91, 92, 93, 94 and 95 for the particular type of receptacle -- adjacent pairs 96, 97 for telephone, two pairs 96, 97 separated by slot 87 for duplex receptacle 88, separated pairs 98, 99 for coaxial (which requires greater shielding), electrical conductors and ground 100, 101, 102 as above, and combination of pairs 103, 104, and 107, 108, and separated pairs 105, 106 for audio.

Fig. 16 illustrates a floor raceway according to the invention, having electrical and telephone receptacles 84, 85 as above which slide in slots 107, 108 in base 109. Base 109 has sloping sides 110 which present a surface over which wheels can roll and on which people are less likely to trip. Figures 48, 49 and 50 illustrate three variations of this design in which the angle formed by face 110 with the bottom 111 of base 109 (which lies flush on the floor) is 15 degrees, 20 degrees and 22 degrees respectively. While Fig. 16 illustrate use of electrical and telephone receptacles, it will be apparent that the various other movable receptacles described herein could also be used.

The basic structure of the various movable receptacles used in the multiple raceway system is the same as for the single electrical raceway embodiment described above (1 in Fig. 1, and 85 in Fig. 12), with the alterations made to accommodate the different electrical connections. Otherwise the receptacles include the same T-shaped assembly 14, and bars 19, movable on screws 17 and 18 and having tenons 16 which fit in the respective slots. While two screws for each bar 19 are shown, a single adjustment screw 18 could be used for each bar 19. It is important that individual raceways are shielded from each other to minimize distortion, noise and cross-talk. Also, each wire cell is preferably shielded so electrical interference

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computer coaxial telephone receptacle 132 including both the coaxial jack 126 and telephone jack 118. Fig. 33, 34, 39 and 40 illustrate an audio receptacle 90 having jacks 140, 141 and 142 and conductors 143, 144, 145, 146, 147 and 148.

Fig. 41 illustrates a multiple power receptacle and Fig. 42 illustrates a multiple telephone receptacle. As shown in Fig. 51, 52 below, Up to six lines (12 conductors) can be accommodated on one receptacle, which can be configured as shown in Figures 41, 42, and otherwise the means of connection to the raceway is as for the single line receptacle.

Fig. 43 through 47 illustrate connector pieces as in Fig. 7 through 11 above, but accommodating six conductors per raceway. Fig. 43 illustrates a connector piece 150. Fig. 44 illustrates a connector piece 152 for an outside corner. Fig. 45 illustrates a connector piece 154 for an inside corner. Fig. 46 is a side view of an end cap 156 and Fig. 47 illustrates the power connection 158. In Fig. 47 the necessary coaxial balun is incorporated into the coaxial receptacle. Terminals 159 permit the attachment of a source of electrical power or telephone/audio signals etc.

Fig. 51 and 52 illustrate how 12 conductors can be accommodated on one receptacle. Fig. 51 illustrates an expansion T-shaped connector 172 which is an expansion of connector 14. Fig. 52 illustrates the construction of the expansion raceway 172 having slot 174.

Fig. 53 illustrates a raceway utilizing conductive inserts. Slots 177 in the baseboard 80 receive removable conductive inserts 171, 173, 175 which may have one or two conductive tracks. In this way the arrangement of receptacles can be varied. This also allow for the addition and updating in new technology.

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While the invention has been described in the context of a unit resembling a baseboard, the same principles could be applied to a vertical track on a wall, a track mounted directly to the floor, or a ceiling-mounted track.

CLAIMS

1. An electrical distribution system comprising:
 - a) an elongated housing having a front panel defining a hollow interior within said housing, and an elongated slot formed along the length of said front panel, said front panel having an inner and outer surface;
 - b) first and second electrical conduction means fixed to the inner surface of said front panel, at spaced locations respectively above and below said slot;
 - c) means for providing an electrical differential between said first and second conduction means; and wherein
 - d) said hollow interior of said housing is provided with a partition extending parallel to said conduction means to provide a compartment accessible from the exterior of said housing for removably carrying electrical conductive insulated cables parallel to and separated from said conduction means;
characterized in that said electrical distribution system further comprises:
 - e) movable receptacle means for releasably engaging said housing, said receptacle means comprising a face having electrical receptacle means, means for releasably securing said movable receptacle to said housing and means for engaging said conduction means, said conduction engaging means being adapted to engage said conduction means when said receptacle means is installed in said slot, and wherein said compartment is accessible along a continuous opening by means of a removable strip which removably covers said opening.
- 2) The electrical distribution system of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of said elongated slots in said front panel extending in a horizontal, parallel relationship along the length of said front panel, first and second electrical conduction means fixed to the inner surface of said front panel at spaced locations respectively above and below each said slot, means for providing an electrical differential between each said first and second conduction means, and movable receptacle means associated with each of said plurality of slots.

- 3) The electrical distribution system of claim 2 wherein said movable receptacle means comprise a telephone receptacle, a standard electrical outlet and a coaxial cable receptacle.
- 4) The electrical distribution system of claim 1 wherein said means for providing an electrical differential comprises a body having a projection adapted to be mounted in an end of said hollow interior and provided with conductors located to contact said conduction means on said front panel, and terminal means connected to said conductors for providing an electrical differential between pairs of conductors.
- 5) The electrical distribution system of claim 1 further comprising connector means having first and second ends, each end having a projection adapted to be fixedly mounted in an end of said hollow interior and provided with first and second conductors located to contact one of said pairs of electrical conduction means on said front panel, whereby an electrical connection is made between the conduction means of first and second housings when said first and second ends of said connector means mounted in said first and second housings.
- 6) The electrical distribution system of claim 5 wherein said connector means comprises a central vertical post and said first and second ends meet said post at right angles.
- 7) The electrical distribution system of claim 1 wherein said conduction engaging means comprises an elongated bar having a width less than said slot and conductive elements fixed to the inner surface of said bar and connected to said receptacle means, said conduction engaging means being adapted to engage said conduction means when said receptacle means is installed in said slot.
- 8) The electrical distribution system of claim 7 wherein said elongated bar is T-shaped.

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- 9) The electrical distribution system of claim 7 wherein said means for securing comprises an elongated bar threadably movable on a screw and provided with tenon means for mating with said slot.