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INK JET RECORDING APAPRATUS AND INK CARTRIDGE FOR THE APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to an ink jet recording apparatus provided with an ink jet head for effecting recording with flying ink droplets utilizing the film boiling phenomenon of liquid.

The present invention also relates to an ink cartridge interchangeably provided for the ink jet recording apparatus.

Related Background Art

In recent years, various ink jet recording methods have been put into practical use because in such recording methods, the creation of noise during recording is negligibly small and in addition, recording can be effected on plain paper.

Among them, the ink jet recording method described, for example, in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 54-51837 (the so-called bubble jet recording method) is such that heat energy is caused to act on ink and the ink subjected to the action of this heat energy causes a sudden volume change (film boiling phenomenon) resulting from a state change and by this action force, the ink is discharged from a discharge port at the end of a recording head unit,

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whereby flying ink droplets are formed and adhere to a recording medium to thereby accomplish recording.

The principle of ink droplet formation in such a recording method is that when an electro-thermal converting member is electrically energized, the ink in the heat-acting portion subjected to the action of the heat energy which is ink droplet forming energy causes a state change resulting from a sudden increase in volume, that is, the ink in the heat-acting portion causes the creation, growth and contraction of a bubble very momentarily, whereby the liquid present between the heat-acting portion and the discharge opening is discharged as an ink droplet.

By repeating such cycle of creation, growth, contraction and disappearance of the bubble, the ink is subjected to high heat. Therefore, thermally unstable ink is liable to cause a chemical change and in the heat-acting portion, production and precipitation of insoluble matters may occur and further, the recording head may become incapable of discharging the ink. Accordingly, to effect recording at a high speed for a long time by the use of such an apparatus, it is very important to improve the stability of the ink and on the other hand, to set the optimum driving conditions corresponding to the ink in the recording head.

Figure 1 of the accompanying drawings shows

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variations with time in the surface temperature T of the heat-acting surface when an electrical signal of pulse waveform shown by P is input to a recording head having an electro-thermal converting member and the volume V of a bubble then created. When the pulse-like electrical signal P which is switched on and off is input to the electro-thermal converting member at a time t_0 and a time t_f, the surface temperature T of the heat-acting surface reaches a maximum temperature T_p at the time t_f.

Here, when T_p is higher than the boiling point b of the ink which is in contact with the heat-acting surface, a bubble begins to be created from a time TbO at which T = Tb in the heat-acting portion filled with the ink, and the volume thereof increases with the lapse of time and reaches a maximum volume V_p at a time t_p. When the electrical signal P is switched off at the time t_f, the surface temperature T begins to attenuate gradually and accordingly, the volume V of the bubble decreases and the bubble disappears at a time t_{B1}.

In order to ensure the discharge of ink droplets to be effected efficiently and stably in an ink jet recording apparatus, for example, in the aforedescribed bubble jet recording method, driving conditions for film boiling such as a voltage, a pulse width and a frequency at which electrical

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energy is supplied to the electro-thermal converting member and further, control such as pre-discharging or pre-heating for effecting stable practical printing, or the recovery operation of the recording head are programmed in advance in the ink jet recording apparatus by hardware or software in accordance with the characteristic of ink set for the ink jet recording apparatus. Particularly, in a recording apparatus of the type in which an ink tank storing therein ink to be supplied to a recording head is interchangeable for the apparatus, if use is made of an ink cartridge storing therein ink of other kind which does not match these various set conditions, there will not be obtained an appropriate combination of the characteristic of the ink and the driving conditions and therefore, normal driving of the recording head cannot be accomplished and recording of high quality will become difficult to accomplish. For this reason, usually, the form of the ink cartridge interchangeable for the recording apparatus is designed exclusively for each apparatus so that the user may not misuse the ink cartridge.

An example of the form of such an ink cartridge is a box-like form. The ink cartridge is designed such that by the operation of mounting the ink cartridge on a cartridge mounting portion, a hollow needle provided on the mounting portion is

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thrust in the rubber plug of the cartridge so that ink may be supplied from an ink containing portion in the cartridge to an ink supply system through the hollow needle.

However, the conventional ink jet recording apparatus having such an interchangeable ink cartridge only permits the use of ink fit for the discharge conditions set in that apparatus and cannot select ink of different discharge conditions and therefore, the range of use of the ink jet recording apparatus is limited and a wide range of use of the ink jet recording apparatus having an excellent recording characteristic has been difficult. Also, even if ink having more excellent discharge and recording characteristics is developed in the future, it will become impossible to use such ink or obtain a satisfactory state of use because the program in the apparatus is not proper.

The above-noted problems will hereinafter be discussed specifically and in detail. Some examples of the typical ink composition usable in an ink jet recording apparatus are shown in Table 1 below.

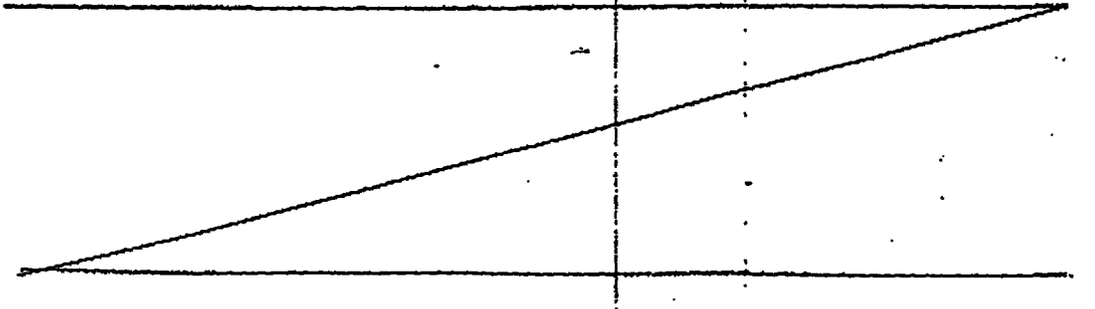

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Table 1

Kinds of ink / Component	①	②	③
Water [%]	50	50	80
DEG [%]	47	37	17
PEG [%]	0	10	0
Dyestuff [%]	3	3	3

The ink ① is an example of standard ink which exhibits a popular performance in both viscosity and solidification. On the other hand, the ink ② is ink in which the percentage of the component difficult to volatilize is increased relative to the ink ① and therefore which is characterized by a difficulty in clogging the discharge ports of the recording head. Thus, an ink jet recording apparatus using the ink ② does not require a mechanism for preventing the clogging of the discharge ports during the downtime of the ink jet recording head, or can be structurally simplified. However, since the ink ② has relatively high viscosity, it is necessary that discharge of the ink which does not contribute the recording, i.e., an operation called preliminary discharge, be sufficiently performed in advance in the early stage of each use. This may sometimes lead to a reduced

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throughput. Also, the ink (2) suffers from a disadvantage that the ink is ready to blur on the recording medium and a very high quality of printing cannot be provided. The ink (3) is ink characterized in that the percentage of water content is increased relative to the ink (1) and the desiccation of the ink on the recording medium is quick and recording of high quality suffering much less from blur can be accomplished. Further, the ink (3) has a feature that it can be driven at a relatively high frequency because it permits quick refilling of the nozzle after discharge. However, the ink (3) is ready to desiccate and therefore, the ink in the discharge ports of the recording head is ready to solidify as during the downtime of the recording head. Therefore, it is necessary that the recovery operation such as pumping and the capping operation be performed frequently during the downtime of the recording head. Particularly, where the ink (3) is used for a recording head of the bubble jet type in which heat energy is utilized as ink discharging energy, stable ink discharge cannot be accomplished unless the electrical energization time is made relatively short (e.g. 2-5 [μsec]) and correspondingly the driving voltage is made high. According, in the case of a recording head which can withstand such high driving stress, printing of high quality can be accomplished, but

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otherwise there will be obtained printing of low quality which is bad in the accuracy of liquid droplet shot.

Table 2 below specifically shows some examples of the driving conditions for the recording head relative to the inks in Table 1.

Table 2

Examples of apparatus	Kinds of ink / Driving conditions	①	②	③
I	Voltage [V]	21	21	28
	Pulse width [μs]	7	7	3
	Frequency [KHz]	4.5	4.0	6.0
	Number of preliminary discharges (times)	50	128	50
II	Voltage [V]	21	19	21
	Pulse width [μs]	7	8.5	7
	Frequency [KHz]	2	2	3
	Number of preliminary discharges (times)	50	128	50

The apparatus example I is an apparatus using silicon single crystal as the base material of the recording head and carrying thereon a recording head having a characteristic capable of withstanding short pulse energization and high voltage driving and responding to a high frequency. The apparatus example II is an apparatus using glass as the base

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material of the recording head and carrying thereon a recording head which is low in durability to short pulse energization, high voltage driving and a high frequency, but is very inexpensive.

For example, when the apparatus example I programmed with the use of the ink (1) having the standard characteristic being taken into account is used in a manner in which the frequency of use is extremely low, it is desirable to use the ink (2) which does not cause clogging. However, it is necessary that the user change without fail the substance of the driving program of the recording head in which are set the conditions for the best discharge to be accomplished when the ink (1) is used to the substances matching the characteristic of the ink (2), for example, the conditions such as the number of preliminary discharges, the pre-heating state, the driving frequency and the pulse width.

To increase the printing speed in the apparatus example I, the ink (3) can be used, but even in that case, as described previously, it is necessary that the user change without fail the driving conditions of the recording head in accordance with the characteristic of the ink (3).

However, it is cumbersome and mistakable for the user to change the driving conditions in accordance

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with the characteristic of the ink used, and damage is liable to occur to the recording apparatus due to the malfunctioning of the recording head. For example, where use is made of a recording head of the type of the apparatus example II, when the conditions for the use of the ink (1) are to be changed to the driving conditions for the use of the ink (3), the head driving voltage is changed from 21V to 28V and the pulse width is changed from 7 μsec to 3 μsec, whereby there is provided good discharge of the ink (3). However, as previously described, such driving conditions are not suitable because they give high stress to the recording head used in the apparatus example I and may therefore extremely shorten the life of the recording head. Accordingly, when the life of the recording head is taken into consideration, for example, the driving voltage must be changed to 21V and the pulse width must be changed to the order of 7 μsec and moreover, the set frequency must be changed from 6 KHz to 3 KHz.

As described above, it is adequate to use ink which takes into account the used state and the purpose of use of the ink jet recording apparatus, but it is difficult for an ordinary user to minutely change the program in the ink jet recording apparatus body such as the driving conditions and the preliminary discharge conditions of the recording head with the kind and driving characteristic of the recording head

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taken into account so that a change of the ink used can be coped with. Even if such change is possible at all, wrong setting may be effected and abnormal printing or excessive stress may be given to the recording head, and it will be difficult to ensure the reliability of the recording apparatus.

Now, when an ink cartridge interchangeable for the apparatus is mounted in the apparatus body, it is popular that the ink cartridge is held by a suitable fastening means. Also, in the mounted state of the ink cartridge, the interior of the ink tank and the ink supply system on the apparatus body side are communicated with each other by ink.

However, if the relation between the holding position of the fastening means and the position in which the communication is effected by ink is not appropriate or especially there is a play in the fastening means, the ink communication will not be secured in spite of the ink tank being held by the fastening means, and the ink supply system and the ink tank will become spaced apart from each other. If at this time, for example, the recovery operation is performed, air may be introduced into the supply system. If air is thus introduced into the supply system, not only ink discharge will fail to be properly effected, but also the recording head will be damaged.

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On the other hand, when the ink cartridge is to be interchanged, the user may inadvertently insert his hand into the cartridge insertion port and have the fingertip injured or stained with ink. In order to prevent this, there has been provided a protective device as shown, for example, in Figure 2 of the accompanying drawings. In Figure 2, the reference numeral 130 designates an ink tube connected to a hollow needle 120 and supplying ink to the recording head, the reference numeral 131 denotes a mounting bed for fixedly supporting the hollow needle 120, and the reference numeral 132 designates an insertion path for directly the ink cartridge 104 to its mounted position.

The reference numeral 133 denotes a protective plate pivotable about a support shaft 134, the reference numeral 135 designates a torsion coil spring mounted around the support shaft 134 and biasing the protective plate 133 in the direction of arrow C, and the reference numerals 136 and 137 denote locking members for holding the protective plate 133 in an insertion path closing position as shown and restraining the movement thereof. That is, these locking members 136 and 137 are formed symmetrically with respect to each other, and have wedge portions 136A and 137A and locking grooves 136B and 137B at opposed locations, and are both endowed with

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resiliency, whereby they can be fexed in the direction of arrow D. The reference numeral 140 designates a rubber plug provided in the front face of the ink cartridge 104, and the reference numerals 141 and 142 denote unlocking projection members (hereinafter referred to as the unlocking members) provided on the sides of the ink cartridge 104.

In the protective device for the ink cartridge mounting portion which is so constructed, as long as the ink cartridge 104 is not mounted, the protective plate 133 is held in its shown position by the locking members 136 and 137, and even if a finger tip or the like is inserted into a cartridge guide or the like, it will strike against the protective plate 133 and will not reach the tip end of the hollow needle 120. Also, if as shown in Figure 2, the ink cartridge 104 is inserted from the direction of arrow A along the insertion path 132, the unlocking members 141 and 142 will slidably contact with the wedge portions 136A and 137A of the locking members 136 and 137, respectively, and will push open these members in the direction of arrow D.

Consequently, the opposite end portions of the protective plate 133 are liberated from the locking grooves 136B and 137B of these members and also, the front face of the ink cartridge 104 bears against the protective plate 133 and pushes it up in the direction

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of arrow B. Thereafter, the hollow needle 120 thrusts into the rubber plug 140 of the ink cartridge 104, whereby there can be brought about a mounted state in which the supply of ink to the recording head is possible. When the ink cartridge 104 is to be removed, the ink cartridge 104 is pulled out rearwardly from its mounted state, whereby the hollow needle 120 is pulled out from the rubber plug 140, and then the protective plate 133 is pivoted in the driection of arrow C by the spring force of the torsion coil spring 135 and returns to its vertical position and is sandwiched between the locking members 136 and 137 and restores the state shown in Figure 2.

However, in the conventional ink jet recording apparatus as described above, the locking members 136 and 137 are provided laterally symmetrically and therefore, even when the user inserts the ink cartridge 104 with its vertical direction or its longitudinal direction mistaken, the locked state of the protective plate 133 will be released by the engagement between the unlocking members 141, 142 and the locking members 136, 137 and the ink cartridge 104 will be directed to its mounted position, and this has led to the undesirable possibility that the hollow needle 120 is damaged or the ink cartridge 104 itself is damaged and the supply of ink becomes impossible. Also, an attempt to provide a special

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device discretely to prevent such an accident would make the mounting device itself complicated in structure and result in an increased cost.

Now, some of ink cartridges are in a form which is provided with an ink containing portion and in addition, a waste ink containing portion for containing discharged ink, i.e., ink sucked during the recovery operation performed to prevent the clogging of the ink discharge ports of the recording head (hereinafter referred to as the waste ink), and with such ink cartridges, it is possible to scrap the waste ink contained in the waste ink containing portion, by and simultaneously with the interchange of the cartridge.

If in an ink jet recording apparatus of such interchangeable ink cartridge type, the recording operation is performed with no ink cartridge mounted in the apparatus, recording will not be obtained because ink supply does not take place. Also, if the recovery operation is performed, waste ink discharged from the waste ink system side will not be contained in the ink cartridge but may be released into the apparatus to thereby contaminate the surroundings, or the released waste ink may contaminate electric circuits to thereby cause an accident such as fire. Accordingly, it is desirable to provide detecting means for informing the user of the mounting of an ink cartridge in the apparatus.

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An example of such detecting means is shown in Figures 3 and 4 of the accompanying drawings. As shown in Figure 3, a cartridge detecting flag 131 is comprised of a rotatable flag shaft 131B supported on the upper portion of an insertion port 121, a flag plate 131C mounted on one end of the shaft, and a cam portion 131A for rotating the flag shaft 131B, and on the other hand, a lever member 132 pivotally moved by the mounting of a cartridge 104 is provided inside the insertion port 121. Thus, when the ink cartridge 104 is inserted into the insertion port 121 and is surely mounted with a hollow needle 120 being inserted into a tank, not shown, in the cartridge 104, the projected portion 132A of the lever member 132 is pressed by the fore end of the cartridge 104, whereby the tip end portion 132B of the lever pivotally moves the flag plate 131C through the cam portion 131A and keeps it in a light intercepting position for a detecting sensor 124 as shown.

Figure 4 shows the details of the detecting sensor 124 for detecting both of the home position and the cartridge. The detecting sensor 124 is of the transmission type and is provided with an optical path 135 between a light emitting element 133 and a light receiving element 134, and is designed such that the optical path 135 is shielded from light by a home position detecting flag 130, the flag plate 131C of

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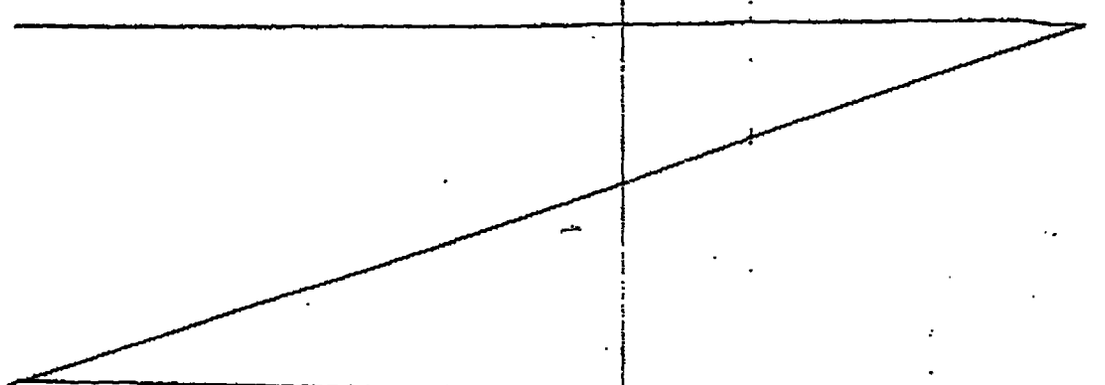
the ink cartridge detecting flag 131, etc. Accordingly, when the ink cartridge 104 is mounted, the detecting sensor 124 detects the flag plate 131C when a carriage 102 has been directed to a detecting position, whereby the mounting of the cartridge is confirmed.

However, in the conventional ink jet recording apparatus as described above, the home position sensor is used also as the cartridge detecting sensor and the number of detecting means is correspondingly decreased, but the information the user wants to recognize about the ink cartridge 104 is not only the mounting thereof, but also the information regarding the color and characteristic of the ink contained in the ink cartridge 104 as described previously and the remaining amount of ink, and to enable all of such information to be obtained, the number of flags must be increased or the number of detecting means themselves must be increased, and this will result in complicated structure, which in turn will result in an increased cost.



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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

So, it is an object of the present invention to eliminate such problems peculiar to the prior art and to provide an ink cartridge to which is imparted information for controlling the driving conditions of a recording head on the basis of ink used.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus of high performance and high reliability in which an ink jet recording head used changes its driving conditions so as to fit thereto.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a construction of such correlation that the mounting of an ink cartridge into an apparatus can be reliably accomplished, and to ensure ink supply, information reading, etc. to be reliably effected.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an ink cartridge which is simple in structure and can prevent malfunctioning during the mounting of the cartridge, and an ink jet recording apparatus into which such ink cartridge can be mounted.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus in which a minimum number of detecting means enables the user to recognize various kinds of information

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regarding an ink cartridge, and to provide such ink cartridge.

It is yet still another object of the present invention to provide an ink cartridge which is interchangeably provided for an ink jet recording apparatus provided with a recording head for causing the discharge of ink to thereby effect the recording of images and which contains said ink therein and supplies said ink in response to the discharge of said ink, characterized by the provision of a medium provided with information for controlling the driving conditions of said recording head.

It is also an object of the present invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus which permits the removable mounting therein of an ink tank cartridge forming a supply source of ink for a recording head for discharging said ink to a recording medium to thereby effect recording, characterized by the provision of:

communication means for effecting the communication between said ink tank and the supplied ink;

reading means for reading the information regarding said ink tank cartridge itself from an information presenting member provided on said ink tank cartridge to present said information; and

holding means for holding said ink tank

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cartridge;

a position in which said ink communication is effected, a position in which said information is read and a position in which said ink tank cartridge is held being disposed in the named order in the direction of mounting of said ink tank cartridge.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide an ink tank cartridge forming a supply source of ink for a recording head for discharging said ink to a recording medium to thereby effect recording, characterized by the provision of:

an information presenting member provided to present the information regarding the ink tank cartridge itself;

a communication member for effecting the communication of the supplied ink with an apparatus body; and

a held member for being held by said apparatus body;

said communication member, said information presenting member and said held member being disposed so that the communication of said supplied ink, the reading of said information and said holding may be effected in the named order with the mounting operation of said ink tank cartridge.

It is still a further object of the present

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invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus characterized by the provision of:

an ink tank cartridge which forms a supply source of ink for a recording head for discharging said ink toward a recording medium to thereby effect recording and which is provided with a member for presenting inherent information regarding said ink tank cartridge itself and second information differing from said inherent information and is removably mountable in an apparatus body;

communication means for effecting the communication between said ink tank cartridge and the supplied ink;

reading means for reading said inherent information and said second information; and

holding means for holding said ink tank cartridge;

a position in which said ink communication is effected, a position in which said second information is read, a position in which said inherent information is read and a position in which said ink tank cartridge is held being disposed in the named order in the direction of mounting of said ink tank cartridge.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an ink tank cartridge for an ink jet recording apparatus which forms an ink supply source

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for a recording head for discharging ink and which is removably mountable in the apparatus body, characterized by the provision of an inherent information presenting member for presenting inherent information regarding the ink tank cartridge itself, and a second information presenting member provided forwardly of said inherent information presenting member with respect to the direction of mounting for presenting second information differing from said inherent information.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide an ink cartridge which is mountable on a mounting portion along the insertion path of an ink jet recording apparatus having an openable-closable plate openably and closably held in the insertion path to said mounting portion, and locking members for restraining said openable-closable plate from the opposite sides of said insertion path to inhibit the opening movement thereof and which contains therein ink to be supplied to a recording head and in which unlocking members engageable with said locking members to thereby release the restraint of said locking member during the mounting of said ink cartridge are projectedly provided on opposite sides, characterized in that said unlocking members are

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provided asymmetrically with respect to the direction of insertion into said insertion path.

It is yet still another object of the present invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus which is provided with an openable-closable plate provided in an insertion path for directing to a mounting portion an ink cartridge containing therein ink to be supplied to a recording head and openably and closably held, and locking members for restraining said openable-closable plate from the opposite sides of said insertion path to inhibit the opening movement thereof and in which the restraint of said locking members can be released by unlocking members projectedly provided on the opposite sides of said ink cartridge during the insertion of said ink cartridge into said insertion path, characterized in that said unlocking members and said locking members are disposed asymmetrically with respect to the direction of insertion of said ink cartridge.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an ink jet recording apparatus in which is removably mounted an ink cartridge containing therein ink to be supplied to a recording head for discharging the ink to thereby effect recording, characterized by the provision of:

a flag member provided on said ink cartridge

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and adapted to be protruded toward a path along which a carriage is moved only when said ink cartridge is mounted on a mounting portion; and

a photosensor provided on said carriage and capable of being shielded from light by said flag member.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide an ink cartridge which is removably mounted on the fixed mounting portion of an ink jet recording apparatus for supplying discharged ink to a recording head carried on a movable carriage, characterized by the provision of a flag member capable of being protruded and contained, and means for protruding said flag member toward a path along which said carriage is moved only when said ink cartridge is mounted on said mounting portion, the light interception of a photosensor provided on said carriage being possible by said flag member.

By providing on an ink cartridge a medium including information for driving an ink jet head, the driving conditions of the ink jet head matching the composition of ink can be automatically set by an ink jet recording apparatus itself, and this leads to the possibility of providing an ink jet recording head which is simple to operate and high in reliability.

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Also, there can be provided an ink cartridge which can be prevented from being erroneously inserted by the user and which has information for properly controlling the driving of a recording head.

Further, in a position wherein an ink cartridge is held in an apparatus body, the communication between an ink supply system and ink is effected prior thereto and therefore, the ink communication state can be secured near the held position of the ink cartridge. In addition, prior to the holding, the information regarding the ink cartridge is readable and therefore, the impossibility of reading or misjudgment does not occur near the held position. Furthermore, the ink communication is effected prior to reading and therefore, even if the recording operation is immediately started in response to reading, there will occur no inconvenience such as the introduction of air into the ink supply system, and even if conversely, the ink cartridge is pulled out during the recording operation, this can be detected before the ink communication is cut off and therefore, there will occur no similar inconvenience if the operation is discontinued.

Also, according to the present invention, in the position wherein the ink cartridge is held in

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the apparatus body, the communication between the ink supply system and ink is effected prior thereto and therefore, the ink communication state can be secured near the held position of the ink cartridge. Further, the inherent information regarding the ink cartridge becomes readable near the held position, and information differing from said information is read in a predetermined range from the ink communication position to the vicinity of the held position and therefore, if design is made such that a warning is given in response to the reading of this information, the unsatisfactory holding of the ink cartridge can be detected to obviate the falling off thereof.

Furthermore, the horizontal positions of the unlocking members provided on the ink cartridge side and the horizontal positions of the locking members provided correspondingly to them are made asymmetrical with respect to the direction of insertion, i.e., different from each other with respect to the vertical direction or the direction of insertion, and therefore, even if the ink cartridge is inserted into the mounting portion with the vertical direction or the longitudinal direction thereof being mistaken, the locking members and the unlocking members will not come into engagement with each other and the locked state will not be released

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and thus, the ink cartridge will be prevented from being mounted by mistake and accordingly, any damage attributable to wrong mounting can be prevented.

Also, according to the present invention, the flag member capable of being protruded and contained which is provided on the ink cartridge is protruded from the cartridge toward the path along which the carriage is moved when the ink cartridge is mounted on the mounting portion and therefore, the mounting of the ink cartridge can be detected by the photosensor carried on the carriage, and by variously changing the form of the flag member and characterizing each ink cartridge, the information for a plurality of ink cartridges can be individually judged by a combination thereof with the moved position of the carriage.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a characteristic graph showing the relation between an applied pulse and the growth of a bubble.

Figure 2 is a perspective view showing the construction of an ink cartridge mounting mechanism according to the prior art.

Figure 3 shows the construction of an ink cartridge detecting device according to the prior art.

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Figure 4 illustrates a photosensor for the detecting device of Figure 3.

Figure 5 is a schematic perspective view showing an embodiment of the ink cartridge according to the present invention.

Figure 6 is a block diagram showing a construction for controlling the driving of a recording head by the information of the ink cartridge.

Figure 7 is a flow chart showing an example of the sequence until printing is accomplished by the information of the ink cartridge.

Figure 8 is a schematic perspective view showing another embodiment of the ink cartridge according to the present invention.

Figures 9 to 15 are schematic perspective views showing further embodiments.

Figure 16 is a schematic perspective view showing the installed position of a medium carried on an ink cartridge.

Figure 17 is a schematic view showing an example of the ink jet recording apparatus.

Figure 18 is a perspective view showing an ink jet recording apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention with the top cover thereof removed.

Figures 19A and 19B are a perspective view

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and a fragmentary cross-sectional view, respectively, showing an example of the construction of the ink cartridge mounting portion of the apparatus according to the present invention.

Figure 20 is a cross-sectional view showing an example of the construction of an ink cartridge according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 21 is a perspective view for illustrating each portion for effecting the mutual coupling between the ink cartridge and the body side.

Figure 22 illustrates the relation in the coupling position of each portion concerned in coupling in the present embodiment relative to the insertion of the ink cartridge.

Figures 23A - 23E illustrate inconveniences which occur when the coupling position relation as in the present embodiment is not adopted.

Figures 24A and 24B are a fragmentary enlarged view and a coupling position relation illustration, respectively, showing an improved embodiment of the ink cartridge of Figures 21 and 22.

Figures 25A and 25B are block diagrams showing a control system for the construction shown in Figure 24 and a flow chart showing an example of the operation thereof, respectively.

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Figure 26 is a perspective view showing an example of the construction of an ink cartridge mounting mechanism according to the present invention.

Figures 27A and 27B illustrate the normal cartridge mounting operation by the embodiment of Figure 26.

Figures 27C and 27D illustrate a wrong mounting operation.

Figure 28 is a perspective view showing the construction according to another embodiment of the present invention.

Figures 29A and 29B illustrate still another embodiment of the present invention.

Figures 30A and 30B illustrate the construction of the ink cartridge according to the present invention before and after the cartridge is mounted.

Figures 31A - 31C are perspective views showing the three kinds of forms of the flag member in the ink cartridge according to the present invention.

Figures 32A and 32B illustrate the operation of another embodiment of the ink cartridge according to the present invention in a state in which ink is present and a state in which ink is absent, respectively.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Some embodiments of the present invention will hereinafter be described in detail with reference to the drawings.

[Embodiment 1]

Figure 5 is a partly broken-away perspective view showing an ink cartridge 51 removably mountable with respect to an ink jet recording apparatus according to the present invention, and a portion of a connecting device 52 connected to the ink cartridge 51 and provided with a supply portion for supplying ink to the ink jet recording apparatus and a supply receiving portion for receiving waste ink from the ink jet recording apparatus, the connecting device 52 being provided on the ink jet recording apparatus side.

In Figure 5, the reference numeral 12 designates the housing of the ink cartridge 51 which is usually made by plastic molding in accordance with the shape or construction of the cartridge containing portion of the ink jet recording apparatus body.

The reference numeral 13 denotes a hermetically sealed type ink container for containing ink therein. In the present embodiment, the ink container 13 uses a flexible ink bag in which ink is enclosed. The reference numeral 15

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designates an ink supply portion formed of an elastic material such as silicone rubber. This ink supply portion is connected to the ink bag through an ink conducting tube 15a, and when the ink cartridge 51 and the ink jet recording apparatus are connected together, the ink supply portion provides a portion into which a hollow ink needle 16 installed in the connecting device 52 of the ink jet recording apparatus is inserted to thereby supply the ink in the ink bag into the ink jet recording apparatus.

Any ink forcibly discharged from an ink jet recording head by the filling of the recording head with ink or by the recovery operation or the like of the recording head passes through waste ink collecting tubes 16a and 16b installed in the ink jet recording apparatus body and is fed into a waste ink reservoir 18 through a hole 17 formed in the housing of the ink cartridge. The reference numeral 19 designates a medium having information indicative of the kind of the ink in the ink cartridge. The medium used in the present embodiment is a resistor (having a predetermined resistance value selected from among 0 to $\infty\Omega$). The reference characters 19a and 19b denote terminals provided on the ink cartridge side to electrically connect the medium to the ink jet recording apparatus body. When the ink

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cartridge is completely connected to the ink jet recording apparatus body, these terminals 19a and 19b are electrically connected to pin terminals 20a and 20b prepared in the ink jet recording apparatus body. These pin terminals are electrically connected to a control circuit in the ink jet recording apparatus body, which control circuit can electrically freely read the information of these elements.

Figure 6 is a block diagram showing the manner in which the ink cartridge 51 shown in Figure 5 is connected to the ink jet recording apparatus 53. By the ink cartridge 51 being mounted in the ink jet recording apparatus 53, the medium 19 carried on the ink cartridge is connected to the interface 54 of the apparatus 53 side, whereby the information of the medium 19 is transmitted. On the basis of this information, control as will be described later, for example, the table of ROM 56 including a conversion table, is selected, and on the basis thereof, the driving of a recording head 59 is controlled by a head driving control device 61.

Figure 7 shows a series of operation sequences when the power source switch of the ink jet recording apparatus body is closed in a state in which the ink cartridge 51 is mounted with respect

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to the ink jet recording apparatus 53 shown in Figures 5 and 6 and the terminals 19a and 19b of the medium 19 of the ink cartridge 51 are electrically connected to the pin terminals 20a and 20b of the apparatus side and the ink supply system is connected to the apparatus body.

At a step S101, a power source switch is closed. At a step S102, whether the ink cartridge is mounted with respect to the apparatus is judged. If the ink cartridge is not mounted, a warning lamp is turned on at a step S103. If the ink cartridge is judged to be mounted, at a step S104, the resistance value of the medium carried on the ink cartridge is read. At a step S105, in conformity with the read resistance value, data is read out from a data table. At a step S106, the data is judged, and if the data is absent, the warning lamp is turned on at a step S107. If the data is present, at a step S108, the data is transferred to a driving RAM. Thus, at a step S109, the recording head is driven in accordance with a predetermined table, and at a step S110, whether printing is possible or whether a printing signal is present is judged, and if printing is possible by the printing signal, printing is effected at a step S111. If printing is not possible, return is made to the step S109, where processing is effected to make the

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recording head capable of printing. Of course, the detection of the presence or absence of the ink cartridge may be effected by detecting the medium carried on the ink cartridge.

Table 3 below shows an example of the conversion table of the resistance values of the resistor on the ink cartridge and the ink jet driving conditions, etc. for those resistance values.

Table 3

Resistance value	Voltage	Pulse width	Frequency	Number of preliminary discharges
[kΩ]	[V]	[μs]	[KHz]	[times]
0	0	0	0	0
0.5	21	7	3	128
1	21	7	4	128
5	28	3	3	128
10	28	3	4	50
100	28	3	6	50
200	28	2.5	6	50
∞	0	0	0	0

Resistance value vs. head driving conditions conversion table recorded in the ink jet recording apparatus body.

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This conversion table is pre-recorded in the control ROM in the ink jet recording apparatus. After the presence of the ink cartridge is confirmed, the information on the ink cartridge is read as the resistance value.

Where for example, the kind of the ink jet recording apparatus 53 is the apparatus example I in Table 2 and the kind of the ink is the ink ② in Table 1, if the resistance value of the resistor on the cartridge corresponding thereto is 1 kΩ, the information that the driving voltage is 21 V, that the pulse width is 7 μsec, that the driving frequency is 4 KHz and that the number of preliminary discharges is 128 times is read from the conversion table recorded in the ROM 56 which is shown in Table 3, by the CPU 55, and then is transferred as the data during the driving of the ink jet recording head to a particular area of the RAM 56. Likewise, if the resistance value corresponding to the ink ③ is 100 kΩ, the conditions that the driving voltage is 28 V, the pulse width is 3 μsec, the driving frequency is 6 KHz and the number of preliminary discharges is 50 times are read from the conversion table.

When the recording head 59 is actually driven to effect printing, the CPU 55 again indicates the aforementioned data from said determined area of the

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RAM to a reading head controller 58. Of course, the table differs from apparatus to apparatus, and for the ink ③, in the apparatus example II, the driving voltage is 21 V, the pulse width is 7 μsec, the driving frequency is 3 KHz and the number of preliminary discharges is 50 times, and further, if the clog preventing mechanism is a very simple device and the ink ③ is unsuitable, if the data on the conversion table in that apparatus is made to have a particular value (in this example, 0) for identification, the ink jet recording apparatus will judge that setting is impossible, and can produce an alarm. Thus, any ink which is difficult to discharge when used in a recording head having a predetermined characteristic can be automatically discriminated.

Further, by sufficiently securing the capacity of the conversion table, many expected kinds of driving conditions are input to the conversion table, whereby there can be realized an ink jet recording apparatus which can cope with excellent ink in the future. In the aforedescribed embodiment, description has been made with respect to an example in which reading is effected from the conversion table and the driving voltage, the pulse width, the driving frequency and the number of preliminary discharges are all made variable, but it

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is apparent that it is also possible to form in the apparatus a circuit in which more simply, for example, only the driving voltage, only the pulse width, or only the driving frequency, or a possible combination thereof is set by the resistance value of the resistor. Also, the information designated by the medium can include, in addition to these, the conditions of the pre-heating in which the recording head is pre-heated to improve the characteristic of the ink or the preliminary discharge in which discharge not concerned in recording is effected to improve the recording characteristic, such ink discharge conditions that optimum discharge can be obtained during recording, the ink discharge conditions when recording is effected by the use of inks of plural colors, or the discharge recovery conditions of the recording head which correspond to the ink used.

The discharge recovery conditions are performed when the discharge state is deteriorated before predetermined recording is terminated, and include, for example, a series of operations of moving the recording head to a position opposed to a cap member, thereafter causing the cap to bear against the discharge port surface, driving a pump for recovery to thereby forcibly discharge the ink from the discharge port, opening the cap, thereafter

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effecting idle suction for discharging the ink in the cap, and cleaning the discharge port surface of the recording head by a blade, or one of these operations or a combination of two or more of these operations. That is, the discharge recovery conditions show the selection of these operations and a condition for which these operations are performed under what degree of load, and optimum conditions are set in conformity with the characteristic of the ink. For example, for ink which is low in viscosity and easy to dry, it is necessary to set the discharge recovery operation at high frequency, and for ink which is high in viscosity and difficult to dry, the frequency of the discharge recovery operation can be set low. Here, the frequency includes not only the frequency of the recording operation, but also the operation load or the like of the recovery pump in the recovery operation. Also, the pre-heating conditions are necessary for bringing about such ink conditions that optimum recording can be accomplished during recording in conformity with the characteristic of the ink used. For example, as regards ink of high viscosity, it is preferable to heat such ink at a somewhat high temperature to reduce the load of the ink discharge conditions during the recording by the recording head, and adjust the viscosity of the ink.

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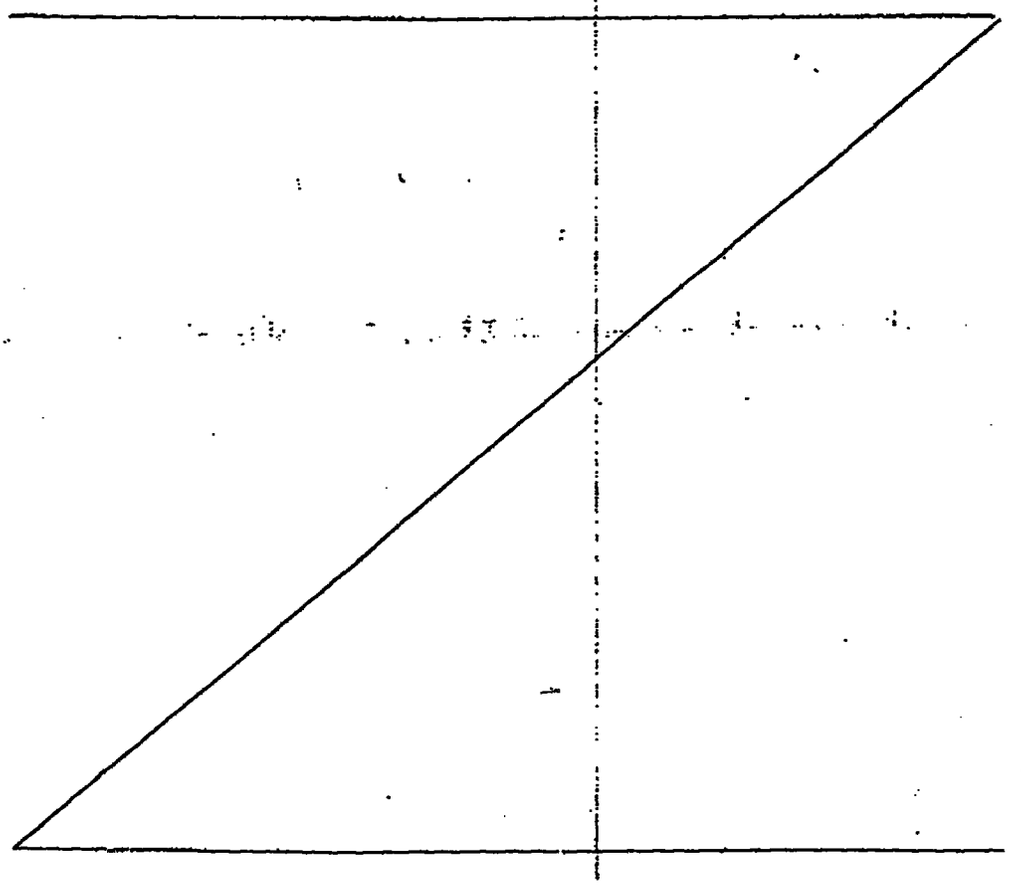
By these various conditions being also included in the conversion table of the body side, more excellent recording can be accomplished more easily as compared with a case where discharge conforming to the characteristic of ink is effected under only the discharge conditions.

As regards the form in which the resistor as the medium is carried on the ink cartridge, such resistor may be provided at a predetermined location on the front face of the ink cartridge in which a collecting portion is provided, but alternatively, may be provided on the upper surface of the ink cartridge as shown in Figure 8.



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In this case, as regards the resistance value of the resistor, a resistor of different resistance value may be carried between the terminals of the cartridge side which are connected to the contacts of the apparatus side, or the expanse of the resistor can be changed, whereby the resistor may assume one of various resistance values. As a method of changing the resistance value of the resistor at this time, it is possible to utilize a logo type or the like of a predetermined shape. Also, the set resistance value may be such a value that the conversion table set on the body side as previously described can be properly read out.

As a method of carrying this resistor on the ink cartridge, mention may be made of a method of forming the resistor by printing so that it may directly assume a predetermined resistance value relative to the upper surface of the cartridge, or a method of sticking a label printed with a resistor so that it may assume a predetermined resistance value.

For the mounting with respect to the apparatus of a cartridge provided with such a resistor having a predetermined resistance value, design is made such that the terminal of the resistor and the terminal of the body side scratch each other. This is because in some cases, stable reading of the resistance value cannot be accomplished even if the terminals are

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connected together with their surfaces oxidized and a film remaining formed thereon, and such instability can be eliminated by mounting the cartridge in such a manner that the oxidized film is scraped off.

In the foregoing, a resistor has been described as an example of the resistor carried on the cartridge, but it is also possible to use a capacitor, a diode, a coil, a battery or the like for the same purpose.

Figure 9 shows an embodiment of the afore-described ink cartridge in which the information medium is made removably mountable. In Figure 9, the reference numeral 28 designates a chip provided with a resistor which is an information medium. By the chip 28 being combined with the mating portion of the ink cartridge, this ink cartridge becomes entirely identical in appearances and function to the ink cartridge shown in Figure 5. Accordingly, in the manufacture of the ink cartridge of the present invention, it is unnecessary to pre-assemble and prepare the housing 12 of the ink cartridge corresponding to the kind of the ink and the element 19, and it will become easy to prevent the mixing of products if the chip 28 is mounted when the ink cartridge is filled with the ink, and efficient production be comes possible with a result that an inexpensive and highly reliable ink cartridge is realized.

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[Embodiment 2]

In Embodiment 1, a simple element such as a resistor has been shown as the information medium, but in the present invention, a semiconductor can be employed as another example of the information medium. Figure 10 shows an embodiment of the present invention which is provided with an electrically erasable read-only semiconductor memory array as the information medium in the ink cartridge. The reference numeral 21 denotes the ink cartridge body. The reference numeral 22 designates a semiconductor memory array. Here, the semiconductor memory array is an ROM (read-only memory), an EEPROM (electrically erasable rewritable read-only memory), a battery back-up RAM or the like. The reference numeral 23 denotes a substrate attached accurately to the housing portion of the ink cartridge. This substrate has a terminal portion 26 for fixing the memory array thereto and electrically connecting the memory array to a connector prepared in an ink jet recording apparatus 24. As shown in Figure 10, when the ink cartridge body is inserted into the ink cartridge receiving portion 27 of the ink jet recording apparatus 24, the connector 25 and the terminal portion 26 are electrically connected together. At this time, an ink reservoir and a waste ink reservoir are likewise connected to the connecting device of the ink jet recording apparatus.

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The series of operation sequences when in this state, the power source switch of the ink jet recording apparatus body is closed are similar to those shown in Figure 7. In the present embodiment, the memory array provided on the ink cartridge permits more information to be recorded thereon than the information medium shown in Embodiment 1 (memory arrays of 1 or more (K byte) as the lowest capacity are now commercially available) and therefore, the ink jet driving conditions, the discharge recovery conditions, the pre-heating conditions, etc. are directly written therein as in the conversion table carried on the apparatus body in Embodiment 1. Accordingly, the CPU quickly transfers the information such as the ink jet driving conditions as the data during the driving of the ink jet recording head from the memory array to a particular area of the RAM after the closing of the power source switch. When the recording head is to be driven, the driving may be effected in a manner similar to that described with respect to Embodiment 1.

A feature of the present embodiment is that as previously described, the information such as the driving conditions, etc. matching the ink in the ink cartridge is recorded in the memory of the ink cartridge for each kind of the ink jet recording head and therefore a conversion table need not be prepared on the ink jet recording apparatus body. Accordingly, it is unnecessary

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to prepare a number of conversion tables in advance. That is, in the present embodiment, even if new ink is prepared in the future, only the ROM data of the ink cartridge can be changed and therefore, the present embodiment is high in expansibility.

Figure 11 shows an example of the ink cartridge in which the removably mountable information medium adopts the memory array as described in connection with Figure 10. In Figure 11, the reference numeral 30 designates a semiconductor memory array such as ROM, EEPROM or a battery back-up RAM. The semiconductor memory array 30 has on the housing 31 thereof a terminal 33 for electrically connecting the memory array to the connector 32 of the ink cartridge. The reference numeral 34 denotes a terminal for electrically connecting the ink jet recording apparatus body to the memory array. Accordingly, again in the present embodiment, it is apparent that an effect similar to that of the embodiment shown in Figure 9 is obtained.

[Embodiment 3]

Figure 12 shows another embodiment of the present invention in which the information such as the ink jet recording head driving conditions are recorded in a memory on the ink cartridge in parallelism to the direction of insertion of the ink cartridge into the ink jet recording apparatus. The reference numeral

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35 designates a magnetic tape on which the information such as the ink jet driving conditions is recorded at 35a in parallelism to the direction of insertion of the ink cartridge by variations in magnetization polarity, density, etc. Also, in order to prevent unsatisfactory reading of the information caused by a change in the insertion speed, exclusive tracks in which timing information is written at predetermined intervals are set at 35b in parallelism to the track in which the aforementioned information is written.

As shown in Figure 12, the information such as the ink jet head driving conditions recorded on the magnetic tape is successively read by a reading head 36 when the ink cartridge is inserted into the ink jet recording head body. After this information is transferred to the RAM area in the ink jet recording apparatus body, the ink jet recording head can be driven on the basis of this information in the same manner as in the embodiment shown in Figure 10.

[Embodiment 4]

Figure 13 shows another embodiment in which the method of recording information on the ink cartridge in the embodiment shown in Figure 12 is changed. In the present embodiment, the information such as the ink jet driving conditions uses a bar code 37 sticked to the housing portion of the ink cartridge, in place of the

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magnetic tape shown in the previous embodiment. Again in this case, as in the previous embodiment, the information such as the recording head driving conditions is successively read by a reading head 38 when the ink cartridge is inserted into the ink cartridge receiving portion 27 of the ink jet recording apparatus. In the present embodiment, a bar code need only be printed as the recording medium and therefore, the medium can be manufactured relatively easily and an inexpensive ink cartridge can be provided.

[Embodiment 5]

Figure 14 shows another embodiment in which the method of recording information on the ink cartridge in the embodiment shown in Figure 13 is changed. In Figure 14, the reference numeral 39 designates an ink cartridge, and the reference numeral 40 denotes a three-dimensional information pattern disposed on the housing of the ink cartridge. The information pattern 40 is molded integrally with the housing of the ink cartridge. The reference numeral 41 designates a three-dimensional information pattern for timing information. As shown in Figure 14, the information such as the ink jet recording head driving conditions recorded on the three-dimensional information pattern is successively read by a reading cam switch 42 when the ink cartridge is inserted into the ink cartridge

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receiving portion of the ink jet recording apparatus. After this information is transferred to the RAM area in the ink jet recording apparatus body, the ink jet recording head can be driven on the basis of this information in the same manner as in the embodiment shown in Figure 10.

[Embodiment 6]

Figure 15 shows another embodiment in which the method of recording information on the ink cartridge in the embodiment shown in Figure 14 is changed. In Figure 15, the reference numeral designates an ink cartridge, and the reference numeral 41 denotes a three-dimensional information pattern disposed on the housing of the ink cartridge 40. The information pattern 41 is molded integrally with the housing of the ink cartridge. The reference numeral 42 designates a three-dimensional information pattern for timing information. In the embodiment shown in Figure 15, the information such as the ink jet head driving conditions so recorded in the three-dimensional information pattern is successively read by the photoelectric switch 43 of the ink jet recording head body when the ink cartridge is inserted into the ink jet recording apparatus. After this information is transferred to the RAM area in the ink jet recording apparatus body, the ink jet recording head can be

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driven on the basis of this information.

The medium for transmitting the information by the aforedescribed various systems, as shown in Figure 16, may preferably be disposed, for example, above the ink connecting portion between the ink cartridge and the recording apparatus with respect to the direction of gravity. That is, it is preferable that as shown in the surfaces 44-48 on the cartridge in Figure 16, the information medium or the information delivery portion between the information medium and the ink jet recording apparatus body be positioned above the level line of a cap 15 which is the ink connecting portion between the ink cartridge and the ink jet recording apparatus.

By the information medium or the information delivery portion between the information medium and the ink jet recording head being so provided above the ink connecting portion with respect to the direction of gravity, the ink flows downwardly of the cartridge along the direction of gravity even if it leaks from the ink connecting portion and therefore, the medium can be prevented from being wetted by the ink. Thus, adverse effects such as electrical leak, the corrosion of the terminal portion and the unsatisfactory operation of the sensor caused by slight leakage of the ink during the mounting or dismounting of the ink cartridge can be minimized.

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The ink cartridge 154 of the present invention can also be applied to an ink cartridge for supplying ink to the ink imparting portion 153 of an apparatus of the type in which as shown in Figure 17, when an ink retaining member 152 passes through the ink imparting portion, a hole or recess 156 formed in the ink retaining member 152 is filled with ink and when the ink reaches the surface of the hole or recess 156 in the ink retaining member 152 filled with ink or the surface of a recording head 151, a desired voltage is applied to the recording head 151 to thereby discharge the ink and form an image on a recording medium 157 disposed in opposed relationship with the recording head 151 and moved on a platen.

In this case, as in each of the aforedescribed embodiments, control can be effected such that the various kinds of information given to the cartridge 154 are transmitted by the interface 159 between the ink imparting portion 153 and the cartridge and a processing table based on the information is selected to thereby effect predetermined driving of the head 151.

[Embodiment 7]

The ink cartridge carrying thereon an information medium in the form as previously described has a construction as shown, for example, in Figure 19, and can be applied to an ink jet recording apparatus which

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is shown with its cover removed.

In Figure 18, the reference numeral 201 designates a recording head in the form of a chip, and the reference numeral 202 denotes a carriage carrying the recording head 201 thereon and enabling the movement of its own for the scanning by the recording head 201. On the carriage 202, as will be described later, there are provided a support member for removably carrying the recording head 201 thereon, and a cover member (indicated by dot-and-dash line) forming a part of the recording head 201 and protecting a substrate printed with a head driving circuit or the like.

The recording head 201 has 64 discharge openings disposed in the front end portion thereof, and an ink liquid path communicating with each of these discharge openings is provided. Further, behind the region in which the ink liquid paths are disposed, there is provided a common liquid chamber for supplying ink to these liquid paths. In the ink liquid paths corresponding to 64 discharge ports, there are provided electro-thermal conversion elements generating discharge energy available to discharge the ink liquid from these discharge ports and electrode wiring for supplying electric power to the electro-thermal conversion elements.

These electro-thermal conversion elements and electrode wiring are formed on a substrate formed of

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silicon or the like by the film-forming technique, and partition walls, a top plate, etc. formed of resin or a glass material are layered on this substrate, whereby said discharge openings, said ink liquid paths and said common liquid chamber are constructed. Further rearwardly of said construction in the recording head 201, a driving circuit for driving the electro-thermal conversion elements on the basis of a recording signal is provided in the form of a printed substrate.

In the carriage 202, rearwardly of the above-described recording head 201, there is disposed a connector substrate 212 through a connector 209. On the connector substrate 212, there are disposed the connector 209 for connection to the recording head 201 and a connector for connection to a flexible cable from the control circuit of the apparatus body. Also, a capacitor, a resistor, etc. are mounted on the connector substrate 212, and by these, the drop of the power source voltage supplied through the flexible cable and the mixing of noise with a signal are compensated for. Further, the connector substrate 212, as will be described later, is supported on a slide member so that it may slide with the opening-closing movement of the cover member and the connector 209 may be connected to the terminal of the recording head 201.

The carriage 202 is slidably and pivotably engaged with a guide shaft 203 through an engagement

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portion 262a, and the guide shaft 203 is provided over an area longer than the width of recording paper so as to be orthogonal to the direction in which a recording medium such as recording paper is conveyed. Also, the carriage 202 is connected to a portion of a belt, not shown, extended in parallelism to the guide shaft 203, and by this belt being driven by a carriage motor, not shown, the movement of the carriage 202 along the guide shaft 203, i.e., the scanning movement of the recording head 201, be comes possible. Also, the carriage 202 and the recording head 201 obtain the force for pivotally moving about the guide shaft 203 from their own gravity, and with this force as a biasing force, they bias a paper keep plate 208 to be described through a slide member provided on the carriage 202 for sliding on the paper keep plate. Thereby, the recording head 201 can keep a predetermined spacing between it and the recording paper used in conformity with the thickness of the recording paper.

The recording paper 206 fed from a paper supply cassette, not shown, or fed manually is supplied to the apparatus body through a paper supply port comprised of an upper paper guide 207a and a lower paper guide 207b. The paper keep plate 208 having a curvature is continuous to the extension of the upper paper guide 207a. The paper keep plate 208 is disposed so as to press the recording paper against a

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paper feeding roller 205, and is formed of such a material that the frictional force created between the paper keep plate and the recording paper during the pressing is smaller than the frictional force created between the paper feeding roller 205 and the recording paper. Also, the lower paper guide 207b extends to the region in which the paper feeding roller 205 is disposed parallel to the paper keep plate 208.

Thus, the recording paper 206 fed from the paper supply port is conveyed by one line each upwardly in the apparatus with the rotation of the paper feeding roller. At this time, the recording paper 206 slides on a plate-like platen 207 while the spacing between it and the recording head 201 is regulated to a predetermined magnitude by the paper keep plate 208 and the platen 207.

The recording head 201, with its scanning movement, discharges ink droplets to the recording area of the recording paper 206 opposed thereto to thereby effect recording of one line, and by this recording and the conveyance of the recording paper for said one line, recording of each one line is sequentially effected, whereby characters, images or the like are formed. The recording paper 206 on which recording has been effected, with the conveyance thereof, is discharged onto a paper discharge tray, not shown, by paper discharge rollers 204 and spurs 240A and 240B

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provided above the recording paper conveyance path. Five pairs of such spurs 240A and 240B are provided correspondingly to the paper discharge rollers 204, and a spur cleaner is interposed between each pair of spurs. A member for supporting these spurs and spur cleaners is not shown in Figure 18. The spurs 240A are designed to impart a pressure force to the paper discharge rollers 204 with the recording paper interposed therebetween, and the spurs 240B are designed to regulate the recording paper conveyance path between them and the platen 207. The paper discharge rollers 204 are rotatively driven so as to be greater in peripheral speed than the paper feeding roller 205, whereby the recording paper 206 in the portion thereof constituting the recording area is pulled upwardly and thus, the recording paper 206 can be prevented from floating up from the platen 207.

Near the home position in the area continuous to the scanning area of the recording head 201, there are provided a series of constructions for the discharge recovery process. That is, there are provided a blade 226 for removing water drops, dust, etc. on the discharge port surface in which the discharge ports are disposed by the wiping movement thereof, an absorbing portion 225 for removing water drops, etc. on the discharge port surface chiefly by absorbing them, and a cap 213 for effecting the capping for the hermetic sealing of

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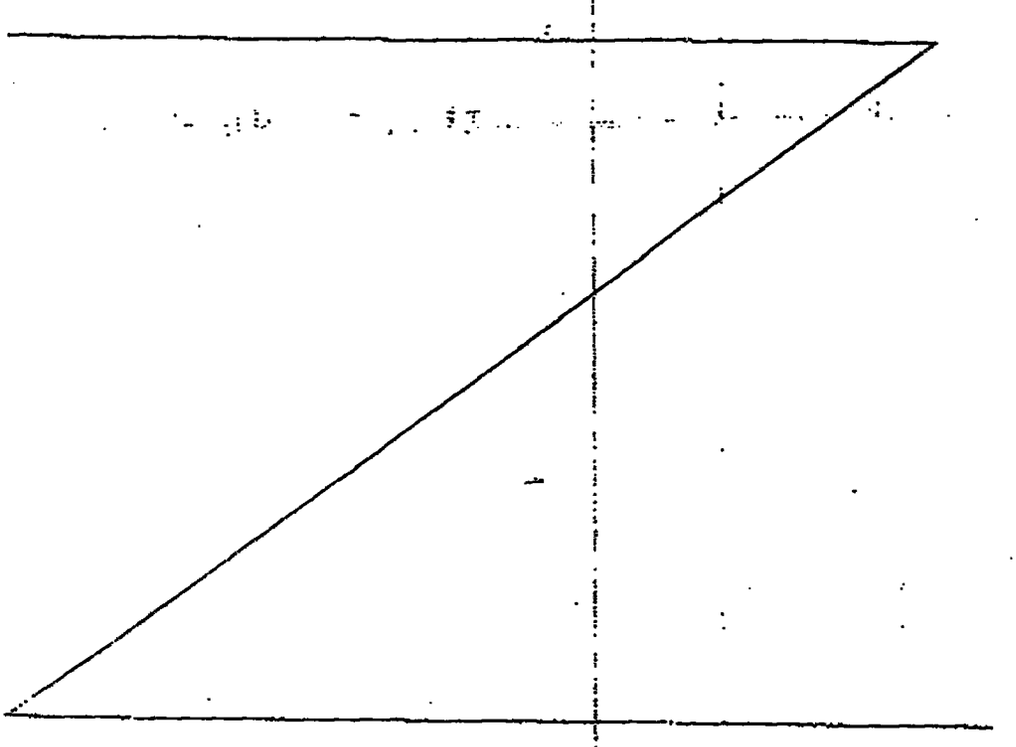
the discharge port surface, idle discharge and ink absorption. These members are designed to be movable back and forth relative to the moving area of the recording head 201 while being supported as a unit by a moving support member 214, and performs their respective operations at appropriate timing. Also, the ink absorption in the cap 213 is effected by a pump 224 communicating with the cap 213 through the hollow portion of the moving support member 214 and a tube. During the capping by the cap 213, a hole formed in a cap arm 217 mounted on a side of a holding member for the cap 213 and a projected portion provided on the carriage 202 are engaged with each other, whereby the recording head 201 is precluded from rotating rearwardly to thereby ensure the capping of the discharge port surface by the cap 213.



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The rotation of the paper feeding roller 205, and the paper discharge rollers 204, and the operations in the discharge recovering mechanism, i.e., the back and forth movement of the cap 213, the blade 226 and the absorbing member 225 as a unit and the absorbing operation by the pump 224, are performed by the utilization of the rotative driving force of a feed motor 221. That is, the rotative driving force of the feed motor 221 mounted on a portion of the apparatus body frame is first transmitted to a transmission switching gear train 219. In this gear train 219, the selection and switching of each gear is effected by the movement of a selection gear (not shown) operatively associated with the movement of the carriage 202, i.e., the scanning movement by the recording head 201, the movement to the home position or the discharge recovery device and the stoppage at these positions. Thereby, the rotation of each gear in the gear train 219 is transmitted to the paper feeding roller 205 and the paper discharge rollers 204 through an intermediate feed gear 220, and transmitted to the cap 213, etc. finally through a cam 216, and further transmitted to the pump 224 through a pump gear 222 and a pump cam 223.

The supply of ink to the recording head 201 is effected from an ink cartridge 227 mounted in the recording apparatus body, through a flexible tube capable of following the movement of the carriage 202.

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Also, the moved position of the carriage 202 is detected by counting the number of steps of the carriage motor with the position of engagement between a home position sensor 211 provided on the carriage 202 and a home position detecting flag provided near the end of the movement area of the carriage 202 as the reference.

Description will now be made of the construction of the ink cartridge 227 according to the present embodiment and the construction of the mounting portion of the body side on which the ink cartridge is mounted.

Figures 19A and 19B show an example of the construction of the mounting portion of the body side.

First, in Figure 19A, the reference numeral 302 designates a cartridge inserting portion for receiving the insertion of the ink cartridge 227. The reference numeral 304 denotes a contact holder for holding leaf spring-like contacts 306A and 306B as means for reading the information provided on the ink cartridge 227. The contact holder 304 is combined with the inserting portion 302 by a latch portion 308 being engaged with a hole 310 in the inserting portion 302. The reference numeral 312 designates a connector for connecting the contacts 306A and 306B to a body control unit.

The reference numeral 314 denotes a hollow needle member which enters the interior of a containing bag for ink to be supplied which is contained in the ink

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cartridge 227. The hollow needle member 314 is formed with an ink conducting aperture 316 in the tip end portion thereof. An ink supply tube is mounted on the other end of the needle 314, and the tube is connected to a common liquid chamber portion in a head chip 110 provided on the recording head 201. Means for detecting the amount of remaining ink can be provided intermediately of this ink supply system.

The reference numeral 318 denotes a waste ink pipe for directing waste ink to an ink absorbing member which enters the ink cartridge 227 and is contained therein. The waste ink is ink discharged during the ink refreshing process, for example, in the ink supply system or the common liquid chamber, or ink discharged during the recovery process.

The reference numeral 320 designates clicks as a fastening means for the ink cartridge 227. One click 320 is provided on each side of the inserting portion 302. These clicks 320, as shown in Figure 19B, receive the insertion of the cartridge 227 by an engagement portion 322 being resiliently flexed with the engagement thereof with a side of the cartridge 227 during the insertion of the cartridge 227, and hold the cartridge 227 in that position by the engagement portion 322 restoring its original shape when a recess 332 in the cartridge 227 reaches the clicks.

Figure 20 shows an example of the construction

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of the ink cartridge 227 according to the present embodiment.

In Figure 20, the reference numeral 340 denotes an ink bag containing therein ink to be supplied. The ink bag 340 is provided with a plug 342 made, for example, of rubber. The needle 314 is inserted into this plug 342 and further enters the interior of the ink bag, whereby ink communication is accomplished. The reference numeral 344 designates an ink absorbing member for receiving the above mentioned waste ink. The aforedescribed medium for transmitting the characteristic of the ink in the cartridge is attached to a portion of a side or the upper surface of the ink cartridge 227.

Figure 21 illustrates each portion for coupling the ink cartridge 227 to the body side. In Figure 21, the reference numeral 346 denotes a wiring resistance pattern provided on the upper surface of the ink cartridge 227, and the control unit of the apparatus body can detect the presence or absence of the mounted ink cartridge in conformity with the conduction/non-conduction between the contacts 306A - 306B through the wiring resistance pattern 346. Also, by this wiring resistance pattern being made into a resistance pattern having a resistance value determined in conformity with the color or density or the like of the ink containing this pattern, the control unit of the apparatus body can read the information thereof.

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In the present embodiment, the location and dimensions of each coupling portion are determined so that an inserted position (1) in which the needle 314 penetrates through the plug 342 with the insertion of the ink cartridge 227 and the aperture 316 comes to the interior of the ink bag 340, whereby ink communication is accomplished, a position (2) in which the contacts 306A and 306B are connected to the wiring resistance pattern 346 and a position (3) in which the clicks 320 are engaged with recesses 332, whereby the ink cartridge 227 is held may lie in the named order in the direction of insertion. That is, design is made such that when the operation inserts the cartridge 227, the needle 314 first enters the interior of the ink bag 340 and when the cartridge is further inserted, the contacts 306A and 306B are then connected to the resistance pattern 346 and only when the cartridge is still further inserted, the clicks 320 come into engagement with the recesses 332. In the case of the present embodiment, the ink cartridge 227 contains the waste ink also therein and therefore, it is desirable that in the position (1), the waste ink pipe 318 be also positioned in the ink cartridge 227.

The above-described positional relation is shown in Figure 22. In Figure 22, (4) indicates a position in which the ink cartridge 227 finally strikes in the direction of insertion, and the range from (3)

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to ④ is a range in which the cartridge 227 is movable in its held position due to the back-lash of the clicks 320 and recesses 332, or a range in which the clicks 320 come into engagement with the recesses 332 and the cartridge 227 is further inserted until it strikes against the innermost part of the inserting position 302.

If such positional relation is not assumed, there will occur inconveniences as shown in Figure 23.

That is, in the relation shown in Figure 23A, even if cartridge holding is done, the information regarding the cartridge cannot be read through the contacts 306A and 306B and therefore, in some cases, the control unit of the apparatus body may judge that the cartridge is not yet inserted. In the relation shown in Figure 23B, contact connection is effected prior to ink communication and therefore, the control unit of the apparatus body may judge that the cartridge has been mounted, and may start a predetermined operation, whereby air may be introduced from the needle 314 into the ink supply system. This also holds true of the relation shown in Figure 23C and moreover, if the operation discontinues the inserting operation by the confirmation of a click sound, ink communication will not be provided at all.

Also in the relations shown in Figures 23D and 23E, in spite of cartridge holding being done, there is

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a case where the needle 314 is out in that range or contact connection becomes unstable.

In contrast, according to the relation as shown in Figure 22, ink communication, contact connection and cartridge holding take place in the named order during the insertion of the cartridge and therefore, the operator only need confirm cartridge holding simply by a click sound or the like. Also, even if the control unit of the apparatus body immediately starts its operation in response to contact connection, there will not occur the inconvenience that air is introduced into the ink supply system, and even if conversely, the cartridge 227 is pulled out during the operation of the control unit of the apparatus body, the control unit of the apparatus body will detect it before ink communication is cut off and therefore, a similar inconvenience will not occur if the operation is discontinued.

Figure 24A shows a further improvement in the above-described construction. In the example shown there, the wiring resistance pattern is divided into two, and the pattern lying forwardly with respect to the direction of insertion of the cartridge is a pattern 346A for short-circuiting the contacts 306A-306B, and the pattern lying rearwardly is a resistance pattern 346B having a resistance value determined in conformity with the color, density, etc. of the ink.

Figure 24B shows the relation among a range

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within which ink communication is done in such a construction, a range within which the contacts 306A and 306B are in contact with the pattern 346A, a range within which the contacts 306A and 306B are in contact only with the pattern 346B, and a range within which the cartridge is held.

In Figure 24B, (1) indicates a limit position in which ink communication is done as described above, (3) indicates a limit position in which the cartridge 227 is held, and (4) indicates the innermost position in which the cartridge 227 strikes. Also, (2A) indicates a limit position on this side with respect to the direction of insertion in which the contacts 306A and 306B are in contact with the pattern 346A and are short-circuited, and (2B) indicates a limit position on this side with respect to the direction of insertion in which the contacts 306A and 306B are off the pattern 346A and in contact only with the pattern 346B and the resistance value of this pattern is read. Here, it is desirable that the position (2B) be the position (3) or a position near it, and in the present example, a position near the position (3) in the direction of insertion of the cartridge in which particularly the engagement between the clicks 320 and the recesses 332 is released and the cartridge 27 is ready to slip out.

The relation among the various positions is as shown, and an effect similar to that in the case of

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Figure 21 is obtained, but in the present embodiment, a more excellent effect is obtained by performing the following operation.

Figure 25A diagrammatically shows the essential portions of a control circuit according to the present embodiment. In Figure 25A, the reference numeral 400 designates the control unit of the apparatus body which may be in the form of a microcomputer having a CPU for effecting the process of Figure 25B and other control of the entire apparatus, an ROM storing therein a program or the like corresponding to the process procedure, and an RAM for working. The reference numeral 410 denotes a detector for detecting the resistance value between the contacts 306A and 306B. When said resistance value is "0", the detector 410 indicates that the contacts are short-circuited by the pattern 306A, and when said resistance value is infinity, it indicates that the ink cartridge 227 is not yet mounted, and when said resistance value is a predetermined value, it indicates that the ink cartridge 227 is properly held. The reference numeral 420 designates a display device for a message or the like, or output means of sound or the like, or a notice unit which may comprise a combination thereof. The letter I denotes an operation stopping signal for each portion.

Figure 25B shows an example of the operation procedure of the present embodiment and this procedure

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can be started at suitable timing during the closing of the power source switch of the apparatus or during the interchange of the ink cartridge 227, and in addition, during the recording operation.

When this procedure is started, the resistance value is first read at a step S1. If at this step, the resistance value is infinity, it means a case where the cartridge 227 is not mounted and therefore, advance is made to a step S3, where the operation of each portion is maintained in its stopped state, and at a step S5, the operator is noticed to promote to insert the cartridge 227.

On the other hand, if the resistance value is "0", it means that the cartridge 227 is ready to slip out and therefore, advance is made to a step S7, where the operation of each portion is stopped, whereafter at a step S9, the operator is noticed to promote the operation for the cartridge 227 to be surely held.

Further, if the resistance value is a predetermined value, it means that the cartridge 227 is already surely held and therefore, the information (the color or the like of the ink) regarding the cartridge corresponding to that resistance value is recognized and a setting process corresponding thereto is carried out (a step S11).

That is, when the operator has inserted the cartridge 227 but the clicks 320 have not come into the recesses 332, or when the engagement therebetween has be

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released for some reason or other, the cartridge holding is not complete and therefore the cartridge is liable to slip out. In such a case, the contacts 306A and 306B are connected to the pattern 346A, whereby the control unit 400 of the apparatus body becomes unable to read the inherent information of the cartridge 227 and therefore, the control unit 400 of the apparatus body can recognize such a situation and switch off the operation of the apparatus, thereby noticing the operator to promote to surely insert the cartridge 227. Thus, the operator can be noticed of such a danger that the cartridge 227 will slip out of the apparatus.

If the positional relation as described above can be basically kept with regard to the reading position for the information regarding the supplied ink communication and the cartridge and the cartridge holding position, it is of course possible that the cartridge and the inserting portion therefor adopt suitable constructions. For example, the cartridge holding need not always resort to the clicks and recesses. Further, the reading of the information regarding the ink cartridge need not always be electrical, but may be, for example, optical. Furthermore, in the above-described embodiment, the waste ink is also introduced into the cartridge, but the cartridge may also be of the type which effects ink supply alone.

By adopting such a construction, reliable reading

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of the information can be accomplished in the cartridge carrying thereon the information medium as previously described, and the driving of the recording head best suited for the ink used can be accomplished.

[Embodiment 8]

Figure 26 shows another example of the ink cartridge mounting mechanism according to the present invention. In Figure 26, the reference numeral 304 designates an example of the ink cartridge according to the present invention, and the reference numerals 341 and 342 denotes unlocking members projectedly provided on the left and right side walls of the ink cartridge 304. The reference numerals 336 and 337 designate locking members according to the present invention which are provided along the left and right sides of an insertion path 332. In the present embodiment, the left and right locking members 336 and 337 differ in shape from each other, as shown.

In the case of the present embodiment, the unlocking members 341 and 342 and the locking members 336 and 337 are all disposed at the same level above the bottom surface of the insertion path 332, but the unlocking members 341 and 342 differ in their projected position in the direction of insertion. In this case, it is desirable in preventing the error of manufacture and malfunctioning that the amount of deviation between

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the unlocking members be 5 mm or more.

Thus, when the ink cartridge 304 is further inserted from the state shown in Figure 25, the locking member 342 may reach the end of the wedge portion 337A of the locking member 337 in a state in which the unlocking member 341 has reached the end of the wedge portion 336A of the locking member 336. The reference characters 336B and 337B designate locking grooves in the respective locking members, the reference character 336C denotes an escape portion, and the reference characters 336D and 337D designate returning wedge portions provided to return a protective plate 333 smoothly from its pushed-up position to its locked position as shown.

Reference is now had to Figures 27A-27D to describe the cartridge mounting operation in the ink cartridge mounting mechanism constructed as described above. First, when the ink cartridge 304 is mounted in a normal posture, as shown in Figure 27A, the unlocking members 341 and 342 provided on both sides of the ink cartridge 304 slidably contact with the wedge portion 336A of the locking member 336 and the wedge portion 337A of the locking member 337, respectively, and pivotally move the locking members 336 and 337 in opposite directions as shown in Figure 27B to thereby liberate the protective plate 333 from the restraint by the locking grooves 336B and 337B, and rotate the

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protective plate 333 in the direction of arrow B against the spring force of a spring 335 as shown in Figure 26, whereby the ink cartridge 304 can be directed to its mounted position.

However, when the ink cartridge 304 is mounted upside down by mistake as shown, for example, in Figure 27C, the unlocking members 341 and 342 pivotally move the locking members 336 and 337 as shown in Figure 27D and thus, the protective plate 333 is not liberated from these locking members. Also, even if the locking members 336 pivotally moves at all, the unlocking member 342 will be stopped in the escape portion 336C and the front face of the ink cartridge will bear against the protective plate 333. Consequently, the inserting movement of the ink cartridge 304 will be precluded by the protective plate 333 and the ink cartridge 304 will not be directed to its mounted position. Although not shown, when the ink cartridge 304 is about to be mounted with its front and rear reversed, the unlocking members are likewise absent and therefore the locking members 336 and 337 are not operated. Thereby the reliability of the cartridge mounting is ensured and thus, the transmission of the information from the information medium carried on the cartridge can also be reliably accomplished.

[Embodiment 9]

Figure 28 shows still another embodiment of

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the present invention. In the ink cartridge 304 according to this embodiment, the unlocking members 341 and 342 provided on both sides thereof are made to differ from each other in the level from the insertion path 332. Again in the present embodiment, it is desirable for the same reason as set forth in the previous embodiment that the amount of the deviation between the unlocking members be 5 mm or more. Thus, the locking members 336 and 337 are also disposed so as to keep levels corresponding to the unlocking members 341 and 342.

In the ink cartridge mounting mechanism constructed as described above, even if the ink cartridge 304 is inserted upside down, the left and right unlocking members 341 and 342 will not come into engagement with the locking members 336 and 337, and if the ink cartridge is inserted with its front and rear reversed, the unlocking members are not present on the first half of the cartridge, whereby the locked state of the protective plate 333 is not released and thus, wrong mounting is prevented.

Figures 29A and 29B show an ink cartridge according to yet still another embodiment of the present invention. The present embodiment is such that the locations of the unlocking members are changed for each ink cartridge and for example, ink cartridges containing therein inks which differ in the characteristics thereof

such as color, etc. can be correctly mounted on their corresponding mounting portions. That is, the ink cartridge 304A shown in Figure 29A and the ink cartridge 304B shown in Figure 29B are made to differ in the locations of unlocking members 341 and 342 in the direction of height and the amounts of horizontal deviation thereof differ from each other as indicated by D1 and D2.

So, assuming that for example, red ink is contained in the ink cartridge 304A and black ink is contained in the ink cartridge 304B, although not shown, locking members provided on the mounting portion of a red ink supply system and the mounting portion of a black ink supply system are made to correspond to the levels of the unlocking members 341 and 342, whereby even if a wrong attempt is made to mount an ink cartridge of a different color, the mounting thereof can be precluded and at the same time, the mounting of the individual ink cartridges 304A and 304B themselves in a wrong posture can be prevented. By wrong mounting being thus prevented, the reliable transmission of information can be accomplished in the cartridges of the aforedescribed construction each having as information medium and optimum driving of the recording head matching the ink used can be accomplished.

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[Embodiment 10]

Figures 30A and 30B show another embodiment of the ink cartridge according to the present invention. In these figures, the reference numeral 401 designates an ink cartridge having therein an ink containing portion, not shown, the reference numeral 402 denotes a shutter kept slidable along an opening 401A in the upper surface of the cartridge 401, the reference character 402A designates a shutter projection projected upwardly from the shutter 402, and the reference numeral 403 denotes a coil spring interposed between the shutter 402 and a spring receiving wall 401B. By this coil spring 403, the shutter 402 is biased leftwardly along the opening 401A and the shutter projection 402A is caused to bear against the end edge of the opening 401A to thereby keep the opening 401A closed.

The reference numeral 404 designates a flag member pivotable about a support shaft 405 and formed, for example, of a material capable of intercepting infrared light. The support shaft 405 is journalled to the wall portion of the cartridge 401. The reference numeral 406 denotes a torsion coil spring provided around the support shaft 405 and having one end thereof restrained by the flag member 404 and the other end secured to the wall portion of the cartridge 401. The torsion coil spring 406 biases the flag member 404 clockwise about the shaft 405 to thereby bias the same toward

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the back side of the shutter 402. On the other hand, the reference character 422A designates a stopper portion projectedly provided from a cartridge guide 422 toward a cartridge insertion path 426. When the ink cartridge 401 is inserted from right to left as viewed in Figure 30A, the shutter projection 402A bears against the stopper portion 422A, and with a further inserting operation thereafter, it serves to open the shutter 402 against the spring force of the spring 403.

The reference numeral 424 denotes a light detecting sensor of the transmission type endowed, for example, with the infrared light detecting function. The sensor 424 is carried on a carriage. When the ink cartridge 401 is inserted from the state of Figure 30A along the cartridge insertion path 426, the shutter 402 is opened by the stopper portion 422A as previously described, and in the completely mounted state of the ink cartridge 401 shown in Figure 30B, the shutter 402 is fully opened and at the same time, the flag member 404 is cocked up by the spring force of the torsion coil spring 406 and bears against the stopper portion 422A, and is kept in a posture for intercepting the optical path of the detecting sensor 424. The end portion 402B of the shutter 402 which is projectedly provided along the direction of the opening therein serves to suppress the cocking-up of the flag member 404 when the ink cartridge 401 does not assume its completely mounted

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position as shown in Figure 30B, but assumes an incompletely mounted position, and as long as the flag member 404 is not cocked up, said end portion 402B is not detected by the detecting sensor 424 and thus, the incomplete insertion of the ink cartridge 401 can be prevented. Accordingly, in this case, it is preferable to keep the gap between the flag member 404 and the shutter 402 as small as possible, and by doing so, the timing at which the flag member 404 is cocked up, i.e., the timing at which the ink cartridge 401 is completely mounted, can be made more accurate.

Also, when the ink cartridge 401 is to be removed from the recording apparatus, the ink cartridge 401 is drawn out rightwardly from the state of Figure 30B, whereby the flag member 404 is pushed by the stopper portion 402A and is rotated counterclockwise and also the shutter 402 is moved by the spring force of the coil spring 403 in a direction to close the opening 401A, and in the completely drawn out state of the cartridge, the flag member 404 is housed under the shutter 402.

In the ink cartridge thus constructed, the flag member for detecting the mounting of the cartridge which is provided in the cartridge itself is housed in the interior thereof before the cartridge is mounted and thus, does not spoil the external appearance of the cartridge and the cartridge is easy to handle, and on

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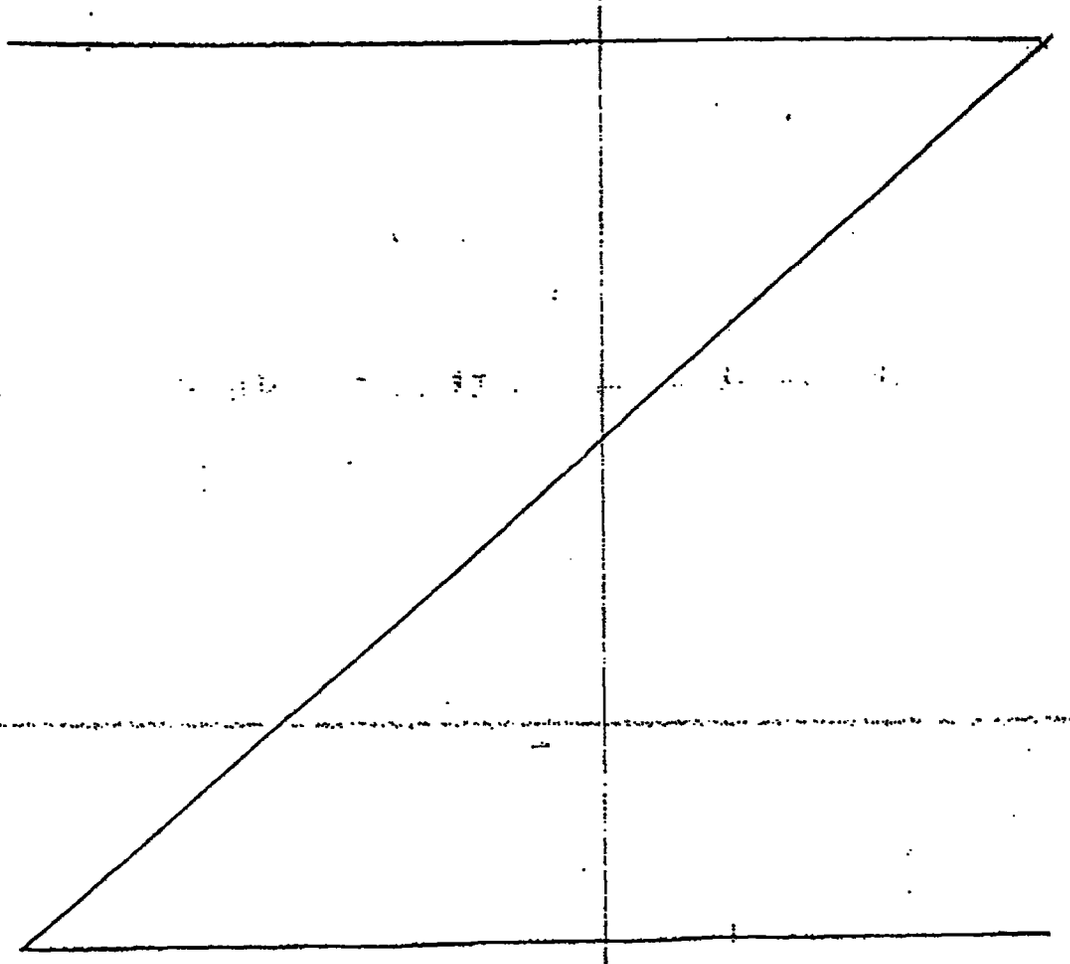
the other hand, it is only required on the recording apparatus side to dispose a hole for cocking up and down the flag member and a stopper portion provided in the cartridge guide and moreover, as will be described later, by a simple construction, various kinds of information regarding the ink cartridge can be provided to the user with high reliability.

Such a construction enables the cartridge to be reliably mounted with respect to the apparatus and therefore, for example, in the case of a cartridge carrying an information medium thereon, the corresponding information is reliably transmitted.



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Figures 31A-31C shows another embodiment of the ink cartridge according to the present invention. In these figures, only a flange member 404 is shown, and the reference characters 404A, 404B and 404C designate the light intercepting portions thereof. By the light intercepting portions 404A, 404B and 404C being so changed in accordance with the direction along the support shaft 405 thereof, i.e., the direction of movement of the carriage, the detecting position by the detecting sensor shown in Figures 30A and 30B can be changed, and different information regarding the ink cartridge 401 (in the case of the present embodiment, three kinds of information) can be obtained due to the difference in the detecting position. This is an example of other form of the afore-described information medium. Accordingly, the flange member 404 which differs in the position of the light intercepting portion as described above from cartridge to cartridge containing ink therein is used so as to show the kind, the characteristic or the like of the ink contained in the cartridge 401, and the number of the kinds of the information is not limited to three as described above.

The amount of information which can be handled differs depending on the resolving power during the carriage scanning and the detection width of the detecting sensor, but where design is made such that detection of a width of 20 mm is done, for example, by scanning

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for 2 mm each, a flag member in which the light intercepting portion is changed in position at a unit of 2 mm is provided in each cartridge, whereby ten kinds of information can be obtained. If an attempt is made to obtain such information by the conventional system, ten independent flags will become necessary and moreover, such flags will have to be arranged at intervals of 2 mm on the recording apparatus side, and this will unavoidably lead to an increased number of parts as well as the complication, bulkiness and increased cost of the apparatus, whereas by constructing the cartridge as shown in the present embodiment, it becomes possible to save the space by a minimum number of parts and yet provide numerous kinds of information regarding the ink cartridge.

Figures 32A and 32B show still another embodiment of the present invention and a construction for transmitting information indicative of the presence or absence of ink. The present embodiment is one in which for an ink bag 430 in the cartridge 401, there is provided a flag for informing the user that the amount of ink remaining in the ink bag has become, for example, a predetermined amount or less. The reference numeral 440 designates that flag member, and in the present embodiment, in the end portion of that side of the flag member 440 on which a support shaft 405 is provided, there is formed a contact portion 440A protruded

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substantially in the form of a semicircle, and such a contact portion 440A may always keep contact with the surface of the ink bag 430 even in the completely mounted state of the ink cartridge 401 as shown in Figures 32A and 32B and the state of the ink cartridge before mounted, although not shown.

The reference numeral 441 denotes longitudinal slots formed in two wall portions of the ink cartridge 401 which are parallel to the plane of the drawing sheet, and the support shaft 405 of the flag member 440 is fitted in these slots 441 and supported for vertical movement and rotational movement. Also, in the case of the present embodiment, a torsion coil spring 406 mounted around the support shaft 405 has a spring force for biasing the flag member 440 clockwise and biasing the support shaft 405 itself downwardly along the slots 441, and biases the contact portion 440A of the flag member 440 toward the ink bag 430.

According to the ink cartridge 401 thus constructed, before the cartridge 401 is mounted at a predetermined mounting position along an insertion path 426, the flag member 440 is housed under the shutter 402 in the same manner as described previously in connection with Figure 30A, but when the cartridge is surely mounted at the predetermined mounting position, the flag member 440 rises in the manner as shown in Figure 32A or 32B. Thus, simultaneously with the rising of the flag member, the

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contact portion 440A of the flag member 440 is biased toward the surface of the ink bag 430 by the spring force of the torsion coil spring 406.

So, in the ink cartridge 401 thus provided with the ink bag 430 as ink containing means, when ink is sufficiently stocked in the ink bag 430, the entire flag member 440 rises at a high position as shown in Figure 32A and thus, the light intercepting portion 440B thereof is kept at a height for intercepting the optical path 435 of a detecting sensor 424, and when the carriage has been directed to the position of the cartridge 440, the presence of ink is detected by the detecting sensor 424 carried on the carriage. Also, when the ink becomes exhausted, the flag member 440 is kept in a low position as shown in Figure 32B even if it rises, whereby the flag member 440 does not intercept the optical path 435 of the detecting sensor 424, and the ink is judged to be absent.

As is apparent from the foregoing description, according to the present invention, a medium including the information for driving the ink jet head is provided on the ink cartridge, whereby the ink jet recording apparatus itself can automatically set the driving conditions of the ink jet head matching the composition of ink and therefore, there can be provided an ink jet recording apparatus which is simple to operate and high in reliability.

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Also, there can be provided an ink cartridge which can be prevented from being erroneously inserted by the user and which has information for properly controlling the driving of the recording head.

Also, as described above, according to the present invention, in the position wherein an ink tank in the form of a cartridge forming an ink supply source is held in the apparatus body, the ink communication with the ink supply system is done prior thereto and therefore, the ink communication state can be secured near the held position of the ink tank. Also, the information regarding the ink tank is readable prior to the holding of the ink tank and therefore, impossibility of reading or misjudgment does not occur near the held position. Further, the ink communication is done prior to reading and therefore, even if the recording operation is immediately started in response to reading, there will not occur the inconvenience that air is introduced into the ink supply system, and even if conversely, the ink tank is pulled out during the recording operation, it can be detected before the ink communication is cut off and therefore, no similar inconvenience will occur if the operation is discontinued.

Further, as described above, according to the present invention, in the position wherein an ink tank in the form of a cartridge forming an ink supply source is held in the apparatus body, the ink communication

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with the ink supply system is done prior thereto and therefore, the ink communication state can be secured near the held position of the ink tank. Also, the inherent information regarding the ink tank becomes readable near the held position, and information differing from said information is read in a predetermined range from the ink communication position to the vicinity of the held position and therefore, if design is made such that a warning is given in response to the reading of the said information, the unsatisfactory holding of the ink tank can be detected to obviate the shipping out thereof.

Furthermore, as has hitherto been described, according to the present invention, unlocking members projected from the opposite sides of the ink cartridge and locking members provided on both sides of the insertion path for the ink cartridge and unlockable by the respective unlocking members are provided asymmetrically with respect to the direction of insertion of the ink cartridge and therefore, even if a wrong attempt is made to insert the ink cartridge with its vertical direction or its longitudinal direction being mistaken, the ink cartridge can be prevented from being erroneously mounted and accordingly, damage to the ink cartridge by the hollow needle or damage to the hollow needle which would make the supply of ink impossible can be eliminated.

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Further, any special expensive device is not required for the prevention of such erroneous mounting, but it is only required to simply change the installed positions of the locking members and the unlocking members. Furthermore, even where a plurality of kinds of inks are used, erroneous mounting can be prevented for the respective ink cartridges.

Also, as has hitherto been described, according to the ink jet recording apparatus of the present invention and the ink cartridge therefor, a transmission type photosensor shielded from light by a flag member existing in the movement path of the carriage is provided on the carriage and a flag member adapted to protrude toward the movement path of the carriage only in the mounted state of the ink cartridge is provided on the ink cartridge, and the transmission type photosensor is shielded from light by the flag member provided on the ink cartirdge, whereby the mounting of the ink cartridge may be detected and therefore, not only the mounting of the ink cartridge is detected by a small number of parts and simple structure, but also the form of the flag member is made different for each ink cartridge, whereby many kinds of information such as the kind, characteristic, etc. of ink can be classificatorily recognized by the user and in addition, the quantity of remaining ink can be detected.

The present invention brings about an excellent

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effect particularly in a recording head and a recording apparatus of the bubble jet type which has been put forward by Canon, Inc., among the ink jet recording systems.

As regards the typical construction and principle of this system, a construction is preferable which uses the basic principle disclosed, for example, in U.S. Patents Nos. 4,723,129 and 4,740,796. This system is applicable to both of the so-called on-demand type and the so-called continuous type, and particularly in the case of the on-demand type, the present invention is effective because at least one driving signal corresponding to recording information and providing a rapid temperature rise exceeding nuclear boiling is applied to an electro-thermal converting member disposed correspondingly to a sheet or a liquid path in which liquid (ink) is retained, thereby causing the electro-thermal converting member to generate heat energy and causing film boiling on the heat-acting surface of a recording head with a result that a bubble in the liquid (ink) can be formed correspondingly at one to one to said driving signal. By the growth and contraction of the bubble, the liquid (ink) is discharged through a discharge port to thereby form at least one droplet. If this driving signal is made into a pulse shape, the growth and contraction of the bubble take place appropriately on the spot and therefore, discharge of the liquid (ink)

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which is particularly excellent in responsiveness can be accomplished, and this is more preferable. The driving signal of such pulse shape may suitably be one as described in U.S. Patents Nos. 4,463,359 and 4,345,262. The adoption of the conditions described in U.S. Patent No. 4,313,124 which is an invention relating to the temperature rise rate of said heat-acting surface would lead to the possibility of accomplishing more excellent recording.

As regards the construction of the recording head, besides the construction as disclosed in the aforementioned patents which comprises a combination of discharge ports, liquid paths and electro-thermal converting members (a straight liquid flow path or a perpendicular liquid flow path), the constructions using U.S. Patents Nos. 4,558,333 and 4,459,600 which disclose constructions in which the heat-acting portion is disposed in a bent area are also covered by the present invention. In addition, the present invention is effective for a construction based on Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 59-123670 which discloses a construction in which a slit common to a plurality of electro-thermal converting members is the discharge portion of the electrothermal converting members, or a construction based on Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 59-138461 which discloses a construction in which an opening for absorbing the pressure wave of heat energy corresponds

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to the discharge portion.

Further, the recording head of the full line type having a length corresponding to the width of the largest recording medium on which the recording apparatus can effect recording may be of a construction as disclosed in the above-mentioned publications wherein that length is satisfied by a combination of a plurality of recording heads, or of a construction as a single recording head formed as a unit, and the present invention can display the above-described effect more effectively.

In addition, the present invention is also effective in a case where use is made of a recording head of the interchangeable chip type which is adapted to be mounted on an apparatus body to thereby make the electrical connection to the apparatus body or the supply of ink from the apparatus body possible, or a recording head of the cartridge type provided integrally on the recording head itself.

Also, the addition of recovery means, preliminary auxiliary means, etc. for the recording head provided as the construction of the recording apparatus of the present invention can more stabilize the effect of the present invention and is therefore preferable. Specifically mentioning these, they are capping means, cleaning means and pressurizing or suction means for the recording head, an electro-thermal converting member or a heating element discrete therefrom or pre-heating means comprising

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a combination of these, and it is also effective for accomplishing stable recording to carry out the preliminary discharge mode in which discharge not concerned in recording is effected.

Further, the recording mode of the recording apparatus is not limited to a recording mode using only the main color such as black, but may use a recording head constructed as a unit or a combination of a plurality of recording heads, and the present invention is very effective for an apparatus provided with a plurality of different colors or at least one of full colors provided by mixed colors.

The above embodiments of the present invention have been described as using liquid ink, but the present invention also permits the use of ink which is in the solid phase at room temperature or ink which becomes softened at room temperature. In the above-described ink jet recording apparatus, it is popular to regulate the temperature of ink itself within a range from 30°C to 70°C and effect temperature control so that the viscosity of the ink may be within a stable discharge range and therefore, use can be made of ink which assumes the liquid phase when the recording signal used is imparted. In addition, the temperature rise by heat energy is positively used as the energy for the change of ink from its solid phase to its liquid phase to thereby prevent said temperature rise, or ink which solidifies

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when left as it is used for the purpose of preventing the evaporation of the ink, and at any rate, the use of ink having a nature that is liquefied only by heat energy, such as ink which is liquefied by the imparting of heat energy conforming to the recording signal and is discharged in the form of liquid or ink which already begins to solidify at a point of time whereat it reaches the recording medium is also applicable to the present invention. In such a case, the ink may assume the form as described in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 54-56847 or Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 60-71260 wherein the ink is retained as liquid or solid in recesses or through-holes in a porous sheet and is opposed to an electro-thermal converting member. In the present invention, what is most effective for each ink mentioned above is what executes the above-described film boiling system.

An ink cartridge interchangeably provided for an ink jet recording apparatus provided with a recording head for causing the discharge of ink to thereby effect the recording of an image, and containing the ink therein and effecting the supply of the ink in conformity with the discharge of the ink is characterized by the provision of a medium provided with information for controlling the driving conditions of the recording head.

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Claims 1 to 9 for the Divisional Application relating to the European Patent Application No. 90 114 982.3-2304

1. An ink cartridge mountable on a mounting portion along an insertion path (332) of an ink jet recording apparatus having an openably-closable plate (333) openably and closably held in said insertion path (322) to said mounting portion, and locking members (336, 337) for restraining said openable-closable plate from both sides of said insertion path (322) to thereby inhibit the opening movement thereof, said ink cartridge containing therein ink to be supplied to a recording head and having projectedly provided on the opposite sides thereof unlocking members (341, 342) engageable with said locking members (336, 337) during the mounting of said ink cartridge to release the restraint of said locking members (336, 337), said ink cartridge being characterized in that said unlocking members (341, 342) are provided asymmetrically with respect to the direction of insertion into said insertion path (332).

2. An ink cartridge according to Claim 1, characterized in that said ink jet recording apparatus has mounting portions and insertion paths corresponding to ink cartridges individually containing a plurality of different kinds of inks therein, and said unlocking members (341, 342) provided on said ink cartridges are asymmetrical with respect to the direction of insertion into said insertion path at positions different for respective corresponding ones of said mounting portions.

3. An ink cartridge removably mounted on a fixed mounting portion of an ink jet recording apparatus and supplying discharged ink to a recording head carried on a movable carriage, characterized by a flag member (404)

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capable of being protruded and contained; and means (406) for protruding said flag member toward a path along which said carriage is moved only when said ink cartridge is mounted on said mounting portion; a photosensor (424) provided on said carriage being capable of being shielded from light by said flag member.

4. An ink cartridge according to Claim 3, characterized in that said photosensor (424) is a sensor for detecting infrared light, and said flag member (404) is formed of a material capable of intercepting said infrared light.

5. An ink cartridge according to Claim 4, characterized in that the position in which said flag member (404) shields said photosensor (424) from light is made different along the direction of movement of said carriage to thereby make the detecting position of said photosensor (424), for said flag member (404) different, and different information is obtained for each ink cartridge mounted.

6. An ink cartridge according to Claim 4, characterized by an ink bag (430) containing said ink therein and wherein the level of the position in which said flag member (404) shield said photosensor (424) from light is varied in conformity with the quantity of the ink in said ink bag (430) to thereby detect the presence or absence of said ink.

7. An ink jet recording apparatus comprising an ink cartridge according to Claim 1, characterized in that the locations at which said unlocking members and said locking members are disposed are asymmetrical with respect to the direction of insertion of said ink cartridge.

8. An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 7, characterized in that a plurality of ink cartridges are provided so as to individually contain different kinds of

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inks therein, said plurality of ink cartridges are mountable on corresponding mounting portions, respectively, and said unlocking members (341, 342) and said locking members (336, 337) are asymmetrical with respect to the direction of insertion of said ink cartridges at positions different for respective corresponding ones of said mounting portions.

9. An ink jet recording apparatus in which an ink cartridge (401) containing therein ink to be supplied to a recording head for discharging the ink to thereby effect recording is removable mounted, characterized by a flag member (404) provided on said ink cartridge and adapted to be protruded toward a path along which a carriage is moved only when said ink cartridge is mounted on a mounting portion; and a photosensor (424) provided on said carriage and capable of being shielded from light by said flag member (404).