

HIGH-DENSITY READ-ONLY MEMORY

Technical Field

The invention relates to the retrieval of digitized information, and in particular, to the retrieval of digitized information stored within a read-only memory ("ROM") device.

Background Of The Invention

Storing digital audio or video information of reasonable quality requires a great deal of memory. For example, it would require approximately 64 million memory sites to store
5 15 minutes of audio sampled at a rate of 64 kbits/s. Audio of higher quality and/or longer duration would naturally require even greater amounts of memory, and naturally, the same would be true for video. However, the capacity and density of semiconductor memory devices, particularly ROMs, have increased dramatically in recent years. As a result, the storage of substantial quantities of digitized audio and video information within such
10 devices has become feasible.

While present ROM architectures will support the storage of large quantities of digitized audio or video information upon a single integrated device or chip, there is an ever increasing need to minimize the physical size of the chip that provides the storage. This need to minimize the physical size of memory is seen to be most critical in the portable,
15 personal audio/video player arena. Clearly, the consumers' preference for very small portable audio and/or video entertainment units is evident from the popularity of miniature stereo cassette players and televisions. It follows that if audio and/or video is to be stored within a solid state memory device for use in portable players, it would be advantageous to utilize a storage system that could provide a greater data storage density than that of
20 currently available ROM devices.

Summary Of The Invention

The aforementioned problem is solved, in accordance with the principles of the invention defined by the claims, by providing a system and method for the storage of digital information wherein data that would normally be represented by multiple bits of

information is effectively stored at single memory site within a ROM. This is accomplished by employing a multiple bit-line memory architecture, in conjunction with a data decoder. With this arrangement it is possible to store, at a single memory site, information that would have required up to $\lceil \log_2(n(n-1)/2) + 1 \rceil$ individual memory sites in a conventional ROM (where n is the number independent of bit-lines connected to an individual memory element in the invention). The invention is particularly well-suited to what would be considered relatively low-speed data retrieval systems, such as those adapted to provide audio and/or video to a user on a real time basis.

Brief Description Of The Drawing

In the drawings:

10 FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram showing a decoder circuit and a portion of a high-density ROM that facilitate the practice of a particular method of the invention;

FIGS. 2A and 2B are schematic diagrams showing a decoder circuit and a portion of a high-density ROM that facilitate the practice of an alternate method of the invention; and

15 FIG. 3 provides an illustration of various signal waveforms that are applied to and produced by the circuit of FIGS. 2A and 2B.

Detailed Description

FIG. 1 provides a schematic diagram showing eight memory sites (101 through 108) within a portion of a high-density ROM, and an associated decoding circuit 100. Each memory site is shown to include a field-effect transistor ("FET") (109-116). As is well known to those familiar with the art, logical values 1 and 0 are typically represented within ROMs by the presence or absence of a connection to an FET at any given memory site -- One bit being stored per memory site. Each memory site within a ROM is typically addressed via a single bitline and a single wordline. In FIG. 1, lines 117-122 are bitlines, and lines 123-126 are wordlines. As is also shown, each memory site within the ROM can be addressed via three separate and distinct bitlines. For example, any one of memory sites 25 101-104 can be addressed via bitlines 117, 118, or 119. This three bitline addressing

effectively allows data that would have required two bits of information (and two separate memory sites) to be effectively stored at each memory site. Any memory site can be made to represent any of four states corresponding to the bit series 00, 01, 10, or 11. The bit series 11 is represented by an FET that provides a switchable path between bitline 119 (the most significant bitline) and ground; an FET switchably connecting bitline 118 (the intermediate bitline) and ground represents the bit sequence 10; the sequence 01 is represented by an FET connecting bitline 117 (the least significant bitline) and ground, and the bit sequence 00 is represented when there is no connection between an FET and any of the bitlines at a particular memory site.

In order to read the two bits of information stored at a particular memory site in the circuit of FIG. 1, the three bitlines and one wordline associated with that particular memory site must be accessed. For example, to read the value of the data stored at memory site 104, wordlines 123, 124 and 125 are grounded to ensure that the channels within associated FETs 109-111 and 113-115 are maintained in a non-conductive state. Simultaneously, wordline 126 is supplied with a voltage V_{dd} . This applied voltage causes the channels within FET 112 and FET 116 to be placed in a conductive state, thereby selecting the column of memory sites which includes 108 and 104. A connection between decoder circuit 100 and bitlines 117, 118 and 119 is then effected. To accomplish this, bitline control conductor 127 is supplied voltage V_{dd} , while bitline control conductor 128 is grounded. This places the channels within FETs 129, 130 and 131 into conductive states, thereby selecting the row of memory sites 101-104 for reading (i.e., conductive paths between bitline 117 and line 134, bitline 118 and line 133, and bitline 119 and line 132 are established). The grounding of conductor 128 maintains the channels within FETs 135, 136 and 137 in non-conductive states.

With the bitlines and wordlines in the state described above, memory site 104 is selected for reading and the combinational logic devices (138-141) within decoder 100 produce the following:

high output (logical 1) at the output of inverter 138 as a result of line 132 being grounded via FETs 112 and 131, and therefore held to a logical 0 signal level;

5 low outputs (logical 0) at the output of inverters 139 and 140 as a result of lines 133 and 134 not being connected to ground and therefore each maintain a logical 1 signal level; and

10 low output (logical 0) at the output of AND-gate as a result of line 132 being at a logical 0 signal level.

When the FET at the particular memory site being read provides a connection between a most significant bitline (119, 122) and ground (such as the FETs at memory sites 104 and 107) the output of inverter 138 will produce a logical 1, while all other logic device
15 outputs will be 0. When the FET at the memory site provides a connection between an intermediate bitline (118, 121) and ground (such as the FETs at memory sites 103, 105 and 108) the output of inverter 139 will produce a logical 1, while all other logic devices output 0. When reading a memory site having an FET providing a connection between a least significant bitline (117, 120) and ground (such as the FETs at memory sites 102 and 106)
20 the output of inverter 140 will be a logical 1, while all other logic devices will output logical 0. Finally, if the FET at the memory site being read fails to provide a connection between ground and any of the bitlines (such as the FET at memory site 101), the output of AND-gate 141 will be a logical 1, while the three inverters will output logical 0s.

FIGS. 2A and 2B are schematic diagrams showing an alternate decoder circuit (200)
25 and a portion of a high-density ROM that facilitate the practice of the invention. Each memory site (201-214) is shown to include an FET (215-228). Lines 229-236 are bitlines, and lines 237-243 are wordlines. As shown, the memory sites within the ROM can be addressed via four separate bitlines -- bitlines 229-232 address memory sites 201-207, and bitlines 233-236 address memory sites 208-214. The four bitline addressing permits seven

separate information states to be stored at each memory site, as follows:. For example, for memory sites 201-207:

an FET connection between a most-significant bit line (232, 236) and a
5 second most-significant bit line (231, 235) represents the bit series 110;

an FET connection between a most-significant bit line (232, 236) and a
second least-significant bit line (230, 234) represents the bit series 101;

10 an FET connection between a second most-significant bit line (231, 235)
and a second least-significant bit line (230, 234) represents the bit series
100;

an FET connection between a most-significant bit line (232, 236) and a
15 least-significant bit line (229, 233) represents the bit series 011;

an FET connection between a second most-significant bit line (231, 235)
and a least-significant bit line (229, 233) represents the bit series 010;

20 an FET connection between a second least-significant bit line (230, 234) and
a least-significant bit line (229, 233) represents the bit series 001; and

no connection between the bitlines at a particular memory site represents the
bit series 000.

25 In conventional single bit-line ROMs, storage of such seven-state information would
require three separate memory sites.

In order to read the seven different information states that can be stored at a
particular memory site in the circuit of FIGS. 2A and 2B, the four bitlines and one wordline
30 associated with that particular memory site must be accessed. To read the value of the data

stored at memory site 207, wordlines 237-242 are grounded to ensure that the channels within associated FETs 215-220 and 222-227) are maintained in a non-conductive state. Simultaneously, wordline 243 is supplied with a voltage V_{dd} so that the channels within FETs 221 and 228 are placed in a conductive state. A connection between decoder circuit 200 and bitlines 229-232 is then effected by supplying bitline control conductor 244 with voltage V_{dd} , while grounding bitline control conductor 245. This places the channels within FETs 246-249 into conductive states, and maintains the channels within FETs 250-253 in non-conductive states.

FETs 254-256 (FIG. 2B) are then clocked sequentially with non-overlapping signals CLK 1, CLK 2 and CLK 3 as illustrated in FIG. 3. Following one full sequence of the three clock signals, the logic devices in FIG. 2B (257-262) produce an output that is indicative of the FET bitline connections for the FET at the particular memory site being read. A logical 1 signal at the Q outputs of flip-flops 257-262 and the output of AND-gate 263 correspond to the following bit series:

Bit Series	Logical 1 Output at:
110	Q of flip-flop 262
101	Q of flip-flop 261
100	Q of flip-flop 260
011	Q of flip-flop 259
010	Q of flip-flop 258
001	Q of flip-flop 257
000	AND-gate 263

With the bitlines and wordlines in the state described above, memory site 207 is selected for reading, and, after the application of the third sequential clock signal, logic devices 257-263 will produce the following:

5 high output (logical 1) at the Q terminal of flip-flop 262;

low outputs (logical 0s) at the Q terminal of flip-flops 257-261 and the output of AND-gate 263.

10 FIG. 3 provides a depiction of the output signals for the logic devices shown in FIG. 2 as the sequence of the three clock signals are applied during the reading of memory site 207. The outputs of the logic devices are considered to provide valid information following the application of the third sequential clock signal (valid from time t_v on).

It will be understood that the ROM/decoder arrangements of FIGS. 1, 2A and 2B
15 are only portions of a larger devices containing many more rows and columns of memory sites that are accessed and read in a manner similar to that described above. Furthermore, the particular methods described above are only illustrative of the principles of the present invention, and that various modifications could be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention. One such modification would
20 include applying the invention to ROM/decoder arrangements wherein each memory site is capable of being addressed via many more than four bitlines. In general, the multi-bitline memory scheme of the invention provides for $(n(n-1)/2)+1$ states to be represented at a single memory site; where n is the number of bitlines provided for connection to a single memory site. For example, if the basic architecture of the circuitry of FIGS. 2A and 2B is
25 applied to a ten bitline per memory site arrangement, each memory site would be capable of representing one of 46 unique states -- Analogous to data that would normally require M separate memory sites for representation; where $M = \lceil \log_2((n(n-1)/2)+1) \rceil$. In the case where $n=10$, the number of individual memory sites, M , would be 6. It will also be understood that any number of logic circuit arrangements (combinational, sequential, or hybrid) can be
30 employed as a decoder for the multi-bitline ROM arrays disclosed and claimed. The design

of logic circuit arrangements suited to such decoding (many inputs resulting in one selected output) is well known in the art.

Claims:

This Sheet Has Been Replaced



1. A read-only memory device comprising:
an array of individual memory sites (101-104) including at least one switchable
memory element at each of said sites;
a plurality of bitlines (117-119), each capable of being connected to each of said
5 switchable memory elements in a particular row of said memory site array; and
a decoding circuit (100) connected to said plurality of bitlines, adapted to provide
an output indicative of the connection of a specific switchable memory element in said
particular row of said memory sites to one or more of said plurality of bitlines.

2. The invention of claim 1, wherein said plurality of bitlines further comprises a
10 plurality of n bitlines and wherein said decoding circuit further comprises an n -line to
 $((n-1)/2)+1$ -line decoding circuit connected to said plurality of n bitlines, adapted to
provide an output on a particular one of said $(n-1)/2+1$ output lines indicative of the
connection of a specific switchable memory element in said particular row of said
memory sites to one or more of said n bitlines.

15 3. The invention of claim 1, wherein each of said switchable memory elements is
connected to no more than one, if any, of said bitlines.

4. The invention of claim 1, wherein each of said switchable memory elements is
connected to at least one of said bitlines.

20 5. The invention of claim 1, wherein said switchable memory element comprises
a transistor.

6. The invention of claim 1, wherein said decoding circuit includes sequential
logic elements.



7. The invention of claim 1, wherein said decoding circuit includes combinational logic elements.

8. A method for retrieving digital data comprising the steps of:
accessing a plurality of n bitlines associated with a single memory site;
5 determining which, if any, of said plurality of bitlines are interconnected at said memory site; and
producing a signal as a function of said determination, wherein said signal is representative of one of $(n(n-1)/2)+1$ data states.

9. The invention of claim 8, wherein said step of determining which, if any, of
10 said plurality of n bitlines are connected to ground at said memory site, and said step of producing a signal as a function of said determination employ combinational logic decoding.

10. The invention of claim 8, wherein said step of determining which, if any, of
said plurality of n bitlines are connected to ground at said memory site, and said step of
15 producing a signal as a function of said determination employ sequential logic decoding.

This Sheet Has Been Replaced



* C L M S *