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CONNECTOR HAVING AN INCREASED RELIABILITY
AND IMPROVED OPERATION PROPERTIES

Background of the Invention:

The present invention relates to a connector device for use in connecting a sheet-like connecting member such as a flexible printed circuit (FPC) and a flexible flat cable (FFC) of a flat plate shape. The connector device is usable to connect a key board and a mother board in a personal computer to each other.

With reference to Figs. 5 and 6, description will be made as regards a connector according to a first earlier technology. The connector comprises an insulator 101, a conductive contact 103 held in the insulator 101, and a slidably arranged slider member 105 which introduces an end of a sheet-like connecting member 120 into the insulator 101 and brings the connecting member 120 to in contact with the contact 103.

The slider member 105 has a working portion 107. The insulator 101 has a receiving space 101a which receives an end of the connecting member 120 and the working portion 107. The contact 103 comprises a fixed portion 103a held in the insulator 101, a retaining portion 103b extending from the fixed portion 103a along the upper wall of the insulator 101, a contact spring 103c extending from the

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fixed portion 103a in the same direction as retaining portion 103b, and a terminal 103d extending from the fixed portion 103a to the outside of the insulator 101 mounted onto a circuit board 130. The terminal 103d is connected to electric circuit on the circuit board 130. A contact portion 103f is formed at an end of the contact spring 103c.

As shown in Fig. 5, the working portion 7 of the slider member 105 is inserted between the retaining portion 103b and the contact spring 103c together with the connecting member 120. When the end of the inserted connecting member 120 bears on the working portion 107, the contact portion 103f of the contact spring 103c is pressed against the conductive portion of the connecting member 120 to make electric contact with it.

The connecting member 120 can be pulled out of the insulator 101 by withdrawing the slider member 105 from the receiving space 101a of the insulator 101, thereby relieving the pressing force of the working portion 107, as shown in Fig. 6 (see, for example, Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication H10-22010).

However, the connector requires handling of the slider member 105 every time the connecting member 120 is inserted and pulled out. Also, it has a problem that the flexible conductive portions of the connecting member 120 can be damaged by repeated inserting and pulling out of the connection member, leading to a deteriorated electric contact. This especially applies to a contact processed by press punching, since the rupture surface by punching which

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in this case serves as the contact surface will easily damage the conductive portions.

With reference to Fig. 7, a second earlier technology will be described. The second earlier technology comprises a plug connector 150 and a receptacle connector 160. The plug connector 150 is connected by soldering to an end of a connecting member 120 which is the same as the connecting member 120 shown as the first earlier technology. The plug connector 150 comprises an insulator 151 and a conductive contact assembled with the insulator 150. In the illustrated example, contact portions of the contact are arranged at a fitting portion 151a of the insulator 151, terminals 155 of the contact being soldered to conductive portions of the connecting member 120.

The receptacle connector 160 is mounted onto a circuit board which is not shown. The receptacle connector 160 comprises a mating insulator 161 and a conductive mating contact 163 assembled with the mating insulator 161. In the illustrated example, mating terminals 164 of the mating contact 163 are soldered to conductive portions of a circuit board which are not shown.

The plug connector has a problem that it requires much man-hour in connecting operation, since the terminals 155 have to be soldered to the conductive portions of the connection member 120. Further, it has problem that pulling out of the plug connector 155 from the receptacle connector 160 by hand severely stresses the terminals 155 of the plug connector 150, giving rise to a damage in the

connecting portions.

Summary of the Invention:

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a connector device
5 which has an increased reliability and improved operation properties, or which at least
provides a useful alternative to the prior art.

According to the present invention, there is provided a connector device for use in
connecting a connecting member which is of a flat plate shape and has an end portion
provide with a conductive portion, said connector device comprising:

10 a receptacle connector including a receptacle-side contact; and

a plug connector removably coupled to said receptacle connector by fitting
therebetween for electrically connecting said connecting member with said receptacle
connector;

said plug connector comprising:

15 an insulator defining a receiving space for receiving said end portion of the
connecting member and having a fitting space and a retaining wall in said fitting space and
a plurality of engaging holes formed in a pair of side walls facing said retaining wall;

a conductive contact held in the insulator and formed to become in contact with
said receptacle-side contact when said plug connector is coupled to said receptacle
20 connector;

a slider member slidably inserted in said receiving space to make said conductive
portion be brought in contact with said conductive contact in said receiving space;

said conductive contact comprising:

25 a pair of retained portions held on opposite surfaces of said retaining wall,
respectively, for becoming in contact with said receptacle-side contact;

a connecting portion connecting said retained portions together;

a pair of spring portions connected to said retained portions and extending in said
receiving space for receiving said connecting member and said slider member
therebetween;

30 a contact portion formed on one of said spring portions for becoming in contact
with said conductive portion of the connecting member; and

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a pressing portion formed on another of said spring portions for pressing said slider member to make said conductive portion be brought in press contact with said contact portion;

5 said receptacle connector further including a receptacle-side insulator which holds said receptacle-side contact and which is mounted on a circuit board, said receptacle-side insulator having a receptacle-side fitting portion which receives said retaining wall;

 said receptacle-side contact comprising:

 a receptacle-side retained portion held in said receptacle-side insulator;

10 a receptacle-side contact spring extending from said receptacle-side retained portion towards said receptacle-side fitting portion;

 a terminal extending from said mating retained portions to the outside; and

 a receptacle-side contact portion which comes in contact with said pair of retained portions when said fitting portion is fitted with said receptacle-side insulator, said
15 receptacle-side insulator having a plurality of engaging protrusions at a pair of receptacle-side side walls facing said pair of side walls, which engage with corresponding said engaging holes.

Brief Description of the Drawing:

20 Fig. 1 is an exploded perspective view showing a connector device according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 2 is a sectional view of the connector device of Fig. 1, wherein a connecting member is connected to a plug connector;

Fig. 3 is an enlarged perspective view of a contact included in the plug connector shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a plan view of the plug connector shown in Fig. 2, wherein the connecting member is connected to the plug connector;

Fig. 5 is a sectional view of a connector according to a first earlier technology, wherein a circuit board is installed thereto;

Fig. 6 is a sectional view for describing action of the connector of Fig. 5; and

Fig. 7 is a sectional view of a connector device according to a second earlier technology.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments:

With reference to Figs. 1 and 2, the description will be made as regards a connector device according to an embodiment of the present invention.

The connector device is for use in connecting a sheet-like connecting member 20 such as a FPC and a FFC of a flat plate shape. The connecting member 20 has a plurality of conductive portions 21 arranged parallel to each other with a predetermined interval therebetween. The connector device comprises a receptacle connector 30 and a plug connector 10 for being connected between the receptacle connector 30 and the connecting member 20.

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The plug connector 10 comprises an insulator 1 having substantially rectangular box shape, a plurality of conductive contacts 3 held in the insulator 1, and a slider member 5 slidably arranged in the insulator 1. The contacts 3 are arranged in the insulator 1 in parallel to each other with the predetermined interval therebetween.

The slider member 5 comprises a working portion 7 having a contacting surface 5a for contacting to the connecting member 20 and a pressing surface 5b opposite to the contacting surface 5a. The insulator 1 defines a receiving space 1a and a fitting portion or a fitting space 1b and comprises a retaining wall 9 formed in the fitting space 1b. The receiving space 1a is for receiving an end portion of the connecting member 20 and the working portion 7 of the slider member 5. The fitting space 1b is for detachably fitting over the receptacle connector 30.

Referring to Fig. 3, each contact 3 comprises a pair of retained portions 3a and 3b, a pair of spring portions 3c and 3d, and a connecting portion 3e. The retained portions 3a and 3b are held on a pair of opposite retaining surfaces 9a and 9b of the retaining wall 9, respectively. The retained portions 3a and 3b are for becoming in contact with conductive receptacle-side or mating contacts 33 held in the receptacle connector 30. The spring portions 3c and 3d are connected to respective ends of the retained portions 3a and 3b and extend to face each other within the receiving space 1a. The connecting portion 3e is connected between the other ends of the retained portions 3a and 3b.

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The overall side view of the retained portions 3a and 3b and the connecting portion 3e substantially assumes an U-shape.

The retaining wall 9 is arranged longitudinally between and at the center of a pair of parallel side walls 9d, 9e extending in the longitudinal direction of the insulator 1. The retaining wall 9 extends from the open end of the fitting space 1b toward the receiving space 1a.

A contact portion 3f is formed at the spring portion 3c and placed in the receiving space 1a. On the other hand, a pressing portion 3g is formed at the spring portion 3d and placed in the receiving space 1a. The connecting member 20 is inserted between the contact portion 3f and the pressing portion 3g so that the conductive portion 21 faces the contact portion 3f. The working portion 7 is inserted between the pressing portion 3g and the conductive portion 21 of the connecting member 20. When the connecting member 20 and the working portion 7 are inserted between the contact portion 3f and the pressing portion 3g, the pressing portion 3g presses the working portion 7 to make the conductive portion 21 be brought in press contact with the contact portion 3f. As a result, the contact portion 3f is electrically connected to one of the conductive portions 21 of the connecting member 20. In other words, the slider member 5 makes the conductive portions 21 become in contact with the contacts 3, respectively.

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Each contact 3 is formed as an elongate plate by press punching a conductive plate followed by bending. The contact portion 3f has a material surface or a blank surface which comes in contact with the conductive portion 21 of the connecting member 20. Accordingly, the conductive portion 21 of the connecting member 20 are brought into contact with the material surface of the contact 3, and not with the ruptured surface A made by punching.

Further, the slider member 5 has a handling portion 11 integrated with the working portion 7. Handling projections 11a are formed at the handling portion 11. The handling projections 11a are engaged with the projections 20a formed at both side edges of the end of the connecting member 20. Therefore, the connecting member is prevented from being pulled out when the handling projections rest on the open end surface of the receiving space 1a while the connecting member 20 is introduced into the receiving space 1a with its end bearing on the bearing surface 5a.

Referring to Fig. 4 together with Fig. 1, a pair of arms 23 are formed at both sides of the slider member 5. The arms 23 extend along both external side walls of the insulator 1 to be perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the insulator 1. A pair of arm receptacles 26 is formed at the external side walls of the insulator 1. The arm receptacles 26 have ends connected to the external side walls, respectively. A pair of arms 23 is slidable to be engaged with the arm receptacles 26.

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The insulator 1 comprises four side walls 9d, 9e, 9f, and 9g surrounding the retaining wall 9 formed at the center of the fitting space 1b in such a manner as to come in contact with pairs of the mating contacts 33 arranged symmetrically. Among the four side walls 9d, 9e, 9f, and 9g, a pair of opposite side walls 9d and 9e is provided with a plurality of engaging holes 10a formed therein.

Referring to Figs. 1 and 2 again, the receptacle connector 30 comprises pairs of the mating contacts 33 and a mating insulator 35 which holds the mating contacts 33 and is mounted on a circuit board (not shown). The mating insulator 35 has a mating fitting space 35a which receives the retaining wall 9.

Each mating contact 33 comprises a receptacle-side or mating retained portion 33a held at the mating insulator 35, receptacle-side or mating contact springs 33b extending from the mating retained portion 33a toward the mating fitting space 35a, and a receptacle-side or mating terminal 33c extending to the outside from the mating retained portion 33a. A pair of the mating contact springs 33b have a pair of receptacle-side or mating contact portions 33d which come in contact with a pair of retained portions 3a and 3b, respectively, when the fitting space 1b is fitted with the mating insulator 35. The mating insulator 35 has a plurality of engaging protrusions 35m on each of a pair of mating side walls facing the side walls 9d and 9e, which engage with the corresponding engaging holes 10a.

The connecting member 20 is previously connected to the plug connector 10. Generally, electrical connection or disconnection is carried out between the plug connector 10 and the receptacle connector 30. The projections 20a provided at both ends of the conductive portion array 21 of the connecting member 20 are engaged with the slider member 5, while the slider member 5 and the insulator 1 are locked with each other when the connection member 20 is connected. In this way, the conductive portions 21 of the connecting member 20 are free from the influence of a stress even in case the plug connector 10 are pulled by pulling the connecting member 20 by hand.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A connector device for use in connecting a connecting member which is of a flat plate shape and has an end portion provide with a conductive portion, said connector
5 device comprising:
 - a receptacle connector including a receptacle-side contact; and
 - a plug connector removably coupled to said receptacle connector by fitting therebetween for electrically connecting said connecting member with said receptacle connector;
 - 10 said plug connector comprising:
 - an insulator defining a receiving space for receiving said end portion of the connecting member and having a fitting space and a retaining wall in said fitting space and a plurality of engaging holes formed in a pair of side walls facing said retaining wall;
 - a conductive contact held in the insulator and formed to become in contact with
15 said receptacle-side contact when said plug connector is coupled to said receptacle connector;
 - a slider member slidably inserted in said receiving space to make said conductive portion be brought in contact with said conductive contact in said receiving space;
 - said conductive contact comprising:
 - 20 a pair of retained portions held on opposite surfaces of said retaining wall, respectively, for becoming in contact with said receptacle-side contact;
 - a connecting portion connecting said retained portions together;
 - a pair of spring portions connected to said retained portions and extending in said receiving space for receiving said connecting member and said slider member
25 therebetween;
 - a contact portion formed on one of said spring portions for becoming in contact with said conductive portion of the connecting member; and
 - a pressing portion formed on another of said spring portions for pressing said slider member to make said conductive portion be brought in press contact with said contact
30 portion;
 - said receptacle connector further including a receptacle-side insulator which holds

said receptacle-side contact and which is mounted on a circuit board, said receptacle-side insulator having a receptacle-side fitting portion which receives said retaining wall;

said receptacle-side contact comprising:

a receptacle-side retained portion held in said receptacle-side insulator;

5 a receptacle-side contact spring extending from said receptacle-side retained portion towards said receptacle-side fitting portion;

a terminal extending from said mating retained portions to the outside; and

a receptacle-side contact portion which comes in contact with said pair of retained portions when said fitting portion is fitted with said receptacle-side insulator, said
10 receptacle-side insulator having a plurality of engaging protrusions at a pair of receptacle-side side walls facing said pair of side walls, which engage with corresponding said engaging holes.

2. A connector device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said insulator has a fitting
15 portion for removably fitting to said receptacle connector.

3. A connector device as claimed in claim 1, wherein, said insulator has external walls of both sides thereof, said slider member having a pair of arms at both side ends thereof, said arms extending along said external walls, said insulator having a pair of arm
20 receptacles extending from said external walls in such a manner that said arms are slidable to be engaged with them.

4. A connector device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said conductive contact is made of an elongate conductive plate, said contact portion being of material surface of said
25 elongate plate.

5. A connector device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said connecting member is inserted between said contact portion and said pressing portion, said slider member comprising a working portion being inserted between said pressing portion and said
30 conductive portion of the connecting member.

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6. A connector device as claimed in claim 5, wherein said slider member further comprises a handling portion integrated with said working portion for handling said slider member, said handling portion engaging with said connecting member to maintain said
5 connecting member between said contact portion and said working portion.

7. A connector device as claimed in claim 6, wherein said connecting member has projections formed at both sides thereof, said handling portion having projections which engage with the projections of said connecting member in such a manner that said
10 connecting member is prevented from being pulled out when said handling portion rests on the open end surface of said receiving space while said connecting member is inserted between said contact portion and said working portion.