

Description

This invention relates generally to ink jet pens for ink jet printing systems and more particularly to such pens having an increased ink reservoir capacity and improved ink distribution characteristics.

In the manufacture of disposable pens for various types of ink jet printers, various approaches have been taken to insure that a substantially constant pressure that is less than the ambient pressure ("backpressure") is provided in the ink reservoir of the pen as the ink is depleted from full to empty during a printing operation. In this manner, the size of the ink drops ejected from an orifice plate of the pen will remain constant during ink depletion, and additionally this constant backpressure will prevent leakage of ink from the orifice plate when the pen is inactive. One such approach providing a substantially constant backpressure in the ink reservoir of a thermal ink jet pen is disclosed and claimed in the United States Patent No. 4,509,062 issued to Robert Low et al and entitled "Ink Reservoir with Essentially Constant Negative Backpressure".

Whereas the approach described in the above Low et al patent has proven highly satisfactory and unique in many respects, this approach nevertheless requires a collapsible bladder in order to maintain a substantially constant backpressure in the ink reservoir over a certain range of ink depletion therein. This requirement for a collapsible bladder has certain attendant disadvantages which are overcome by the present invention and will be appreciated and better understood from the description to follow.

Another prior approach to providing a controlled backpressure in the ink reservoir of a different, stencil type of pen utilizes a so called capillary compensating techniques wherein the main ink reservoir of the pen is connected to a capillary ink flow path or groove. This path or groove is operative to receive a varying quantity of ink during ink reservoir depletion to thereby maintain a substantially constant back pressure in the main ink reservoir. One such capillary compensating technique used in a stencil pen is disclosed in West German Patent 2,844,886 issued to Witz et al.

Whereas the above technique in the German Patent 2,844,886 may be suitable over a limited ink reservoir volume and a limited range of operating temperatures, the stencil pen of the above German Patent is not capable of handling relatively large ink reservoir volumes operating over relatively large changes in ink operating temperature. Furthermore, the capillary groove capacity of the pen disclosed in the above German Patent 2,844,886 will typically be on the order of eight to ten percent of the ink

reservoir capacity, and this ratio in turn means a relatively large increase in capillary groove capacity for desired corresponding increases in ink reservoir capacity. Thus, this eight to ten percent volume of capillary groove requirement in the Witz et al German patent imposes a rather substantial limitation on pen construction where a significant increase in size of the ink reservoir of the pen is required.

Another recent approach to providing a controlled backpressure in an ink reservoir of a disposable ink jet pen is disclosed and claimed in copending European patent application 87305776.4, EP-A-0261764 (published on 30.03.88) of Jeffrey Baker et al, assigned to the present assignee and incorporated herein by reference. In this latter approach, a reticulated polyurethane foam is used as an ink storage medium for both black and color ink jet pens. This more recent technique of storing ink in a porous medium such as polyurethane foam provides several new and useful improvements and distinct advantages with respect to the earlier bladder storage techniques. However, the requirement for a porous foam storage medium in the ink storage compartment of the pen limits the volumetric ink storage efficiency thereof.

According to the invention there is provided an ink jet pen characterised in that it comprises a pen body housing containing a primary ink reservoir and a secondary ink reservoir, a printhead with ink ejection means mounted on the housing so as to receive ink from the primary reservoir during an ink jet printing operation, and connection means to allow ink to flow back and forth between the primary reservoir and the secondary reservoir as a function of changes in ambient temperature.

It is a general object of the present invention to provide still further new and useful improvements in ink jet pens including the capability of ink storage without using a porous material or other ink storage media and their associated space requirements within the main reservoir of the pen body housing.

Another object is to provide a new and improved ink jet pen of the type described in which the volume of ink storage has been substantially increased relative to foam storage and other similar types of storage media of ink jet pens.

Another object is to provide an ink jet pen of the type described which operates with a substantially constant operating backpressure over a predetermined wide range of temperatures and during the operation of the pen as it is depleted from full to empty.

Another object is to provide a new and improved ink jet pen of the type described which may require a compensating capillary tube volume of as little as about one percent of the main ink reservoir

capacity for proper backpressure operation.

A further object of this invention is to provide a new and improved ink jet pen of the type described which lends itself to improved and straightforward manufacturability at high production yields.

The above objects and other advantages and novel features of this invention have been accomplished by the provision of an ink jet pen having an ink supply housing which includes a primary ink reservoir and a secondary ink reservoir. A balancing capillary member is positioned within the ink supply housing and includes ink flow path which extends between the primary ink reservoir and the secondary ink reservoir. This capillary member is operative to draw ink from the primary ink reservoir and into or toward the secondary ink reservoir by capillary action as temperature and pressure within the primary ink reservoir increases. Conversely, when temperature and pressure in the housing decreases, ink will be drawn back into or toward the primary ink reservoir. In addition, the primary ink reservoir is connected by way of a suitable ink feed path to an ink jet printhead for supplying ink to the printhead during an ink jet printing operation.

The above summary, objects, novel features and attendant advantages of this invention will become better understood from the following description of the accompanying drawings:

Figure 1A is a schematic fluid flow diagram to illustrate the vertical capillary embodiment of the invention shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1B is a schematic fluid flow diagram to illustrate the dual reservoir capillary system no. 1 shown in Figure 3.

Figure 1C is a schematic fluid flow diagram to illustrate the dual reservoir capillary system no. 2 shown in Figure 4.

Figure 2A is an exploded isometric view showing the vertical capillary pen structure in accordance with a first embodiment of the invention for a multicolor ink jet pen.

Figure 2B is a cross section view taken along lines B-B of Figure 2A.

Figure 2C is a partially cut-away elevation view showing the geometry of the balanced capillary tubes in the structures of Figures 2A and 2B above.

Figure 3A is an exploded isometric view illustrating a second embodiment of the invention referred to herein as the dual reservoir capillary system embodiment number 1.

Figures 3B, 3C, 3D and 3E are cross sectional views taken along lines B,C,D and E respectively of Figure 3A.

Figure 4A is an exploded isometric view illustrating a third embodiment of the invention referred to herein as the dual reservoir capillary system embodiment number 2.

Figure 4B is a cross sectional view taken along lines B-B of Figure 4A.

Referring now to Figure 1A, the fluid flow schematic shown therein includes an ink reservoir tank 10 from which an ink feed tube 12 extends to a printhead of an inkjet pen. A vertical capillary tube 14 extends upwardly at the angle shown and is tapered to increasingly smaller cross sections as the vertical height of the capillary tube 14 increases. When the pressure inside the ink reservoir 10 increases with corresponding increases in temperature therein, the ink 16 will be drawn upwardly in the capillary tube 14 to thereby maintain a substantially constant backpressure which is generated at the ink meniscus 18 and is the pressure at the location where the pen body housing joins the printhead, both of which are described in more detail below. Conversely, when the pressure inside the ink reservoir 10 decreases, the ink 16 in the capillary tube 14 will again move downward and tend to maintain the meniscus 18 at a substantially constant backpressure. As will be shown in more detail in Figure 2 below, the shape of the capillary feed tube 14 may be configured in a serpentine type of geometry which extends vertically upward in a back and forth pattern for each of a plurality of ink compartments of the ink jet pen. In this manner, capillary tube capacity in a given volume can be greatly increased.

Referring now to Figure 1B, in this embodiment of the invention the right hand vertical capillary tube portion 20 is also tapered with a decreasing cross section towards its apex 22 and is integrally joined with a left hand capillary tube portion 24, also tapered, which feeds into a secondary reservoir 26 having its own vertical vent/capillary tube 28. Thus, in the embodiment of Figure 1B, the capillary ink storage capacity has been substantially increased relative to Figure 1A and now includes both a secondary reservoir 26 and a primary reservoir 30 as well as a capillary path of substantial length between the reservoirs 26 and 30. As the ink moves upwardly in the right hand capillary tube 20, there is maintained a slightly negative head at the printhead member 32. This condition is maintained even after the ink passes through the apex 22 and begins its downward movement in the capillary tube portion 24 and toward the secondary ink reservoir 26.

When the secondary reservoir 26 begins to take in ink from the capillary tube 24, the pressure at the printhead 32 becomes slightly positive by the vertical distance between the printhead 32 and the free ink surface within the secondary reservoir 26. This is also true for the schematic diagram of Figure 1C to be described. In both of these two embodiments, the secondary reservoir should be located vertically as close to the printhead as is

physically possible in order to minimize the slight, but tolerable, positive head at the printhead which occurs with the filling of the secondary reservoir. When the pressure in the primary reservoir 30 begins to decrease, then the ink will be drawn from the secondary reservoir 26 and back through the capillary tube portions 24 and 20, respectively, and into the main ink reservoir 30.

If possible from a design standpoint, it is preferable to locate the secondary reservoir below the ink jet printhead and this design would always insure that the pen operates with a constant backpressure. Unfortunately this latter design is not always available as a result of other design constraints placed upon pen construction.

Referring now to Figure 1C, which is a schematic diagram for the third embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figure 4, this embodiment is referred to herein as the dual reservoir capillary system embodiment number 2. This embodiment has also been alternatively referred to herein as the "sump pump" embodiment and includes a capillary tube 34 of tapered cross section which passes ink directly as shown between the main ink reservoir 36 and a secondary ink reservoir 38. As in Figure 1B, the secondary ink reservoir 38 includes its own vertical capillary/vent tube 39 which provides additional ink overflow capacity in this embodiment of the invention. The ink position on the capillary section 34 tends to maintain a substantially constant backpressure at the printhead 40 in the manner previously described with changes in pressure and temperature in the main reservoir 36. As in embodiment 1, ink in the secondary reservoir produces slight but tolerable positive pressure and is positioned accordingly. The significance of this embodiment is that the capillary tube 34 has been significantly shortened relative to Figure 1B, and this feature allows for more closely positioning the primary and secondary reservoirs adjacent one another within the pen body housing. The exact nature of the controlled capillary action for all of the schematic diagrams in Figures 1A, 1B and 1C will become better understood in the following description of the three preferred corresponding physical embodiments of the present invention.

In each of the three (3) embodiments described below, a substantially constant "negative head" or "backpressure" is maintained at the printhead within each structure described for both a normal temperature range printing operation (the "dynamic" operation) and the normal standby mode, or "static" case. For the over-temperature case and with the secondary reservoir taking in ink, the slight positive pressure at the printhead will be determined in large part by the geometry and location of the secondary reservoir. However, for all of the above conditions of pen operation, certain

known operating parameters will enable one skilled in the art to size the dimensions and geometries of the reservoirs and capillary tubes in such a manner as to precisely control the pressures at the output printhead.

The surface tension, viscosity, and wetting angle of the ink can be known for its interaction with the material used in pen body housing construction. Then using the parameters of surface tension and ink-to-solid contact angle (angle of wettability), the proper size and geometries of the capillary tubes can be ascertained and used to control air bubble formation in to the main reservoir. And, it is this control of air bubble formation in the main reservoir and designed capillary draw in the tubing that in turn provides the control of pressures in the main ink reservoir and at the ink jet printhead for the above two (2) operating conditions for each of the three (3) embodiments. For example, the pressure regulation in the operational mode in each of the primary or main ink reservoirs of these three embodiments is achieved by the combination of air bubble formation in each reservoir. In the standby mode, pressure regulation is maintained by capillary draw in the connecting capillary tube. In the overflow mode (due to temperature or pressure changes) pressure is limited by geometric positioning of the secondary reservoir for the dual reservoir systems.

Referring now to Figures 2A, 2B and 2C, the exploded isometric view in Figure 2A includes a main ink reservoir member 42 having one outer wall 44, for receiving the front or face plate 46 in the manner indicated. The face plate member 46 includes an integral shelf 48 which is received as shown beneath a bottom wall 49 of the main ink reservoir 42. The right hand or hidden wall 50 of the front plate 46 includes the serpentine capillary ink flow paths to be further described, and the front plate 46 further includes an offset lower downwardly facing section 52 for receiving the thin film resistor printhead or other equivalent type of ink jet printhead not shown in this figure. This printhead may advantageously be connected to and electrically driven by means of a flexible circuit element or the like (not shown) which is wrapped around the tapered wall 54 and then up along the front face 56 of the front plate 46. The upstanding member 58 is a latching device which facilitates locking the pen into a pen carriage or the like and is a mechanical detail which is not significant to the operation of the present invention.

A back plate 60 is adapted to provide a cover for a large opening in the back wall 62 of the main ink reservoir 42, and the back plate 60 includes a plurality of ink feed ports 64, 66 and 68 which may advantageously be used as ink supply paths for three different color ink compartments (not shown)

which may be constructed within the interior of the main ink reservoir 42. These interior separate compartments are connected by way of the ink feed openings 73, 74 and 75 in the housing wall 44 to a corresponding plurality of ink jet printheads not shown in this figure. However, such multi-compartment construction is generally well known in the art and is disclosed in more detail in the above identified Baker et al EP-A-0 261 764.

Referring now to figure 2B, the right hand wall of the face plate 46 includes serpentine grooves 72 therein which become of decreasing cross-section as they wind back and forth upwardly in a continuous path from an ink feed port 74 to the top wall 76 of the face plate 46. These grooves 72 may be constructed in the form of three distinct and continuous capillary paths for three colors of ink in a three color ink jet pen, for example. Two of these serpentine capillary paths are shown in the partially cut away view of Figure 2C. These serpentine grooves 72 are closed off by the adjacent abutting front wall 78 of the main ink reservoir 42, and a capillary ink feed tube 78 extends vertically downward as shown in Figure 2B to pass ink to a thin film resistor type printhead 80 or the like which is not shown in detail herein. However, this printhead may be of the type disclosed in the above identified Baker et al EP-A-0 261 764.

Thus, as described above with reference to Figure 1A, the ink will move upwardly in the balanced capillary tube/vent combination 72 as temperature and pressure within the ink reservoir 42 rise, and will move back down the tube/vent 72 as pressure and temperature within the main ink reservoir 42 again decrease. This action has the effect of maintaining a substantially constant negative back pressure at the printhead 80 and within the capillary ink feed tube 78.

Referring now to Figure 2C, the cut away section of this figure shows the serpentine geometry of two of the capillary feed tubes 72 which extend from one of the main ink reservoir access ports 74 and upwardly as shown to the top of the pen structure. The pen structure in Figure 2C also includes a feed tube 82 which extends as shown from the reservoir access port 74 and downwardly at an angle toward an ink jet printhead 80. When using the ink jet pen of Figure 2 in multi-color applications, there will be a separate capillary tube 72 for each color and black, and clear vehicle if desired.

Referring now to Figures 3A-3E, the exploded isometric view in Figure 3A includes an ink reservoir housing member 90 having a primary ink reservoir 92 and a secondary ink reservoir 94 located as shown in the upper and lower regions of the reservoir housing 90 respectively. The near facing outer wall sections 96, 98, 100, 102 and 104 will,

when the pen is completely assembled, directly abut the back wall 106 of an intermediate capillary section 108. The capillary section 108 includes a vertical vent tube 110, a capillary ink feed tube 112 centrally located within the capillary section 108 and a left hand inverted U-shaped capillary balance tube 114. These tubes 110, 112 and 114 are actually formed by grooves as indicated within the near facing surface 118 of the capillary section 108, but will become closed ink feed tubes once the front face 118 of the section 108 is moved directly adjacent to the right side wall 120 of a front cover plate 122 for the ink jet pen. When assembled, a thin film printhead 124 will be positioned within the centrally located offset region 126 which is defined along the bottom facing surfaces of the intermediate and front cover members 108 and 122 previously described. The front cover plate 122 includes a latching member 128 which facilitates the loading and unloading of the pen into a pen carriage member or the like, and an ink fill plug 130 is positioned as shown for insertion into an ink fill hole 132 in the top wall 134 of the ink reservoir housing 90. Referring now to Figures 3B-3E in conjunction with the previously identified Figure 3A, the cross section view in Figure 3B is taken through the center line of the vent tube 110, and the vent tube 110 extends from the secondary reservoir 94 and from a lateral ink flow port 95 and up to the top surface of the capillary section 108. In addition to providing air flow to the outside ambient, the vent tube 110 also provides ink overflow capacity when the secondary reservoir 94 fills up and the temperature and pressure within the pen body housing continue to rise and continue to exert force on the ink and move the ink upwardly in the vent tube 110. This action would occur beyond the upper operational temperature range in which the pen is expected to operate. The vent tube 110 corresponds to the vertical capillary tube 28 in Figure 1B.

Referring now to Figure 3C, the capillary feed tube 112 shown therein extends from a horizontal ink reservoir access port 136 and downwardly to the ink jet printhead 124 previously identified. This feed tube 112 is the main operational ink channel for supplying ink from the main ink reservoir 92 and to the ink jet printhead 124.

Referring now to Figure 3D, this figure is a cross section view taken along the right hand portion of the U-shaped capillary balance tube 114 and extends as shown from a lateral ink passage-way 138 to the secondary ink reservoir 94 and the apex 139 of the tube 114.

The cross section view in Figure 3E is taken along the left hand portion of the U-shaped capillary balance tube 114 and shows the completed path of ink flow from the primary reservoir 92 and

to the secondary reservoir 94, so that the direction of capillary ink feed will be along the direction of arrows in Figure 3E and upwardly in this figure and then back downwardly in Figure 3D and into the secondary ink reservoir 94. Thus, it is only after the ink flowing in the direction of arrows in Figures 3E and 3D fills the secondary ink reservoir 94 when the ink will then begin to flow in the direction of arrows in Figure 3B and upwardly in the vent tube 110 shown therein. This will occur only when the pen is operating beyond its uppermost temperature range.

Referring now to Figures 4A and 4B, this dual reservoir capillary system embodiment number 2 corresponds to the previously described schematic in Figure 1C. In Figure 4A, the primary reservoir housing 140 includes a top rim or ledge section 142 extending laterally outward from the housing 140 and configured to receive a top plate 144 having a pen carriage latching assembly 146 in the geometry shown. The reservoir housing 140 is integrally joined to a capillary balancing tube 148 of conical inner and outer geometry which extends downwardly into a secondary ink reservoir region 150 within the secondary ink reservoir housing 152.

The secondary reservoir housing 152 also includes an integral, upwardly extending vent tube 154 of conical outer geometry like that of the capillary balancing tube 148. The tube 154 is referred to herein as a vent tube since it serves as an air vent to the outside ambient.

Referring now to Figure 4B, the cross section view in this figure is taken through the center lines of the two matching tubes 148 and 154 and shows a main capillary feed tube 156 extending from the primary reservoir 158 within the reservoir housing 140 and to a printhead member 16. The printhead 16 is mounted on the downwardly facing surfaces of the secondary reservoir housing member 162.

When operating in a normal room temperature range, ink will be supplied directly from the primary reservoir 158 and through the ink feed capillary tube 156 to the ink jet printhead 164. In this operating condition, negative backpressure is maintained by the surface tension of air bubble formation and is enhanced by the geometry of the shroud member 149 which forms a well around the entrance to the capillary balancing tube 148. When temperature and pressure within the ink reservoir housing 140 rise above a certain level, ink will be drawn by capillary action down through the capillary balancing tube 148 and into the secondary reservoir 150. When temperature and pressure within the reservoir housing 140 begin to decrease back to or toward a normal room temperature operating range, ink in the secondary reservoir 150 will be drawn by reducing pressure in the primary reservoir back up through the capillary balancing tube 148 and into

the primary reservoir 158. During this operation, the vent tube 154 provides air flow into and out of the secondary reservoir 150 from the outside ambient.

As shown in Figures 4A and 4B, a shroud 149 extends upwardly of the capillary balancing tube 148 and will serve as an ink well and be filled with ink even after the ink level in the main ink reservoir 140 nears the bottom floor 151 of the pen body housing. In this manner, bubble formation will occur within the well formed by the shroud 149 and will continue to regulate pressure within the main reservoir housing 140 even as the ink level therein approaches the floor 151. Thus, this pressure regulation continues up until the time that the ink jet pen is completely out of ink.

Various modifications may be made in the above described embodiments without departing from the scope of this invention. For example, the present invention is not limited to the particular geometry or attachment method or ink flow mechanism of the printheads, e.g. 164. These thin film printheads and related attachment methods are generally well known in the art and typically include a thin film resistor substrate, an intermediate barrier layer defining individual reservoirs for resistor heaters or other equivalent transducers and an outer orifice plate. For a further discussion of such structures, reference may be made to the Hewlett-Packard Journal, Vol. 38, No. 5, May 1985, incorporated herein by reference. In addition, the printhead and ink feed structure of the above identified Baker et al EP-A-0 261 764 may be used with the above described pen body housings and related capillary feed structures.

There are many other design and construction modifications which may be selected by those skilled in the art within the scope of the appended claims. These modifications would include, but are not limited to, changes to the internal geometry of the capillary balancing tube 148 in Figure 4 and the geometry, location and design of the shroud 149 in Figure 4. It is also to be understood that in multicolor (and black and untuned vehicle) applications, there will be separate compartments like those described above for each color, black and clear vehicle. The above described embodiments in Figs. 3 and 4 show only a single color (or black) ink reservoir construction for sake of brevity, and clearly the appended claims are equally directed to multicolor pens as well as black pens, or a combination of the latter.

Finally, for a further discussion of related slot-feed ink flow techniques and single point tape automated bond (TAB bond) electrical interconnect methods used for ink jet printhead construction and mounting, reference may be made to U.S. Patents 4,680,859 and 4,683,481 issued to S. A. Johnson

and U.S. patent 4,635,073 issued to Gary E. Hanson and all assigned to the present assignee and incorporated herein by reference.

Claims

1. An ink jet pen characterised in that it comprises a pen body housing containing a primary ink reservoir (30) and a secondary ink reservoir (26), a printhead with ink ejection means (32) mounted on the housing so as to receive ink from the primary reservoir (30) during an ink jet printing operation, and connection means (20,22,24,34) to allow ink to flow back and forth between the primary reservoir (30) and the secondary reservoir (26) as a function of changes in ambient temperature. 10
2. The pen defined in Claim 1 wherein the secondary reservoir (26) is a tubular shaped feed path (14) which extends from the primary reservoir (30) to the outside ambient. 20
3. The pen defined in Claims 1 or 2 wherein the secondary reservoir (26) is separated from the primary reservoir (30) and said connection means is a non-linear capillary tube (20,22,24) connecting said primary and secondary reservoirs. 25
4. The pen defined in Claim 3 wherein the non-linear capillary tube is formed in a capillary section of the housing and is positioned directly between openings in the primary and secondary reservoirs for passing ink therebetween. 30
5. The pen defined in Claims 1 or 2 wherein the secondary reservoir (38) is separated from the primary reservoir (36) and is connected thereto by means of a capillary tube (34). 40
6. The pen defined in any preceding claim wherein said secondary reservoir (38) is situated beneath said primary reservoir (36). 45
7. The pen as defined in any preceding Claim wherein the secondary reservoir (38) contains an air vent tube (39) which extends to the outside ambient. 50
8. The pen defined in claims 5,6 or 7 wherein a separate ink well is formed around the opening of said straight capillary tube into said primary reservoir to enhance air bubble formation in said primary reservoir as it is being depleted of ink. 55

9. A method for controlling backpressure in an ink jet pen which includes; providing primary and secondary ink reservoirs (30,26) in a pen body housing, and causing ink to flow back and forth between the reservoirs as a function of variations in ambient temperature, whereby ink may be supplied from the main ink reservoir (30) to an ink jet printhead (32) at a substantially constant backpressure over a certain temperature range.
10. The method defined in Claim 9 further introducing including air bubbles into the primary ink reservoir from a capillary ink flow path thereto, whereby pressure regulation in the primary reservoir (30) is maintained by a combination of bubble formation therein and the surface tension and capillary action of ink in said capillary ink flow path.

Revendications

1. Cartouche à jet d'encre caractérisée en ce qu'elle comprend un boîtier de corps de cartouche contenant un réservoir d'encre principal (30) et un réservoir d'encre secondaire (26), une tête d'impression munie de moyens (32) d'éjection de l'encre montés sur le boîtier de manière à recevoir de l'encre du réservoir principal (30) pendant une opération d'impression à jet d'encre, et des moyens de liaison (20, 22, 24, 34) destinés à permettre à l'encre de s'écouler dans les deux sens entre le réservoir principal (30) et le réservoir secondaire (26) en fonction des variations de la température ambiante.
2. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (26) est un passage d'amenée (14) de forme tubulaire qui s'étend du réservoir principal (30) à l'atmosphère extérieure.
3. Cartouche selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (26) est séparé du réservoir principal (30) et lesdits moyens de liaison sont un tube capillaire non linéaire (20, 22, 24) qui relie lesdits réservoirs principal et secondaire.
4. Cartouche selon la revendication 3, dans laquelle le tube capillaire non linéaire est formé dans une section capillaire du boîtier et positionné directement entre des ouvertures formées dans les réservoirs principal et secondaire pour assurer l'écoulement de l'encre entre ces réservoirs.



and U.S. patent 4,635,073 issued to Gary E. Hanson and all assigned to the present assignee and incorporated herein by reference.

Claims

1. An ink jet pen characterised in that it comprises a pen body housing containing a primary ink reservoir (30) and a secondary ink reservoir (26), a printhead with ink ejection means (32) mounted on the housing so as to receive ink from the primary reservoir (30) during an ink jet printing operation, and connection means (20,22,24,34) to allow ink to flow back and forth between the primary reservoir (30) and the secondary reservoir (26) as a function of changes in ambient temperature. 5
2. The pen defined in Claim 1 wherein the secondary reservoir (26) is a tubular shaped feed path (14) which extends from the primary reservoir (30) to the outside ambient. 10
3. The pen defined in Claims 1 or 2 wherein the secondary reservoir (26) is separated from the primary reservoir (30) and said connection means is a non-linear capillary tube (20,22,24) connecting said primary and secondary reservoirs. 15
4. The pen defined in Claim 3 wherein the non-linear capillary tube is formed in a capillary section of the housing and is positioned directly between openings in the primary and secondary reservoirs for passing ink therebetween. 20
5. The pen defined in Claims 1 or 2 wherein the secondary reservoir (38) is separated from the primary reservoir (36) and is connected thereto by means of a capillary tube (34). 25
6. The pen defined in any preceding claim wherein said secondary reservoir (38) is situated beneath said primary reservoir (36). 30
7. The pen as defined in any preceding Claim wherein the secondary reservoir (38) contains an air vent tube (39) which extends to the outside ambient. 35
8. The pen defined in claims 5,6 or 7 wherein a separate ink well is formed around the opening of said straight capillary tube into said primary reservoir to enhance air bubble formation in said primary reservoir as it is being depleted of ink. 40

9. A method for controlling backpressure in an ink jet pen which includes; providing primary and secondary ink reservoirs (30,26) in a pen body housing, and causing ink to flow back and forth between the reservoirs as a function of variations in ambient temperature, whereby ink may be supplied from the main ink reservoir (30) to an ink jet printhead (32) at a substantially constant backpressure over a certain temperature range. 45
10. The method defined in Claim 9 further introducing including air bubbles into the primary ink reservoir from a capillary ink flow path thereto, whereby pressure regulation in the primary reservoir (30) is maintained by a combination of bubble formation therein and the surface tension and capillary action of ink in said capillary ink flow path. 50

Revendications

1. Cartouche à jet d'encre caractérisée en ce qu'elle comprend un boîtier de corps de cartouche contenant un réservoir d'encre principal (30) et un réservoir d'encre secondaire (26), une tête d'impression munie de moyens (32) d'éjection de l'encre montés sur le boîtier de manière à recevoir de l'encre du réservoir principal (30) pendant une opération d'impression à jet d'encre, et des moyens de liaison (20, 22, 24, 34) destinés à permettre à l'encre de s'écouler dans les deux sens entre le réservoir principal (30) et le réservoir secondaire (26) en fonction des variations de la température ambiante. 55
2. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (26) est un passage d'amenée (14) de forme tubulaire qui s'étend du réservoir principal (30) à l'atmosphère extérieure.
3. Cartouche selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (26) est séparé du réservoir principal (30) et lesdits moyens de liaison sont un tube capillaire non linéaire (20, 22, 24) qui relie lesdits réservoirs principal et secondaire.
4. Cartouche selon la revendication 3, dans laquelle le tube capillaire non linéaire est formé dans une section capillaire du boîtier et positionné directement entre des ouvertures formées dans les réservoirs principal et secondaire pour assurer l'écoulement de l'encre entre ces réservoirs.



5. Cartouche selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (30) est séparé du réservoir principal (36) et est relié à celui-ci par un tube capillaire (34).

6. Cartouche selon une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle ledit réservoir secondaire (38) est situé au-dessous dudit réservoir principal (36).

7. Cartouche selon une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle le réservoir secondaire (38) contient un tube d'évent atmosphérique (39) qui s'étend jusqu'à l'atmosphère extérieure.

8. Cartouche selon la revendication 5, 6 ou 7, dans laquelle un puits d'encre séparé est formé autour de l'ouverture dudit tube capillaire droit, en saillie dans ledit réservoir principal, pour favoriser la formation des bulles d'air dans ledit réservoir principal lorsque ce dernier épuise son encre.

9. Procédé pour régler la contre-pression dans une cartouche à jet d'encre, qui consiste à : prévoir des réservoirs d'encre principal et secondaire (30, 26) à l'intérieur d'un boîtier de corps de cartouche et laisser l'encre s'écouler dans les deux sens entre les réservoirs en fonction des variations de la température ambiante, de sorte que l'encre peut être transmise du réservoir d'encre principal (30) à une tête d'impression à jet d'encre (32) en présence d'une contre-pression sensiblement constante sur un certain intervalle de température.

10. Procédé selon la revendication 9, consistant en outre à introduire des bulles d'air dans le réservoir d'encre principal en provenance d'un trajet capillaire d'écoulement de l'encre aboutissant à ce réservoir, de sorte que la régulation de pression dans le réservoir principal (30) est entretenu par une combinaison de la formation de bulles dans ce réservoir et de la tension superficielle et de l'action capillaire de l'encre dans ledit passage capillaire d'écoulement de l'encre.

Patentansprüche

1. Tintenstrahlschreiber, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß er ein Schreibergehäuse, enthaltend ein primäres Tintenreservoir (30) und ein sekundäres Tintenreservoir (26), einen Druckkopf mit einer am Gehäuse angeordneten Tinten- ausstrahlvorrichtung (32) zum Aufnehmen von

Tinte aus dem primären Reservoir (30) während eines Tintenstrahldruckvorganges sowie eine Verbindungsvorrichtung (20, 22, 24, 34) zum Ermöglichen eines Tintenstromes in beiden Richtungen zwischen dem primären Reservoir (30) und dem sekundären Reservoir (26) in Abhängigkeit von Änderungen der Umgebungstemperatur aufweist.

2. Schreiber nach Anspruch 1, bei dem das sekundäre Reservoir (26) eine rohrförmig gestaltete Zuführung (14) ist, welche sich von dem primären Reservoir (30) zur äußeren Umgebung erstreckt.

3. Schreiber nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, bei dem das sekundäre Reservoir (26) vom primären Reservoir (30) getrennt ist, und die Verbindungsvorrichtung ein nicht-geradliniges Kapillarrohr (20, 22, 24) ist, welches das primäre Reservoir mit dem sekundären Reservoir verbindet.

4. Schreiber nach Anspruch 3, bei dem das nicht-geradlinige Kapillarrohr als Kapillarabschnitt des Gehäuses ausgestaltet und direkt zwischen Öffnungen des primären und des sekundären Reservoirs zum Passierenlassen von Tinte zwischen den Reservoiren angeordnet ist.

5. Schreiber nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, bei dem das sekundäre Reservoir (38) vom primären Reservoir (36) getrennt ist und damit mittels eines Kapillarrohres (34) verbunden ist.

6. Schreiber nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, bei dem das sekundäre Reservoir (38) unterhalb des primären Reservoirs (36) angeordnet ist.

7. Schreiber nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, bei dem das sekundäre Reservoir (38) ein Entlüftungsröhr (39) aufweist, welches sich zur äußeren Umgebung öffnet.

8. Schreiber nach Anspruch 5, 6 oder 7, bei dem ein gesonderter Tintenvorrat um die Öffnung des geraden Kapillarrohrs in das primäre Reservoir vorgesehen ist, um Luftblasenbildung in dem primären Reservoir bei dessen Entleerung von Tinte zu verstärken.

9. Verfahren zum Regeln des Rückdruckes in einem Tintenstrahlschreiber, welches umfaßt: Vorsehen eines ersten und eines zweiten Tintenreservoirs (30, 26) in einem Schreibergehäuse und Veranlassen eines Hin- und Rück-



stromes von Tinte zwischen den Reservoiren in Abhängigkeit von Änderungen der Umgebungstemperatur, wodurch Tinte aus dem Haupt-Tintenreservoir (30) zu einem Tintenstrahldruckkopf (32) unter im wesentlichen konstantem Rückdruck innerhalb eines gewissen Temperaturbereiches gespeist werden kann.

5

10. Verfahren nach Anspruch 9, bei dem zusätzlich Luftblasen aus einem kapillaren Tintenstropfpfad in das primäre Tintenreservoir eingespeist werden, wodurch eine Druckregelung im primären Reservoir (30) mittels einer Kombination aus Luftblasenbildung darin und der Oberflächenspannung sowie Kapillarwirkung der Tinte in dem kapillaren Tintenstropfpfad aufrechterhalten wird.

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55