

Description

The invention relates to a hand-held labeler adapted to print and apply pressure sensitive labels releasably secured to a carrier web, comprising: a housing having a handle; a label applicator mounted on the housing, the housing having a label roll mounting means, a print head including electrically selectable printing elements disposed within the housing, means for advancing the carrier web, a keyboard, a visual display disposed adjacent the keyboard for displaying data entered into the keyboard, and a control circuit connecting the keyboard, the print head and the display, said control circuit including a circuit board.

In the case of a prior art labeler of this species (EP—A—657) the housing comprises door means allowing access to a battery compartment within said housing. For attending or repairing important components of the labeler these components are accessible only after substantial disassembling of the labeler.

The invention aims at developing the aforementioned labeler in such a manner that in particular the most sensitive components thereof can be attended or repaired simply and conveniently.

The labeler solving this problem is substantially characterized in that the housing includes a housing section movable away from the remainder of the housing for accessing the inside of the housing, means for mounting the keyboard and the circuit board to the movable housing section, the circuit board being in generally parallel relationship to the keyboard, and means including a flexible ribbon connector for connecting the circuit board and the print head for enabling movement of the housing section between a position in which the housing section is part of the housing and a position away from the remainder of the housing. Due to these features it is possible to move the housing section conjointly with the keyboard and the therewith parallel circuit board away from the remaining housing, while it is not necessary to undo the electrical connection. It is rather possible to input orders also in the moved-away state and to observe how they are carried out. Owing to this possibility of moving the housing section away also some of the remaining components positioned within the housing are accessible very easily. The labeler according to the present invention therefore is very compact but nevertheless readily serviceable.

It is worth mentioning that in the case of conventional labelers comprising a purely mechanically operated printing system (US—A—39 57 562) all components of the labeler are supported on at least one of two halves of the labeler housing or on an inner frame. For this reason they are only accessible through openings in the labeler housing or in that the halves of the housing are separated from each other. The prior art labelers therefore do not suggest the present invention whatsoever.

It proved to be particularly advantageous when the flexible ribbon connector is also connected to an operating switch disposed at the handle. In this manner it is possible to release the operation by actuating the operating switch, irrespective of whether or not the housing section is moved away from the remaining housing.

Another advantage can be achieved in terms of structure when the housing section is pivotally mounted with respect to the remainder of the housing.

Further details, advantages and features result from the following description in connexion with the drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a hand-held labeler;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of a portion of the labeler showing structure located in the housing;

Figure 3 is a perspective partially exploded view of a drive mechanism for a toothed feed wheel;

Figure 4 is a fragmentary sectional view showing the relationship of thermographic printing elements to a platen roller;

Figure 5 is a fragmentary, partly broken away, side elevational view of the labeler;

Figure 6 is an exploded perspective view of a print head assembly and structure to which it is mounted;

Figure 7 is a perspective, partly phantom view of a labeler similar to the embodiment of Figures 1 through 6, but using a manual drive for the carrier web;

Figure 8 is an exploded, perspective, diagrammatic view showing the drive for the carrier web;

Figure 9 is a sectional view showing a fluidic drive for driving the feed wheel at a substantially constant rate irrespective of the speed of actuation of a manually operable actuator;

Figure 10 is a sectional view showing a fragment of the fluidic device;

Figure 11 is a sectional view showing the manner in which a label roll and a battery which it carries are mounted in the labeler;

Figure 12 is a functional block diagram of the electronic control circuitry of the labeler;

Figure 13 is a schematic diagram of the microcomputer utilized in the labeler;

Figure 14 is a schematic diagram of a stepper motor driver;

Figure 15 is a schematic diagram of a thermographic print head and control circuitry;

Figure 16 is a schematic diagram of a visual display and display driver;

Figure 17 is a schematic diagram of a reset circuit for the microcomputer;

Figures 18 and 19 are illustrations of two different thermographic print heads;

Figure 20 is an illustration of various types of characters that can be printed by the labeling machine; and

Figures 21—26 are logical flow diagrams describing the logical sequence of operations performed by the microcomputer during data input and label printing operations.

threaded pins 68. Because the pin 72 is undersize with respect to the holes 72' in which it is received, the support 58 and the print head 36 can scuw with respect to the platen 50. As shown, the printing elements 36' are arranged in a line which extends transversely to the direction of movement of the carrier web W. If, for example, either end portion of the line of printing elements 36 is bearing too heavily against the label L, the respective threaded pin 68 adjacent that end can be turned to reduce the spring pressure. It is a feature of the embodiment shown to be able to skew the support 58 by adjusting means which are disposed at spaced apart locations. Both housing sections 22 and 23 have enlarged cutouts or holes 75 into which the projections 65 and 66 respectively project. The projections 65 and 66 extend far enough so that they can be easily actuated by the user. During threading of the labeler 20, the carrier web W is passed along the path illustrated in Figure 5. When the leading end of the carrier web W is in position to be passed between the print head 36 and the platen 50, the user pushes on the projections 65 and 66 to pivot the support clockwise as viewed in Figures 5 and 6 to move the printing elements 36' away from the platen 50. In this way the leading end of the carrier W can be pushed through the space between the printing elements 36' and the platen 50. If desired, the print head 36 can be fixedly held in position and the platen 50 can be selectively moved toward and away from the print head 36 by an alternative construction, not shown. When the threading of the labeler is complete, the projections 65 and 66 can be released whereupon the springs 70 urge the support 58 and the print head 36 counterclockwise to their normal position as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

With reference to the embodiment of Figures 7 through 10, there is shown a labeler 20A identical to the labeler 20 except as described below. The labeler 20A uses a drive for advancing the carrier web W which is manually powered. The handle 74 mounts a pivot 75' for a manually engageable lever actuator 76. The lever actuator 76 carries a gear section 77 which meshes with a gear 78. The gear 78 carries a pawl 79 which cooperates with a ratchet wheel 80 secured to the feed wheel 44. The ratchet wheel 80 is shown to have a plurality of teeth 81 with which a pawl 79 cooperates. A fluidic device generally indicated at 82 is shown to be disposed in the handle 74 and bears against the handle 74 and the actuator or lever 76. The fluidic device 82 includes a tubular cylinder 83 having a closed end portion 84 and a tubular piston 85 having a closed end portion 86. The cylinder 83 and the piston 85 have respective integrally formed bearings 87 and 88 in contact with bearing surfaces 89 and 90 of the handle 74 and the lever 76, respectively. The cylinder 83 has an internal flange 91, and the piston 85 has an external flange 92 to limit separational movement. A resilient O-ring 93 is disposed between the piston 85 and the cylinder 83 to provide an air seal therebetween. The cylinder 83 and the piston 85 combined to provide a chamber 94. A compression-type drive

spring 95 is disposed in the chamber 94 and bears against respective end portions 84 and 86 of the cylinder 83 and the piston 85. The drive spring 95 can be located outside the chamber according to another embodiment, if desired. The end portion 84 contains a restricted orifice 96 and the end portion 86 contains an opening 97 which is alternately opened and closed by means of a valve 98. The construction of the valve 98 and the end portion 86 are shown in greater detail in Figure 10. The valve 98 is of the flapper type and has an anchor portion 99 anchored in a recess 100. The valve 98 has a flexible resilient portion 101. The opening 97 has a tapered entry 102 for receiving the valve 98. The opening 97 is considerably larger than the restricted orifice 96. When it is desired to operate the labeler 20A, the user squeezes the lever 76 to cause the piston 85 to telescope into the cylinder 83 and compress the drive spring 95, thereby causing air within the chamber 94 to pass outwardly through the orifice 96 and the opening 97, and the fluidic device 82 provides essentially no fluid resistance because air can readily escape from the chamber 94. Essentially all of the resistance is afforded by the spring 95. When the lever 76 is released the spring 95 acts on the lever 76 to drive the gear 78 and in turn the ratchet wheel 80 and the feed wheel 44 at an essentially constant rate. It is noted that upon release of the lever 76, the valve 98 closes so that the only air entering the chamber 94 is through the restricted orifice 96. Accordingly, the fluidic device 82 moves from its distended position to its extended position at a controlled, essentially constant rate. Accordingly, the feed wheel 44 is driven at an essentially constant rate. Printing on the labels L takes place while the carrier web W and the label L which it carries are advancing through the labeler 20A. To accommodate for variations in the angular velocity of the feed wheel 44, a shaft encoder generally indicated at 103 is provided. The shaft encoder 103 includes a plurality of markings 104 on the feed wheel 44 and a pickup device or sensor 105.

Because the labeler 20A does not rely on battery energy to advance the carrier W, the battery used to energize the printing elements 36' can be relatively small. According to the embodiment shown a battery 107 is positioned in a central hole 106 in the label roll R as best shown in Figure 11. It is preferred that the battery 107 fit snugly in the label roll hole 106. As shown, the frame sections 55 and 56 rotatably mount roll mounting members 108. Electrical contacts generally indicated at 109 are suitably mounted within the mounting members 108 and are urged by respective springs 110 into contact with opposed terminals 111 and 112 of the battery 107. Electrical energy from the battery 107 is passed from the contacts 109 to conductors 113 and to the ribbon connector 33 to the circuit board 32. The battery 107 can be part and parcel of the label roll R in which event the battery 107 would fit snugly in the label hole 106.

Referring now to Figure 12, there is shown the interrelationship between many of the previously

described mechanical and electromechanical portions of the labeler such as the keyboard 27, the display 29, the stepping motor 35, the print head 36, the trigger 37 and the control circuitry, which is responsive to inputs from the keyboard 27 and the trigger 37 and serves to control the display 29, the stepping motor 35 and the print head 36. The control circuitry is generally designated by the reference numeral 200 in Figure 12, and comprises a microcomputer 202 which includes a central processing unit, a read-only memory and a random-access memory (not shown in Figure 12 but described in a subsequent portion of the application) which cooperate to perform the functions required to receive data from the keyboard 27 and provide the required computations to drive the display 29, the stepping motor 35 and the print head 36 in accordance with the instructions received from the keyboard 27. The control signals from the microcomputer 202 that drive the display 29 are applied to a display driver 204 and are processed thereby to convert the data from the microcomputer 202 to segment driving data that activate predetermined segments of the display 29. A motor driver 206 is responsive to step data from the microcomputer 202 and serves to energize various windings of the stepping motor 35 in a predetermined sequence in response to the step data in order to cause the motor 35 to rotate. A print head driver 208 provides power to the individual elements of the print head 36. The print head driver may be simply a plurality of amplifiers, one for each element, which amplify signals from the microcomputer 202, or may include a serial-to-parallel converter that converts serial digital data from the microcomputer 202 to parallel data for driving each of the individual elements of the print head 36. When a serial-to-parallel converter is employed, the print head driver 208 is preferably located on the same hybrid circuit board as the print head 36 in order to substantially reduce the number of leads required between the microcomputer 202 and the assembly containing the print head 36. This substantial reduction is achieved because each element of the print head 36 must have an individual lead connected thereto, and if the print head driver 208 contained only amplifiers, or if it were not located on the same circuit board as the print head 36, the cable interconnecting the print head circuit board and the microcomputer would require a lead for each element. Since several hundred elements can be contained in the print head, it would not be practical to build such a cable. However, by including a serial-to-parallel converter in the print head driver, and by locating the print head driver 208 on the same hybrid circuit board as the print head 36, only that number of leads required to supply the required data at the desired printing rate need be provided.

A switch 210 is controlled by the trigger 37 and causes the microcomputer 202 to advance the stepping motor 35 in order to cause the motor 35 to feed the web whenever the trigger 37 is depressed. A stop feed switch 212, which may be

controlled, for example, by a cam 35' driven by the motor 35, or by a notch or the like in the web, is coupled to the microcomputer 202 and serves to terminate the advancement of the web after the web has been advanced a predetermined amount, generally the length or width of a label. A reset circuit 214 is coupled to the source of power for the labeler, such as, for example, the output of the regulated voltage which powers the control circuitry, resets the microcomputer 202 each time the power is turned on to assure that no extraneous data is present in the microcomputer 202 prior to the entry of any data by the keyboard 27.

In operation, data to be printed is entered into the microcomputer 202 manually via the keyboard 27, or automatically from another computer or data output source, such as, for example, a cassette recorder (not shown). The entered data may be numeric, alphanumeric and may be of various fonts and sizes, depending on the complexity of the program stored in the microcomputer 202. For example, if the data were entered from the keyboard 27, any of the digits 0 through 9 could be entered, as well as a dollar sign, slash and period. Also, with an appropriate program, the font can be changed to larger or block letters, for example, by depressing the BK key on the keyboard 27. Spaces can be entered by depressing the S key, and the memory can be cleared in the even of an error by depressing the C key. Also, different fonts can be entered by depressing various combinations of keys, for example, by simultaneously pressing the BK and \$ keys prior to or while entering data if the microcomputer 202 is programmed to recognize such combinations.

Each line of entered data is displayed on the display 29 as it is being entered, and if two lines of data are being entered, the display is cleared after the entry of the first line so that the second line can be displayed. Once the input data has been correctly entered, as evidenced by the display 29, any number of labels can be printed by depressing the trigger 37 to close the switch 210. The closing of the switch 210 causes the microcomputer 202 to energize the motor 35 via the motor driver 206, and to maintain the motor 35 energized until the switch 212 is closed, for example, by a notch, or other indexing mark on the web, or by a cam 35' or the like driven by the motor 35 which indicates that a complete label has been printed. The motor is then deenergized, and the printing will stop until the trigger 37 is depressed again.

During the time that the motor 35 is being driven by the microcomputer 202, the various elements in the print head 36 are energized by the microcomputer 202 via the print head driver 208 in the sequence necessary to cause the input data to be printed in the desired font. The data from the microcomputer 202 is applied to the print head driver 208 in parallel or serial form, preferably in serial form, in which the print head driver converts the input information into parallel form for simultaneously energizing all of the elements

in the line array that need to be energized in order to define one line of the array forming the character or characters being printed.

The microcomputer 202 of Figure 12 is illustrated in greater detail in Figure 13. The microcomputer 202 can take on many different configurations, and a typical configuration is illustrated in Figure 13. In the circuit illustrated in Figure 13, the microcomputer 202 contains a central processing unit (CPU) 220 which contains, in the present embodiment, an onboard random-access memory (RAM) having a capacity of 128 bytes, as well as an internal clock whose frequency is controlled by a quartz crystal 222 and a pair of capacitors 224 and 226. In the present embodiment, an MC 6802 integrated circuit manufactured by Motorola, Incorporated, is used as the central processing unit 220; however, many similar integrated circuits manufactured by other manufacturers are available.

A read-only memory (ROM) 228 is used in conjunction with the central processing unit 220. The read-only memory 228 serves to store various data such as the program that controls the operation of the CPU 220, various data, format data, error checking data, and various miscellaneous data necessary to assure proper operation of the labeler. As in the case of the central processing unit 220, various circuits suitable for use as the read-only memory 228 are available, but in the present embodiment, a type 2716 read-only memory, which is capable of storing 16,000 bits of information, or 2,000 words of 8 bits each, is used as the read-only memory 228. The capacity of the read-only memory 228 may be either increased or reduced as necessary, depending on the number of functions desired of the labeling machine, and the number of fonts and formats required. The type 2716 read-only memory illustrated in Figure 13 is manufactured by Motorola, Incorporated, Texas Instruments and other manufacturers.

The microcomputer 202 also contains a programmable timer module (PTM) 230 which operates in conjunction with the CPU 220 and provides various timing signals, such as, for example, timing signals for controlling the time duration that the thermographic printing elements are energized, as well as a 32 Hz signal (and a 32 Hz inverted signal from the inverting amplifier 232) necessary for the operation of the display driver 204. In addition, a 3 to 8 bit demultiplexer 234, which may be a 74 LS 138 demultiplexer available from various manufacturers, as well as a pair of peripheral interface adapters (PIA's) 236 and 238, which may be, for example, a type MC 6821 peripheral interface adapter available from various manufacturers, are also employed. The function of the 3 to 8 bit demultiplexer 234 is to select small portions of the memory 228 for further processing by the CPU 220, and the peripheral interface adapters 236 and 238 serve to provide an interface between the various peripheral elements of the labeling machine, such as, for example, the keyboard 27, the start feed trigger 37, the stop feed switch 212,

as well as the print head driver 208 and display driver 204.

In the schematic diagram illustrated in Figure 13, most of the connections to the various integrated circuits are designated by three different designations, namely, by the pin number of the integrated circuit package, by the integrated circuit manufacturer's mnemonic designations, and by an interconnection designation which defines the interconnections between the various integrated circuits. In the diagram of Figure 13, the pin number designations are shown above each lead to each integrated circuit, and are positioned just outside of the blocks that represent each of the integrated circuits. Typical pin designations range from 1 through 16 for an integrated circuit requiring relatively few connections, such as the demultiplexer 234 to a range of 1 through 40 for integrated circuits requiring more connections, such as the CPU 220 and the peripheral interface adapters 236 and 238. The manufacturer's mnemonics are placed adjacent to the pin numbers inside the various blocks representing the various integrated circuits, and serve generally to identify the various functions performed. For example, mnemonics beginning with a prefix A indicate address bits and mnemonics beginning with the prefix D indicate data bits. Finally, the interconnection designations are placed adjacent the pin numbers outside of the various blocks defining the various integrated circuits. These interconnection designations are also mnemonic in form, and if the same interconnection designation is present on leads extending from two or more different integrated circuits, it indicates that those leads are interconnected. Using this convention in a specific example, the lead designated AD 0 on the CPU 220 would be connected to the leads designated AD 0 on the ROM 228, the PIA1 236 and the PIA2 238.

In operation, data is entered into the CPU 220 from the keyboard 27 via the PIA1 236. The PIA1 236 is sensitive to interconnections between the terminals designated as COL1 through COL4 and ROW1 through ROW4 to determine which of the switches of the keyboard 27 have been closed by a depression of the corresponding keys during the entry of data. The data thus entered is converted by the PIA1 236 to display data at outputs D1 through D4 for driving the display driver 204, as well as to data usable by the CPU 220 appearing at the outputs DB0 through DB7 of the PIA1 236. The entered data is also applied to the PTM 230, as well as to the PIA2 238 which receives the entered data (after processing by the CPU 220) and drives various elements of the print head 36 corresponding to outputs DOT1 through DOT7 of the PIA2 238. The PIA2 238 also sequentially strobes the six digits of the display via the outputs DIG1 through DIG6.

In addition, the PIA1 236 drives the motor driver 206 by applying motor phase signals A1, A2, and B1, B2 sequentially to the motor driver 206 whenever the switch 210 is closed by depressing the trigger 37. The drive signals continue to be

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generated until the sensing switch 212 is closed by an index mark on the web, or otherwise.

The motor driver 206 is illustrated in greater detail in Figure 14, and comprises four amplifier drivers 240, 242, 244 and 246, which drive one winding 248 of the stepper motor 35, and four amplifier drivers 250, 252, 254 and 256, which drive a second winding 258 of the motor 35. The motor driver 206 is responsive to the A1, A2 and B1, B2 signals from the PIA1 236 and serves alternatively to energize the windings 248 and 258 in opposite directions depending upon which one of the signals A1, A2, or B1, B2 is present, and causes the motor to be advanced one step each time the signal present at A1, A2, B1, or B2 is stepped.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 13, each of the DOT1 through DOT7 outputs from the PIA2 238 drives a single printing element of the print head 36. Such a system is acceptable as long as the number of individually actuatable printing elements remains relatively small, as in the case of the seven elements driven by the outputs DOT1 through DOT7. However, if a print head having a substantially larger number of individually selectable printing elements is required, the number of leads required between the PIA2 238 and the print head 36 can rapidly become excessive. For example, if the print head 36 contains two-hundred fifty-six individually addressable elements, two-hundred fifty-six individual leads would be required to interconnect the print head 36 and the PIA2 238 if the system of Figure 13 were employed. This would result in a highly impractical structure. Therefore, in order to avoid this problem, the PIA2 238 is replaced with the circuitry of Figure 15, generally designated by the reference numeral 238', which drives the circuitry and thermal elements located on a thick film substrate 239 which may be a thick film print head of the type manufactured by the Rohm Corporation of Irvine, California.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 15, a PIA 260 receives data representative of the character to be printed from the CPU 220 via the data lines DB0 through DB7. The data thus received is converted to serial form and appears at the output of the PIA 260 designated as DATA IN. In addition, common signals designated as COMM1 and COMM2, as well as strobe signals STRSELA through STRSELD, whose function will be described in a subsequent portion of the specification, are generated. The DATA IN signals are applied to a shift register 262 (located on the substrate 239) which stores the serial data, and the COMM1 and COMM2 signals are applied to alternate printing elements of the thermographic printing head 36 (also located on the substrate 239). The STRSELA through STRSELD signals are applied to a 4 to 16 bit demultiplexer 264, which may be a type 74154 demultiplexer manufactured by various manufacturers.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 15, the print head 36 is also located on the substrate 239 and contains two-hundred fifty-six individual

printing elements connected to a one-hundred twenty-eight stage shift register (located on the substrate 239) via one-hundred twenty-eight drivers which, in the present embodiment, are one-hundred twenty-eight AND gates (also located on the substrate 239).

The two-hundred fifty-six printing elements 36' are connected to two common lines namely, the lines designated as COMM1 and COMM2 by two-hundred fifty-six diodes 270 (located on the substrate 239). One-hundred twenty-eight of the diodes 270 are connected to the common line COMM1 and the one-hundred twenty-eight diodes 270 are connected to the common line COMM2. Each of the AND gates 266 is connected to a pair of adjacent resistive thermal printing elements, and each element of each pair of adjacent printing elements is connected to a different one of the lines COMM1 and COMM2 via one of the diodes 270. Thus, a single one of each pair of adjacent printing elements can be selected by addressing both elements of the pair via the appropriate AND gate 266, and energizing one of the common lines COMM1 or COMM2 to determine which printing element of the pair is to be energized.

As a result of the use of the two common lines COMM1 and COMM2, the shift register 262 need have only one-hundred twenty-eight stages rather than two-hundred fifty-six, or one-half the number of printing elements. The data for the one-hundred twenty-eight printing elements associated with the common line COMM1 is first loaded into the shift register 262 via the DATA IN line, and the common line COMM1 is energized in order to energize the one-hundred twenty-eight printing elements associated with the common line COMM1 in accordance with the data stored in the shift register 262 at that time. Subsequently, data for the one-hundred twenty-eight printing elements connected to the common line COMM2 is loaded into the shift register 262 via the DATA IN line, and the common line COMM2 is energized in order to energize various ones of the printing elements associated with the common line COMM2 in accordance with the data now stored in the shift register 262. Thus, by loading the data into the shift register 262 in two passes and alternately energizing one-half of the two-hundred fifty-six print elements of the print head 36, the number of stages in the shift register 262 can be reduced by a factor of two.

The previous discussion assumed that all of the AND gates 266 were continuously enabled, and as a result, would transfer the contents of the shift register 262 independently of any other inputs applied to the AND gates 266. Such a system is readily workable and can be achieved simply by making the second input of each of the AND gates 266 high. However, under certain circumstances, particularly as in the case of a hand held labeler, the battery power available to drive the print head 36 is limited. Consequently, it is not desirable to drive as many as one-half of the total number of print elements at any one time since this required

a substantial amount of peak battery power. Consequently, the AND gates 266 are strobed in sixteen strobes STR1 through STR16, in the present embodiment, under the control of the strobe signals STRSELA through STRSELD. As a result, no more than eight printing elements are energized at any one time, thus providing a substantial reduction in peak power requirements. Thus, in the embodiment illustrated in Figure 15, the data for one-hundred twenty-eight printing elements is first stored in the shift register 262, and the AND gates 266 are strobed sequentially, eight at a time, in a sixteen strobe sequence until all one-hundred twenty-eight of the AND gates 266 have been strobed. Then the data for the second one-hundred twenty-eight printing elements is loaded into the shift register 262, and the AND gates 266 are again sequentially strobed to energize the second group of printing elements. Although, the embodiment illustrated in Figure 15 uses a sixteen strobe sequence, it should be understood that any number of strobes may be used in the sequence, and if more battery or other peak power is available, a shorter sequence wherein a greater number of the AND gates 266 are simultaneously strobed during each strobe may be used.

In the illustrated embodiment, the individual printing elements 36' are aligned in a straight line array disposed in a direction substantially perpendicular to the direction of travel of the carrier web W; however, the printing elements 36' may be arranged in various patterns, and the print head 36 may be skewed with respect to the direction of travel of the web W, depending on practical design considerations and intended use. For example, a single line array of the type illustrated in Figure 15B provides a great deal of format flexibility, and permits virtually any character or symbol to be printed, depending on the sophistication of the microprocessor 220, its associated components and programming. If only a few characters of a particular type are required, the single line array may be skewed or even curved to accommodate the particular type of characters being printed, and thus permit a reduction in the complexity of the microprocessor 220 and its associated circuitry and programming. Also, for other applications, it may be desired to use a multiple line printing head, a matrix, or even to offset alternate ones of the printing elements 36' in the direction of travel of the web W to compensate for web movement during the interval between energization of the lines COMM1 and COMM2. If the printing elements are energized sequentially, the line may be skewed to compensate for web movement.

The display driver 204 and the display 29 are illustrated in greater detail in Figure 16. As is illustrated in Figure 16, the display 29, in the present embodiment, consists of six individual seven-segment displays, which may be, for example, light emitting diode displays, liquid

crystal displays or the like. In addition, if alpha characters are required in addition to the numeric characters, additional segments may be provided. Decimal points are also provided between the digits of the display.

The driver 204 comprises six converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282. In the illustrated embodiment, type 4056 converters, manufactured by RCA and other manufacturers, are used as the converters 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282; however, any converter suitable for converting a four-bit digit defining word to a seven-bit word for illuminating various segments of the display may be used.

Each of the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 has four inputs D1 through D4 that are connected to the PIA1 236 and receive digit defining data from the PIA1 236. In addition, each of the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 has an input connected to one of the display strobe outputs DIG1 through DIG6 of the PIA2 238. A 32 Hz clock signal is also applied to the display as well as to the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282. The seven outputs of each of the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 are connected to the seven segments of each of the digits of the display, designated as segments a through g on each of the digits and on the outputs of the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282.

In operation, the digit defining information is presented to all of the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 via the inputs D1 through D4. The data defining the digits is presented sequentially, in synchronism with strobe signals that are applied to the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 via the inputs DIG1 through DIG6. Thus, when data defining the first digit is applied to the inputs D1 through D4, the strobe DIG1 goes low and causes the converter driver 272 to read the data on the lines D1 through D4 defining the first digit. Similarly, data defining the second through sixth digits is presented on the lines D1 through D4 in synchronism with the respective strobes DIG2 through DIG6 to cause the various converter drivers 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282 to read the respective digit data on the lines D1 through D4 at the time they are strobed. Once the digit data has been read by the converter drivers 272, 274, 276, 278, 280 and 282, the appropriate ones of the segments a through g of the various digits are illuminated to generate the required display.

Since the display illustrated in Figure 16 is designed to display price information, all of the decimal points, except for decimal points associated with the fifth digit are connected to the 32 Hz clock signal to prevent them from being illuminated. Conversely, the decimal point associated with the fifth digit is connected to an out-of-phase 32 Hz signal to render it permanently illuminated. However, if a permanently illuminated decimal point between the dollars and

cents digits of the display is not desired, illumination of various decimal points can be controlled by the microprocessor via one of the peripheral interface adapters to provide selective illumination of the various decimal points.

The reset circuit 214 is illustrated in greater detail in Figure 17, and in the embodiment illustrated in Figure 17, a type 555 timer circuit and an amplifier 286 are used to provide a reset pulse to the circuitry after power is first applied to the circuit. Although the reset circuit illustrated in Figure 17 employs a timer and amplifier, any suitable reset circuit that provides a reset pulse after turn on to the CPU 220, the PTM 230, and the PIAs 236 and 238 may be utilized.

Referring now to Figure 18, there is shown a typical physical layout for the print head and driver circuitry illustrated schematically in Figure 15. As illustrated in Figure 18, the print head 36 is located on the substrate 239, and the print head driver circuitry is fabricated from one or more integrated circuits 208 also located on the substrate 239. Interconnections between the integrated driver circuitry 208 and the individual print elements are made by a plurality of thick film metallic conductors 292 deposited on the substrate 239 by vapor deposition or other hybrid or thick film circuit techniques. The conductors 292 correspond to the interconnections between the AND gates 266 and the print head 36 (Figure 15), and if a print head having two-hundred fifty-six individual elements and two common lines, such as the lines COMM1 and COMM2, is utilized, the number of individual conductors 292 may be as few as one-hundred thirty, one-hundred twenty-eight to provide the interconnections between the individual printing elements and the AND gates 266 plus two to serve as the common lines COMM1 and COMM2. The inputs to the driver circuitry 208 may be provided by a plurality of conductors 294, similar to the conductors 292. The conductors 292 serve to apply the DATA IN signal as well as the various strobe signals and common signals to the integrated circuit driver circuitry 208. A connector 296 provides an electrical connection between the conductors 294 and the ribbon connector 33 (Figure 6). Since it is no longer necessary to provide a direct connection between the microprocessor and each of the individually addressable printing elements when a serial-to-parallel converter is used, the number of conductors 294 and the number of conductors in the ribbon connector 33 may be substantially reduced.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 18, the individual printing elements of the print head 36 are disposed on a single straight line that is disposed in a direction substantially perpendicular to the direction of advancement of the web carrying the labels (shown in dashed lines in Figure 18). By making the length of the print head 36 at least equal to the width of the label web, printing can be made to occur on any area of the web, thereby permitting any size characters that can be accommodated by the web to be printed.

In addition, reverse, or negative, characters wherein the background is darkened and the characters are light (unprinted) can also be printed utilizing the configuration of Figure 18. Also, by appropriate programming of the microprocessor characters of various fonts and sizes, as well as various orientations, for example, perpendicular to or parallel to the direction of advancement of the web. Skew characters can also be printed. Also, by appropriate programming, or by utilizing a print head having two spaced groups of printing elements, such as the groups 36a and 36b (Figure 19), certain areas of the web may be reserved as blank areas. Also, by appropriate programming or by utilizing two spaced groups of printing elements, two sets of identical labels can be simultaneously printed on a double width web. These labels can subsequently be separated, either by cutting, or by tearing if a perforated web is utilized. Figure 20 shows few of the various types of characters that can be printed by the labeler according to the present invention, but it should be understood that many other characters including alpha and numeric characters, including script and non-standard characters, as well as designs can be printed.

Figures 21-26 illustrate the various logical sequences followed by the logic circuits during the entry and printing of data. Figures 21 and 22 illustrate the initialization routine wherein the various timers, clocks, registers, etc. are cleared prior to the entry of new data. In addition, Figure 21 illustrates the font and/or format selection process along with some error checking wherein the font and/or format selected by entering, via the keyboard or otherwise, data to identify the font and/or format selected. In addition, the program determines whether the data entered represents a valid font or format, and restricts the data that may be entered once the format has been selected. For example, if the dollar format has been selected, only numbers preceded by a dollar sign and having a decimal point between the dollars and cents figures may be entered and printed. If less restrictive formats are selected, any form of data may be entered. Also, the VALID KEY ENTERED block of Figure 22 may incorporate various error checking logic, such as, for example, logic permitting only certain characters to be placed in a certain field, check digit logic, and logic requiring the data to be entered twice for verification purposes.

Figure 23, in conjunction with the print subroutine of Figure 25, illustrates the printing process. In the printing process, the stepping motor is started in order to advance the web, and the characters, in the selected font and format, are taken from the print buffer. The data defining each column forming the selected characters is sequentially applied to the print head to form the selected characters on a column-by-column basis as the web is advanced. During the printing process, the length of time that each print element is maintained energized may also be

adjusted depending on the size of the character being printed, and whether a continuously printed character, or a character wherein the individual imprints are visible, is desired. When the printing of a first character has been completed, the next character (or characters, when more than one character is being printed across the width of the web) is withdrawn from the print buffer and the process is repeated until all of the entered characters have been printed.

Figure 24 illustrates a typical logic sequence that would be employed if a series of labels having a predetermined numeric or alphanumeric sequence were desired. As illustrated in Figure 24, the keyboard is first enabled to receive data defining the first label as well as data defining the increment between successive labels (and possibly the number of increments required or the data defining the last label). In addition, data defining the quantity of each label required may be entered. Once the data has been entered and the print switch activated, the print routine is started to cause a label to be printed. After a label has been printed, a determination is made to see if all required labels of one type have been printed. If not, the print subroutine is continued until all have been printed. After all labels of one type have been printed, the number or character in the print buffer is incremented (or decremented) by the previously entered increment (or decrement). The routine then pauses until the print switch is again activated whereupon the required number of labels containing the incremented (or decremented) characters are printed.

Figure 26 illustrates the logical sequence employed for the controlling of the web advancing stepping motor. Basically, the logic gradually slews the motor up to speed as the printing sequence begins, maintains the motor operating at relatively constant speed until the end of the label is reached, as indicated by a notch or the like in the web or otherwise, and gradually slows the motor to a stop after the end of the label has been sensed.

The present invention is thus mainly concerned with a housing enabling easy access to the most sensitive elements within the housing.

Other aspects of the labeler are claimed in the following divisional applications:

EP—A—126 898 relating to means for comparing printable data with a plurality of predetermined print fonts and/or formats.

EP—A—126 899 relating to a specific control of the print elements,

EP—A—126 901 relating to an arrangement for avoiding contact between the platen-roller and the thermographic printing elements,

EP—A—126 902 relating to an arrangement of print head and platen for skewing the line of print elements with respect to the platen,

EP—A—137 892 relating to a specific arrangement of handle, battery and carrier web exit opening,

EP—A—137 893 relating to a manual drive for the carrier web and

EP—A—144 485 relating to the location of the battery for powering the printing elements.

These applications as well as the present one all originate from EP—A—66 777.

Claims

1. A hand-held labeler adapted to print and apply pressure sensitive labels (L) releasably secured to a carrier web (W), comprising: a housing (21) having a handle, a label applicator mounted on the housing (21), the housing having a label roll mounting means, a print head (36) including electrically-selectable printing elements (36') disposed within the housing (21), means (44) for advancing the carrier web, a keyboard (27), a visual display (29) disposed adjacent the keyboard (27) for displaying data entered into the keyboard (27), and a control circuit (200) connecting the keyboard, the print head and the display, said control circuit (200) including a circuit board (32), characterized in that the housing (21) includes a housing section (24) movable away from the remainder of the housing (21) for accessing the inside of the housing (21), means for mounting the keyboard (27) and the circuit board (32) to the movable housing section, the circuit board (32) being in generally parallel relationship to the keyboard (27), and means including a flexible ribbon connector (33) for connecting the circuit board (32) and the print head (36) for enabling movement of the housing section between a position in which the housing section (24) is part of the housing and a position away from the remainder of the housing.

2. A hand-held labeler as defined in Claim 1, wherein the flexible ribbon connector (33) is also connected to an operating switch (34) disposed at the handle.

3. A hand-held labeler as defined in either Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the movable housing section (24) is pivotally mounted with respect to the remainder of the housing (21).

4. A hand-held labeler as defined in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the mounting means includes means for separately mounting the keyboard (27) and the circuit board (32) to the movable housing section (24), the circuit board (32) is spaced from the inside of the housing section (24).

5. A hand-held labeler as defined in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the visual display (29) is mounted on the movable housing section (24).

Patentansprüche

1. Handetikettiergerät zum Bedrucken und Aufbringen von an einem Trägerband (W) lösbar anhaftenden druckempfindlichen Etiketten (L), welches ein Gehäuse (21) mit einem Handgriff (26) umfaßt, sowie eine am Gehäuse (21) angebrachte Etikettenaufbringeinrichtung, wobei das Gehäuse eine Vorrichtung zur Aufnahme der Etikettenrolle besitzt, sowie einen im Gehäuse (21)



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adjusted depending on the size of the character being printed, and whether a continuously printed character, or a character wherein the individual imprints are visible, is desired. When the printing of a first character has been completed, the next character (or characters, when more than one character is being printed across the width of the web) is withdrawn from the print buffer and the process is repeated until all of the entered characters have been printed.

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EP—A—126 899 relating to a specific control of the print elements.

EP—A—126 901 relating to an arrangement for avoiding contact between the platen-roller and the thermographic printing elements,

EP—A—126 902 relating to an arrangement of print head and platen for skewing the line of print elements with respect to the platen,

EP—A—137 892 relating to a specific arrangement of handle, battery and carrier web exit opening,

EP—A—137 893 relating to a manual drive for the carrier web and

EP—A—144 485 relating to the location of the battery for powering the printing elements.

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2. A hand-held labeler as defined in Claim 1, wherein the flexible ribbon connector (33) is also connected to an operating switch (34) disposed at the handle.

3. A hand-held labeler as defined in either Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein the movable housing section (24) is pivotally mounted with respect to the remainder of the housing (21).

4. A hand-held labeler as defined in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the mounting means includes means for separately mounting the keyboard (27) and the circuit board (32) to the movable housing section (24), the circuit board (32) is spaced from the inside of the housing section (24).

5. A hand-held labeler as defined in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the visual display (29) is mounted on the movable housing section (24).

Patentansprüche

1. Handetikettiergerät zum Bedrucken und Aufbringen von an einem Trägerband (W) lösbar anhaftenden druckempfindlichen Etiketten (L), welches ein Gehäuse (21) mit einem Handgriff (26) umfaßt, sowie eine am Gehäuse (21) angebrachte Etikettenaufbringeeinrichtung, wobei das Gehäuse eine Vorrichtung zur Aufnahme der Etikettenrolle besitzt, sowie einen im Gehäuse (21)

angeordneten Druckkopf (36) mit elektronisch ansteuerbaren Druckelementen (36'), eine Vorrichtung (44) zum Vorwärtsbewegen des Trägerbandes, eine Tastatur (27), eine an die Tastatur (27) angrenzende angeordnete optische Anzeigevorrichtung (29) zur Anzeige der in die Tastatur (27) eingegebenen Daten, und einen Steuerstromkreis (200), der mit der Tastatur, dem Druckkopf und der Anzeigevorrichtung verbunden ist und eine Schaltungsplatte (32) umfaßt, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Gehäuse (21) einen Gehäuseabschnitt (24) umfaßt, der vom restlichen Gehäuse (21) wegbewegbar ist und damit das Innere des Gehäuses (21) freigibt, Mittel zur Laterung der Tastatur (27) und der Schaltungsplatte (32) am beweglichen Gehäuseabschnitt, wobei die Schaltungsplatte (32) in einem im allgemeinen parallelen Verhältnis zur Tastatur (27) steht, und ein flexibles Flachkabel (33) umfassende Mittel zur Verbindung der Schaltungsplatte (32) mit dem Druckkopf (36) und zur Bewegung des Gehäuseabschnitts (24) zwischen einer Stellung, in der der Gehäuseabschnitt (24) einen Teil des Gehäuses darstellt, und einer Stellung, in der sich der Gehäuseabschnitt in einer vom restlichen Gehäuse entfernten Position befindet.

2. Handetikettiergerät nach Anspruch 1, in dem das flexible Flachkabel (33) auch mit einem am Handgriff angeordneten Betätigungsschalter (34) verbunden ist.

3. Handetikettiergerät nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, in dem der bewegliche Gehäuseabschnitt (24) in bezug auf das restliche Gehäuse (21) schwenkbar gelagert ist.

4. Handetikettiergerät nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, worin die Lagerungsmittel Mittel zur separaten Anbringung der Tastatur (27) und der Schaltungsplatte (32) am beweglichen Gehäuseabschnitt (24) umfaßt, wobei die Schaltungsplatte (32) mit Abstand von der Innenseite des Gehäuseabschnitts (24) angebracht ist.

5. Handetikettiergerät nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, wobei die optische Anzeigevorrichtung (29) am beweglichen Gehäuseabschnitt (24) angebracht ist.

Revendications

1. Etiqueteuse à main destinée à imprimer et appliquer des étiquettes (L) adhérant par applica-

tion d'une pression, fixées de façon temporaire à une feuille de support (W), comprenant un boîtier (21) ayant une poignée, un applicateur d'étiquettes monté sur le boîtier (21), le boîtier ayant un dispositif de montage d'un rouleau de support d'étiquettes, une tête d'impression (36) comprenant des éléments d'impression (36') qui peuvent être sélectionnées électriquement et disposés dans le boîtier (21), un dispositif (44) destiné à faire avancer la feuille de support, un clavier (27), un visuel (29) disposé près du clavier (27) et destiné à afficher des données saisies à l'aide du clavier (27), et un circuit de commande (200) connectant le clavier, la tête d'impression et le visuel, le circuit de commande (200) comprenant une plaquette de circuit (32),

caractérisée en ce que boîtier (21) comporte un tronçon (24) de boîtier qui peut être déplacé à distance du reste du boîtier (21) afin qu'il donne accès à l'intérieur du boîtier (21), un dispositif de montage du clavier (27) et de la plaquette de circuit (32) sur le tronçon mobile de boîtier, la plaquette de circuit (32) étant disposée de façon générale en direction parallèle au clavier (27), et un dispositif comprenant un ruban souple (33) de connexion de la plaquette de circuit (32) et de la tête d'impression (36) afin qu'il permette un déplacement un tronçon de boîtier entre une position dans laquelle le tronçon de boîtier (24) fait partie du boîtier et une position dans laquelle il est distant du reste du boîtier.

2. Etiqueteuse à main selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le ruban souple de connexion (33) est aussi connecté à un contacteur (34) de commande disposé sur la poignée.

3. Etiqueteuse à main selon l'une des revendications 1 et 2, dans laquelle le tronçon mobile de boîtier (24) est articulé sur le reste du boîtier (21).

4. Etiqueteuse à main selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle le dispositif de montage comporte un dispositif de montage séparé du clavier (27) et de la plaquette de circuit (32) sur le tronçon mobile (24) de boîtier, la plaquette de circuit (32) étant placée à distance de l'intérieur du tronçon de boîtier (24).

5. Etiqueteuse à main selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans laquelle le visuel (29) est monté sur le tronçon mobile de boîtier (24).



* C L M S *