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(54) **READ-AFTER-WRITE DETECTION OF ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

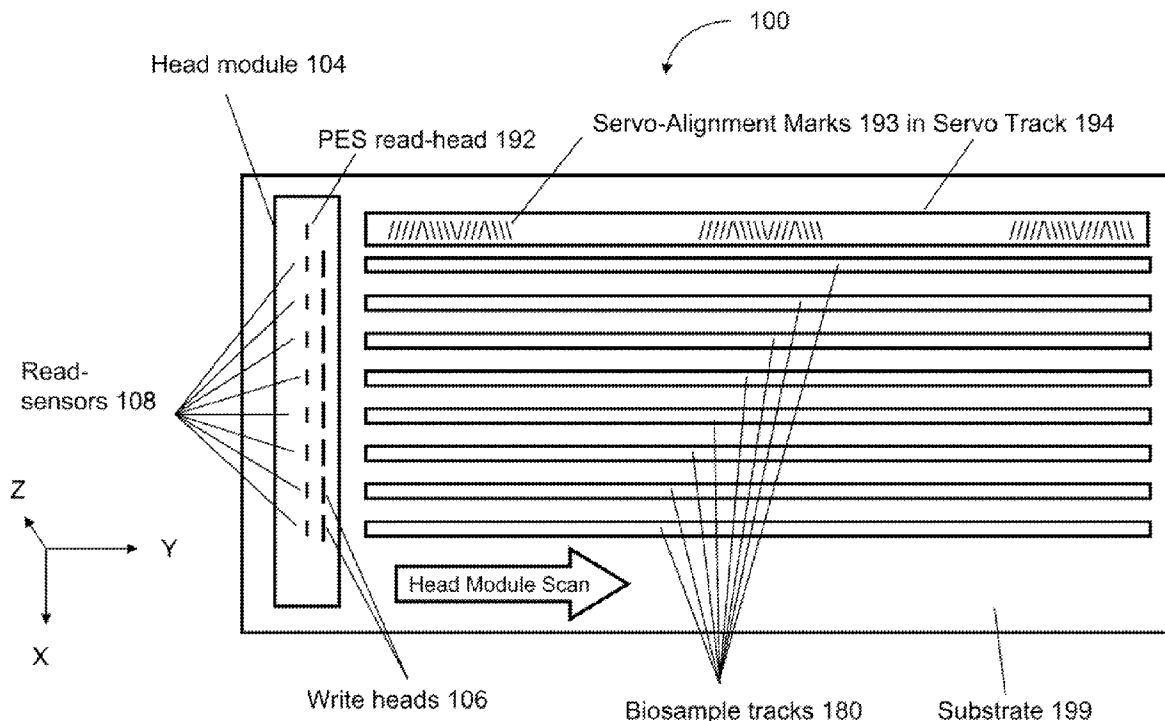
Embodiments of the invention relate to magnetizing and detecting nanoparticle-labeled antigens on biosample tracks deposited on a tape media. An aspect of the invention comprises apparatus and methods for labeling antigens with demagnetized nanoparticles, magnetizing the nanoparticles with an electromagnetic write head, and detecting the antigens via the magnetized nanoparticles by reading the tape media with a read sensor in a read-after-write operation. The write head and read sensor are part of a head-module of magnetic tape drive. Target antigens are attached to the bio-sample tracks by antibodies. Nanoparticles of differing magnetic properties may be selectively paired with antibodies associated with different antigens to allow multiple antigens to be detected upon a single scan by the read sensor.

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/246,329, filed on Sep. 28, 2009.



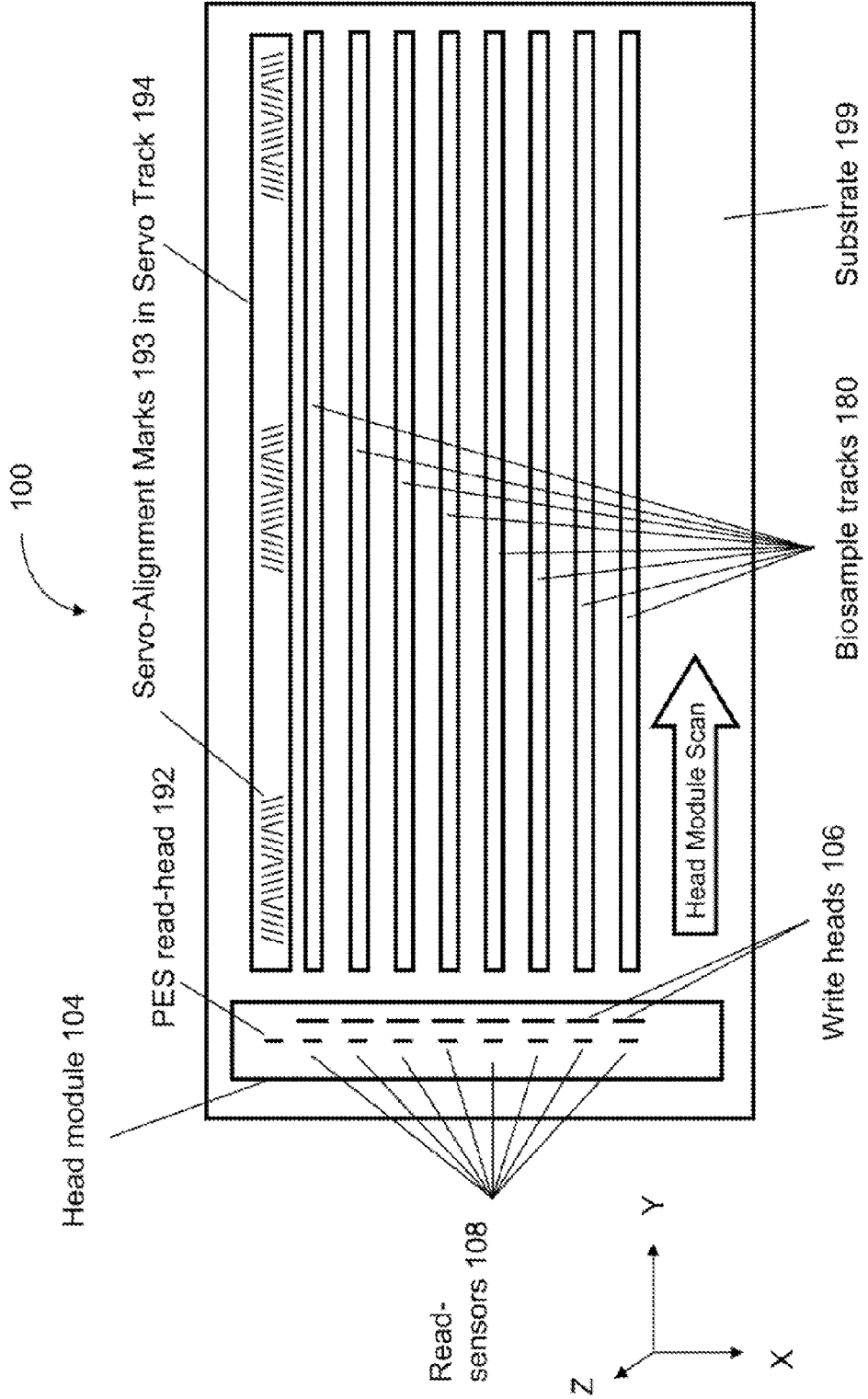


Figure 1

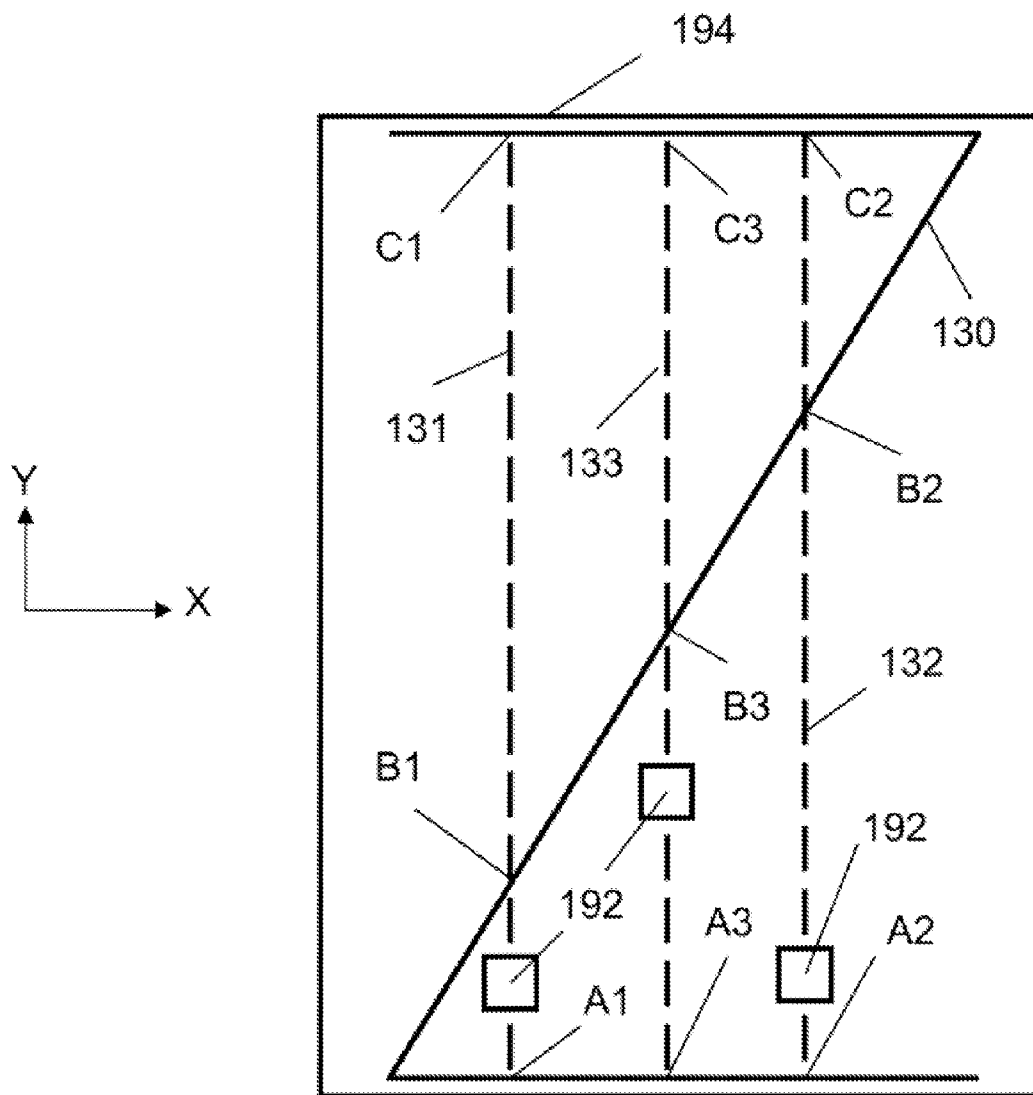
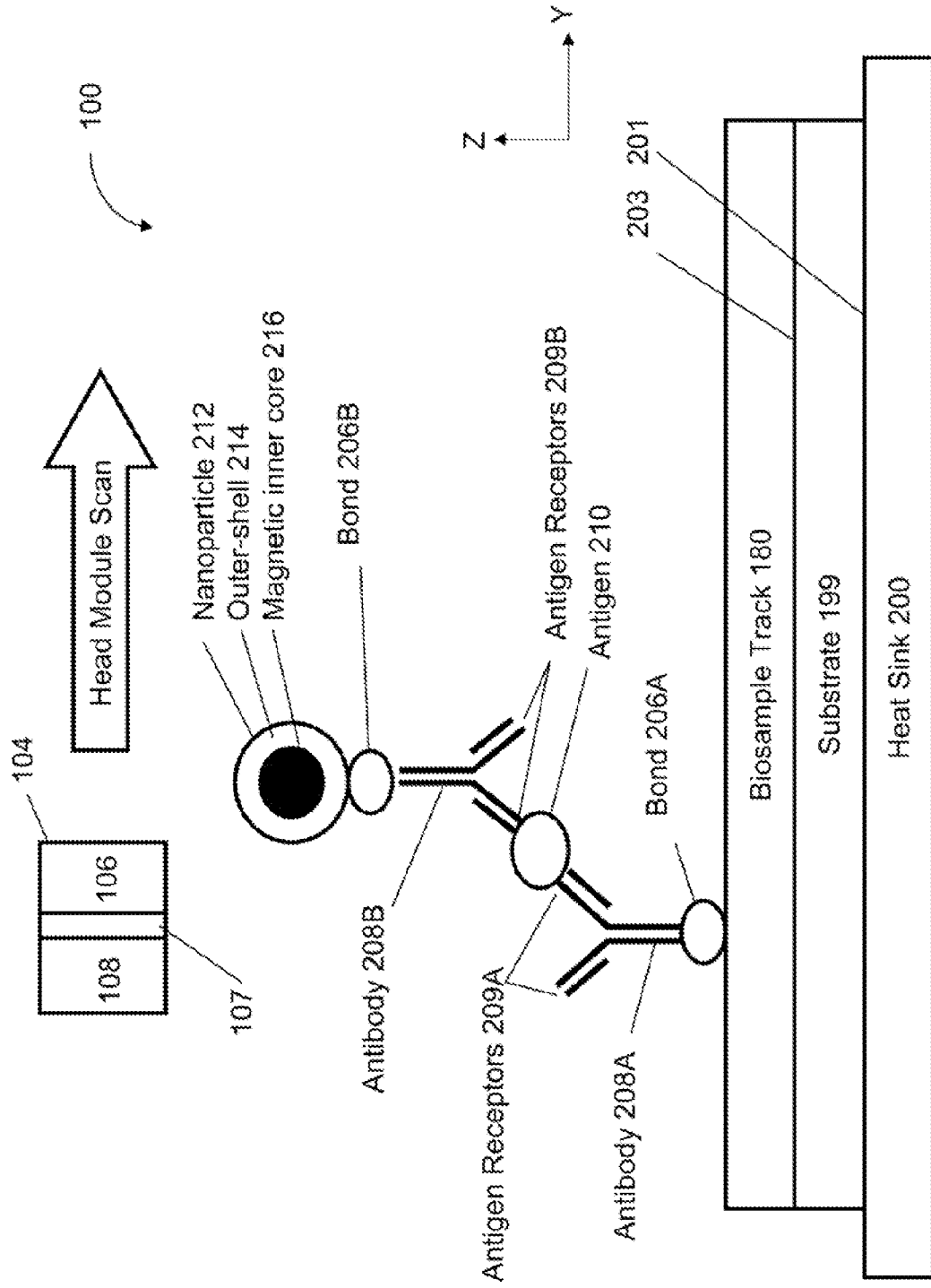


Figure 2



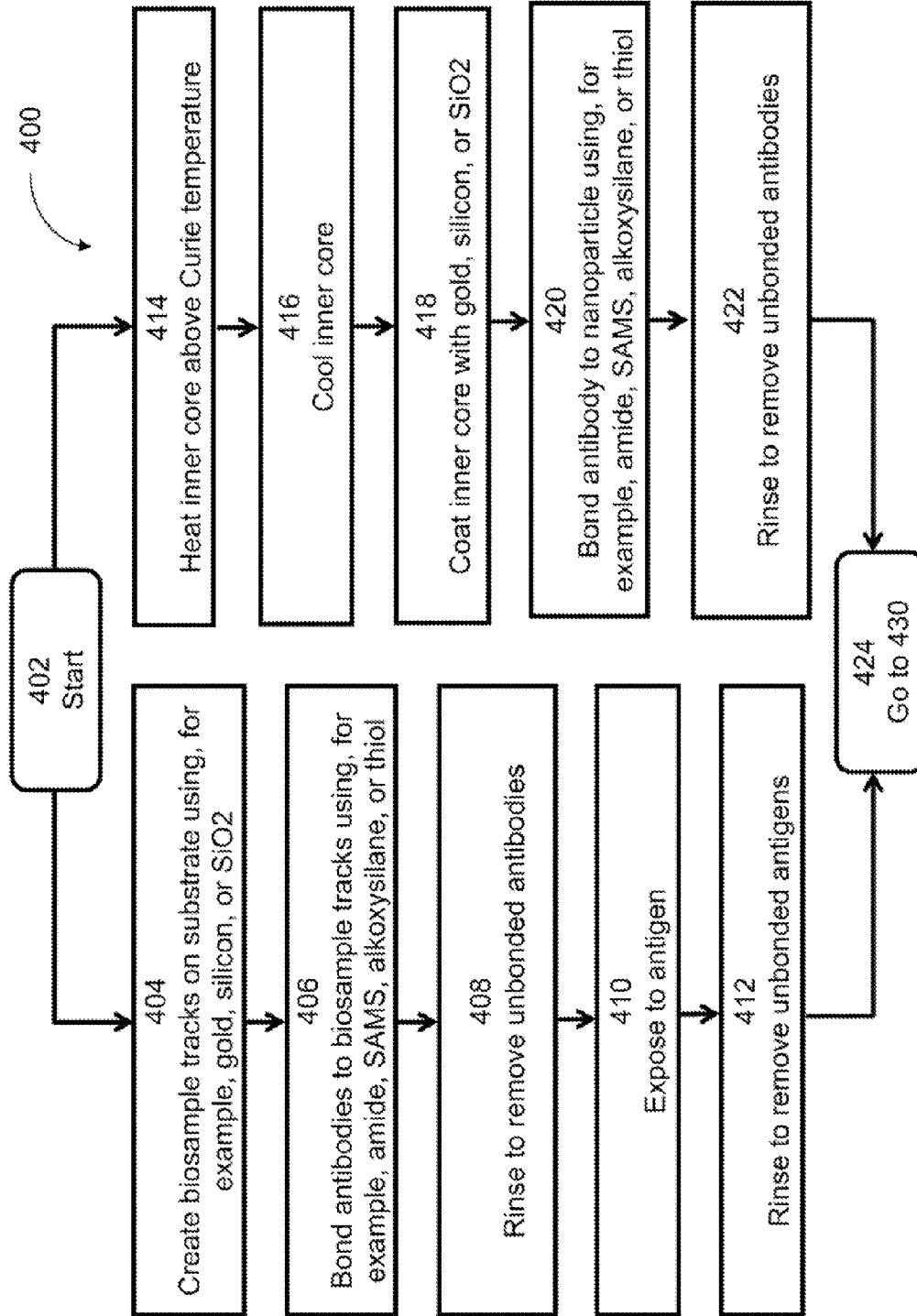


Figure 4A

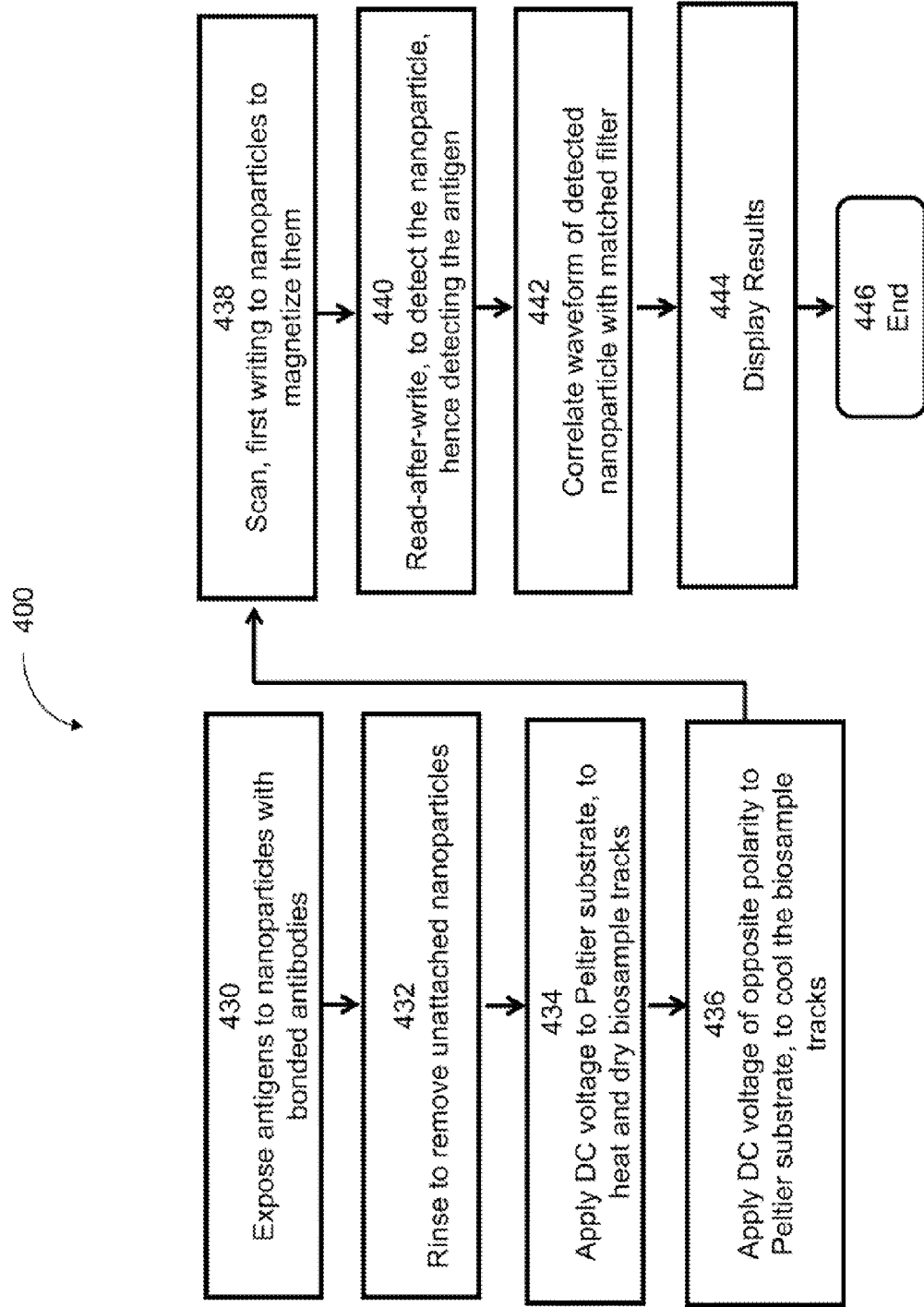


Figure 4B

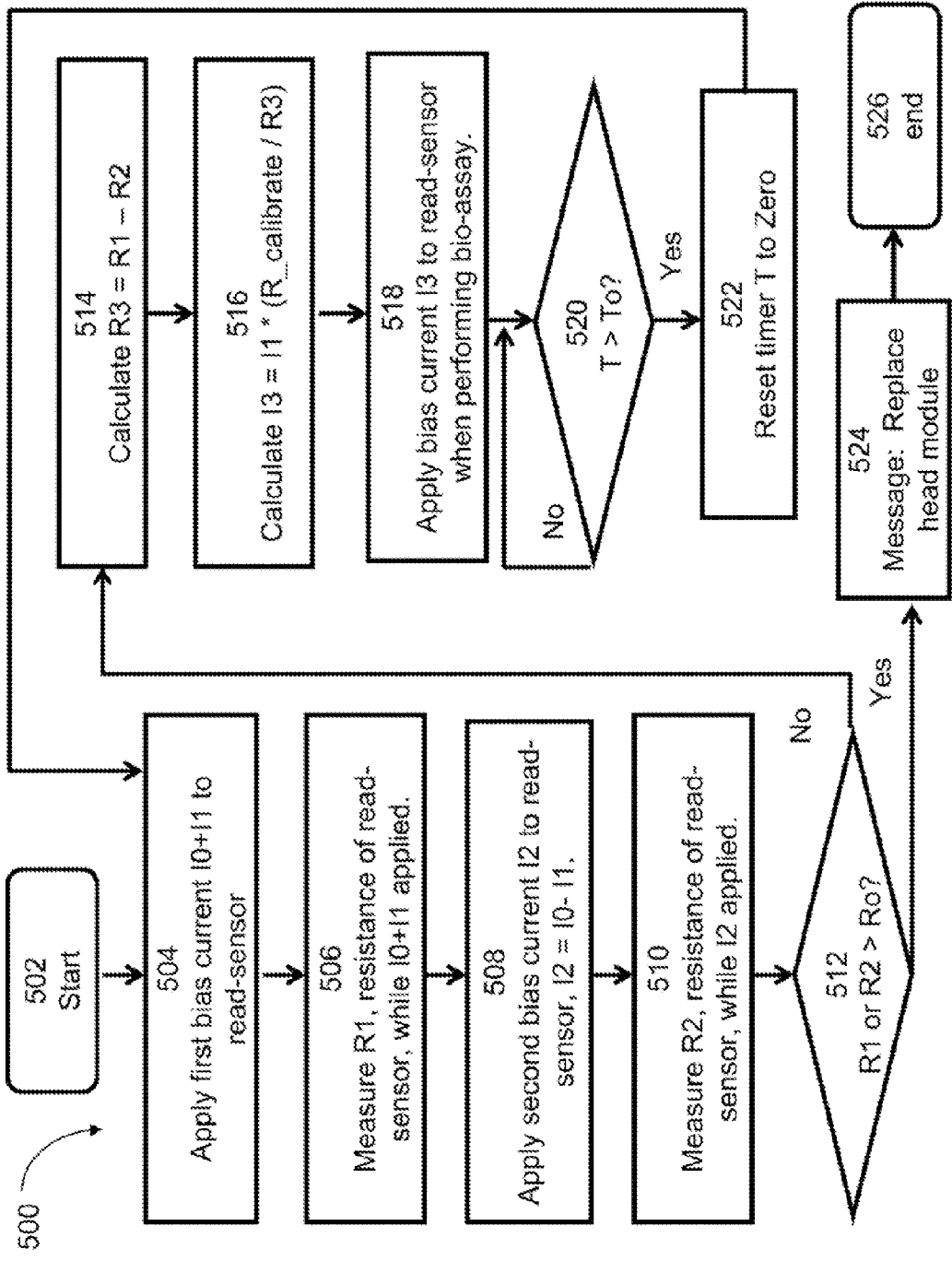


Figure 5

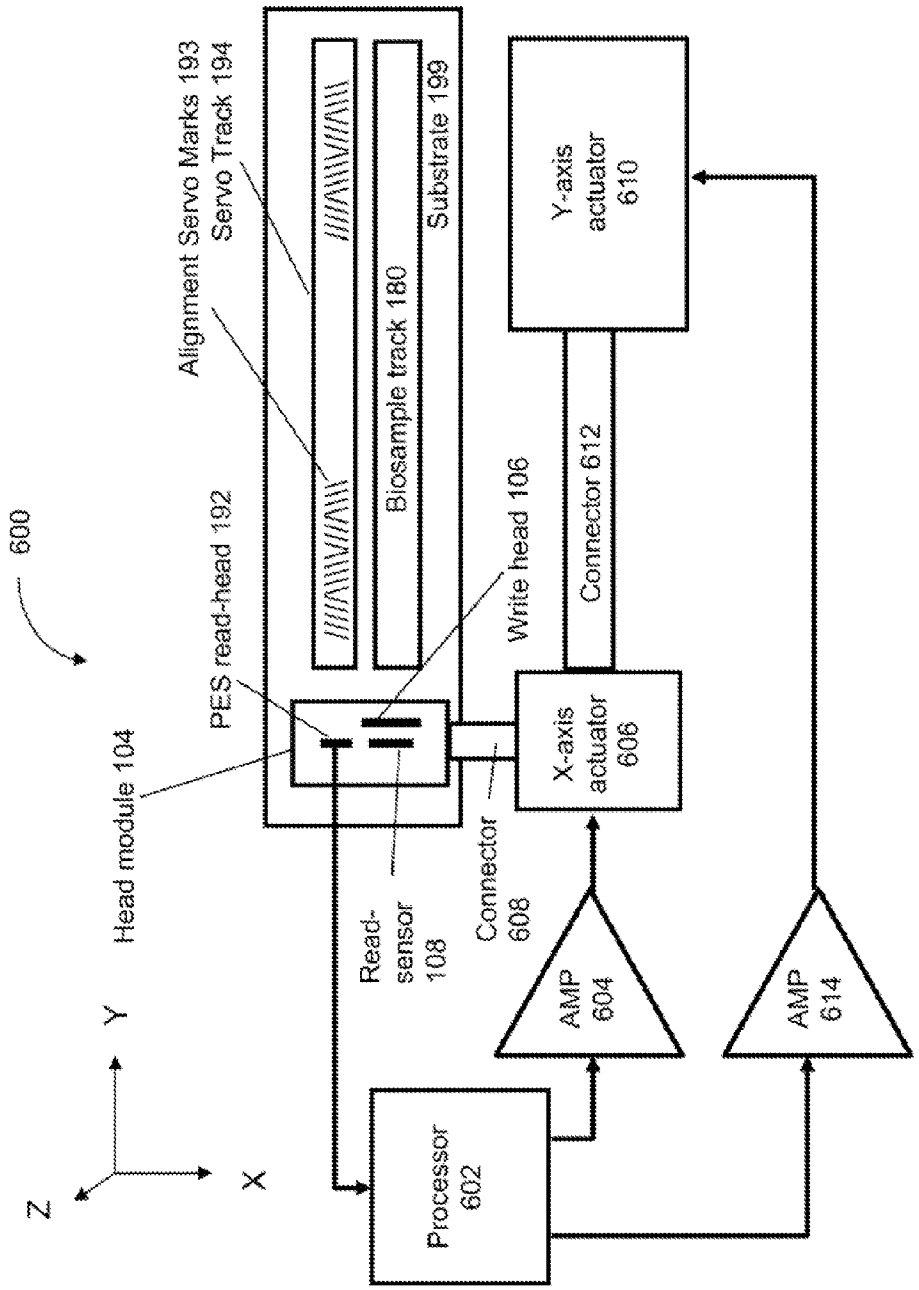


Figure 6

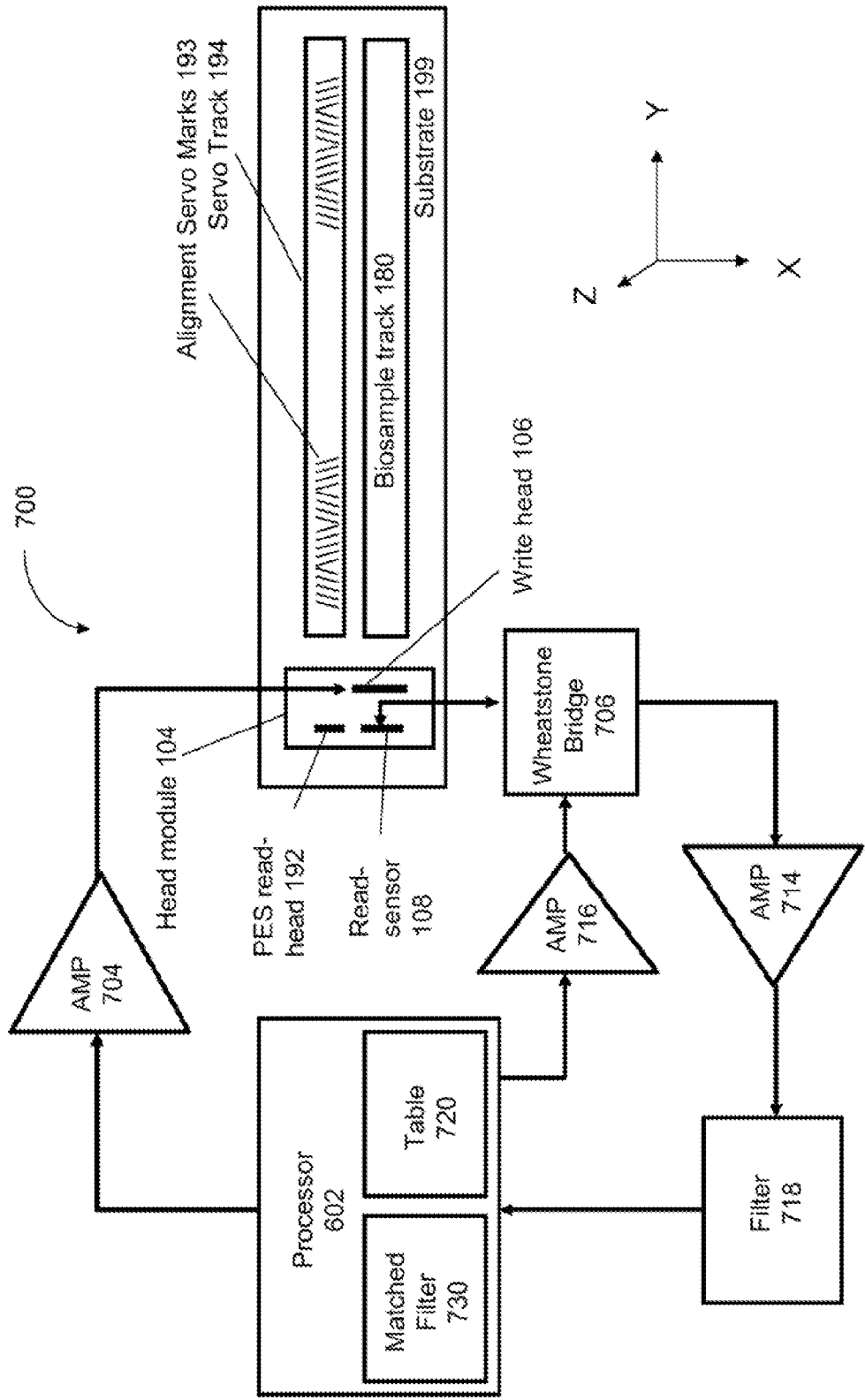


Figure 7

READ-AFTER-WRITE DETECTION OF ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/246,329, entitled "READ-AFTER-WRITE DETECTION OF ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES" filed on Sep. 28, 2009, and is related to co-filed, co-pending and commonly assigned US patent applications: Ser. No. _____ entitled "DETECTION OF ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES WITH ELECTROMAGNETIC READ-WRITE HEADS", Ser. No. _____ entitled "A SERVO CONTROL CIRCUIT FOR DETECTING ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES WITH ELECTROMAGNETIC READ-WRITE HEADS", and Ser. No. _____ entitled "A CIRCUIT FOR DETECTING ANALYTES VIA NANOPARTICLE-LABELED SUBSTANCES WITH ELECTROMAGNETIC READ-WRITE HEADS", all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The invention relates to analytical devices and processes, and more particularly, to devices and processes that incorporate electromagnetic write-heads and magneto-resistive read-sensors to detect analytes via nanoparticle-labeled substances.

[0003] It is known that antibodies bind with antigens as part of the human disease defense system. Presently, antigens are detected by such techniques as immunofluorescence, immunoperoxidase, or enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), each of which then employs a microscope for visual detection of the target antigen. It is desirable to exploit the use of magnetic signaling technology to automate the detection of analytes, such as antigens, and to further apply this technology to the detection of any biological matter.

BRIEF SUMMARY

[0004] A first set of antibodies are bonded to a substrate, then this first set of antibodies are exposed to and bonded with target antigens. A second set of antibodies are bonded to demagnetized nanoparticles, and these nanoparticle labeled antibodies are exposed to the target antigens. The nanoparticles are then detected by the use of magneto-resistive read-sensors. Examples of read-sensors include anisotropic magneto-resistive (AMR), giant magneto-resistive (GMR), and tunnel magneto-resistive (TMR) read-sensors.

[0005] In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, an electromagnetic write-head first magnetizes the nanoparticles, and then a magneto-resistive read sensor, such as an AMR, GMR, or TMR read-sensor, detects the freshly magnetized nanoparticles.

[0006] In another exemplary embodiment, the first set of antibodies may be bonded to biosample tracks deposited on a substrate. The substrate may be a flexible film of polyethylene terephthalate (PET), such as used in conventional magnetic tape, or other polymeric film. Alternately, the substrate may be glass, or may be a Peltier material to allow selective heating and cooling of the substrate and the biological sample on the substrate.

[0007] Nanoparticles of differing magnetic properties are selectively paired with antibodies associated with different antigens, so that multiple types of antigens can be simultaneously detected upon a single scan of the read-sensor.

[0008] For a fuller understanding of the invention, reference is made to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a top view of an analytic device according to an exemplary embodiment of the invention.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an exemplary Z-pattern servo-alignment mark according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a side view of an exemplary analytic device according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0012] FIG. 4A is a flow chart illustrating an exemplary analytic process according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0013] FIG. 4B is a continuation of the flow chart in FIG. 4A, illustrating an exemplary analytic process according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0014] FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating an exemplary process for calibrating a read-sensor for use in detecting nanoparticle labeled antigens, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an exemplary circuit for controlling the X-axis and Y-axis motion of the head-module of an analytic device, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an exemplary write and read circuit for use with an analytic device, according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] The invention is described in exemplary embodiments in the following description with reference to the Figures, in which like numbers represent the same or similar elements. While the invention is described in terms of the best mode for achieving the invention's objectives, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that variations may be accomplished in view of these teachings without deviating from the spirit or scope of the invention.

[0018] Referring to FIG. 1, there is illustrated a top view of an example substrate **199**, which may comprise a Peltier hard-substrate, a glass substrate, a polyethylene terephthalate (PET, which is commonly known by the trade name of Mylar™) flexible-substrate, or other materials having similar properties. In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, head-module **104** scans across stationary substrate **199** from left-to-right, along the +Y-axis, individually sampling one or simultaneously sampling a plurality of biosample tracks **180**. Alternately, substrate **199** may be swept across stationary head-module **104** from right-to-left, along the -Y-axis. If substrate **199** is of a flexible polyethylene terephthalate material, then in one embodiment, this right-to-left motion may be performed as data read-write operations in a magnetic tape drive. As an alternate embodiment of the invention, head-module **104** comprises a helical-scan rotary head-module, and the Y-axis of the biosample tracks **180** is at an angle to the substrate.

[0019] FIG. 1 shows electromagnetic write-heads 106 and magneto-resistive read-sensors 108 arranged in pairs in head-module 104. The electromagnetic write-heads 106 first write to biosample tracks 180, and then the adjacent magneto-resistive read-sensors 106 immediately read from biosample tracks 180, which is referred to as a read-after-write operation. In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, substrate 199 comprises eight biosample tracks 180 corresponding to eight bits in a byte, and hence to eight electromagnetic write-head 106 and magneto-resistive read-sensor 108 pairs in a typical head-module 104 used in magnetic tape drive products. However, as alternatives, any number of biosample tracks 180 may be used. The number of electromagnetic write-head 106 and magneto-resistive read-sensor 108 pairs in head-module 104 may be any number ranging from a minimum of one to the number of electromagnetic write-head and magneto-resistive read-sensor pairs in the head-modules of the tape drives. For example, there are sixteen such electromagnetic write-head and magneto-resistive read-sensor pairs in a head module of an IBM 3480™ tape drive. Typically, the number of biosample tracks 180 is an integral multiple of the number of write-head 106 and read-sensor 108 pairs. In an alternate embodiment, a single device may perform the functions of both the write-head 106 and read-sensor 108.

[0020] Write-heads 106 may comprise miniature electromagnets, with a coil sandwiched between two poles, such as taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,452,164, entitled "Thin Film Magnetic Write-head," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. Write-heads 106 may comprise other structures with similar functionality.

[0021] Read-sensors 108 may be anisotropic magneto-resistive (AMR), giant magneto-resistive (GMR), or tunnel magneto-resistive (TMR) read-sensors, or other devices having similar functionality. AMR read-sensors are taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,005,096, entitled "Magneto-resistive Read Transducer Having Hard Magnetic Shunt Bias," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. AMR read-sensors may comprise other structures having similar functionality. GMR read-sensors, which are also known as spin-valve read-sensors, are taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,206,590, entitled "Magneto-resistive Sensor Based On The Spin Valve Effect," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. GMR read-sensors may comprise other structures having similar functionality. The GMR read-sensors typically have an internal antiparallel pinned layer for increased sensitivity, as taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,465,185, entitled "Magneto-resistive Spin Valve Sensor With Improved Pinned Ferromagnetic Layer And Magnetic Recording System Using The Sensor," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. A recent form of read-sensor, TMR, uses a tunnel barrier layer to augment the GMR internal structure and to provide increased sensitivity, as taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,764,567, entitled "Magnetic Tunnel Junction Device With Nonferromagnetic Interface Layer For Improved Magnetic Field Response," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. TMR read-sensors may comprise other structures having similar functionality.

[0022] In the exemplary embodiment illustrated in FIG. 1, write-head 106 is longer along the X-axis direction than read-sensor 108. The active sensing portion of read-sensor 108 is smaller than write-head 106, along the X-axis, as write-head 106 is used to magnetize nanoparticle 212 as described with

reference to FIGS. 3 and 4B, for detection of nanoparticles 212 by read-sensor 108. If read-sensor 108 were too large in the X-axis direction, it could potentially encounter unmagnetized nanoparticles 212 and thus register an undesired false-negative detection of antigen 210, as described with reference to FIG. 3.

[0023] Head-module 104 may be maintained in linear alignment with biosample tracks 180 along the X-axis by position-error-servo (PES) read-head 192, which reads magnetically encoded servo-alignment marks 193 from servo track 194 on substrate 199. PES read-head 192 may be, for example, an AMR, GMR, or TMR read-sensor. Magnetically encoded servo alignment marks 193 are encoded by the manufacturer of substrate 199 on either a piece of magnetic tape adhered to substrate 199 or encoded on a magnetic recording layer directly deposited on substrate 199. In the example illustrated in FIG. 1, particular servo-alignment marks 193 shown in servo track 194 are Timing Based Servo (TBS) servo-alignment marks such as those used in IBM's Linear Tape Open (LTO) tape drive products, e.g., IBM tape drive models TS1120™ and TS1130™. TBS servo-alignment marks are taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 6,320,719, entitled "Timing Based Servo System for Magnetic Tape Systems," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. Servo-alignment marks 193 may comprise other structures with similar functionality. The writing of TBS servo-alignment marks 193 in servo track 194, as shown in FIG. 1, is taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 6,282,051, entitled "Timing Based Servo System for Magnetic Tape Systems," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. TBS servo-alignment marks 193 may comprise other structures with similar functionality.

[0024] FIG. 2 illustrates another exemplary embodiment of servo-alignment marks 193 in the form of magnetically-encoded Z-pattern 130 that comprises servo-alignment marks in servo track 194. Relative to the Y-axis, the distance between the top and bottom legs of Z-pattern 130 is constant and equal to the sum of line segments AB and BC, which is equal to the sum of line segments A1B1 and B1C1 in path 131. This distance is also equal to the sum of line segments A2B2 and B2C2 in path 132, and the sum of line segments A3B3 and B3C3 in path 133. Thus, the velocity of head module 104 along the Y-axis relative to substrate 199 may be calculated by dividing the sum of line segments (AB+BC) by the time to transit Z-pattern 130 by head module 104. This velocity calculation is not affected by the position of PES read-head 192 along the X-axis, because the top and bottom of Z-pattern 130 are both parallel to the X-axis.

[0025] The position-error-servo (PES) signal corresponding to the position of PES read-head 192, and hence write-heads 106 and read-sensors 108, along the X-axis may be determined by subtracting the distance AB from the distance BC each time a Z-pattern 130 is encountered by PES read-head 192. As can be seen in FIG. 2, the PES signal from PES read-head 192 following path 132 is less than zero because the distance difference (B2C2-A2B2) is less than zero. Similarly, the PES signal from PES read-head 192 following path 131 is greater than zero because the difference (B1C1-A1B1) is greater than zero. Additionally, the value of (BC-AB) varies linearly as PES read-head 192 moves from left to right along the X-axis. Thus the PES signal, as calculated by the difference in distance (BC-AB), provides an X-axis PES signal for head-module 104 and its pairs of electromagnetic

write-heads **106** and magneto-resistive read-sensors **108**. This PES signal is incorporated into servo control circuit **600** shown in FIG. 6.

[0026] In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, the value of the line segment difference (BC-AB) is evaluated based on the time it takes for the PES read head **192** to cross segments AB and BC when the head-module **104** is moving at a constant velocity during its Y-axis seek operation. This is the case where the transit time for the PES read head **192** to cross each Z-pattern **130** is constant. In the exemplary embodiments of the invention shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, TBS servo-alignment marks **193** and Z-pattern **130** could be non-magnetic stripes, either lithographed, silk-screened, or ink-jet printed, and read with an optical laser. In FIG. 2, path **133** is the desired path for PES read-head **192** as electromagnetic write-heads **106** and magneto-resistive read-sensors **108** are aligned with biosample tracks **180**. With path **133**, the distance difference (B3C3-A3B3) is equal to zero, i.e., line segment B3C3 is equal to line segment A3B3. For path **131**, the distance difference (B1C1-A1B1) is greater than zero, which means that head-module **104** must be moved in the +X direction by X-axis actuator **606** so that electromagnetic write-heads **106** and magneto-resistive read-sensors **108** are aligned with biosample tracks **180**. The operation of the X-axis actuator **606** is described below with reference to FIG. 6. Similarly, for path **132**, the distance difference (B2C2-A2B2) is less than zero, which means that head-module **104** must be moved in the -X direction by X-axis actuator **606** so that electromagnetic write-heads **106** and magneto-resistive read-sensors **108** are aligned with biosample tracks **180**.

[0027] FIGS. 1 and 3 illustrate an exemplary analytic device **100**, and FIGS. 4A and 4B illustrate an exemplary analytic process **400**, respectively. In step **404**, biosample tracks **180** are deposited on substrate **199** with nonmagnetic materials such as gold, silicon, or SiO₂, and other materials having similar magnetic properties. Deposition methods may include photolithography, silk-screening, and other similar processes. As shown in FIG. 1, biosample tracks **180** are deposited in stripes on substrate **199** with a track-to-track spacing along the X-axis, matching the read-sensor to read-sensor spacing on head-module **104**. Then, in step **406**, antibodies **208A** are bonded to biosample tracks **180**, for example, via amide, self-assembled-monolayers (SAMS), alkoxy silane, organic functional trialkoxysilane, or thiol bonds **206A**.

[0028] In one example of the bonding of the antibodies **208A** to the biosample tracks **180**, the bonding may comprise first coating substrate **199** with amide, self-assembled-monolayers (SAMS), alkoxy silane, or thiol and then placing a solution of antibodies **208A** on substrate **199** and gently rocking substrate **199** for a period of time, up to six hours. Amide refers to organic compounds that contain the functional group consisting of an acyl group, with the chemical notation C=O, linked to a nitrogen (N) atom. A SAM is an organized layer of amphiphilic molecules in which one end of the molecule, the "head group," shows a special affinity for a substrate, such as gold, silicon, or SiO₂ biosample tracks **180**. At the opposite end of the SAM from the "head group" is a functional group at the terminal end, and it is to this functional group that antibodies **208A** are attached in step **406**. Lastly, a thiol is a compound that contains the functional group composed of a sulfur atom and a hydrogen atom (-SH). Being the sulfur analog of an alcohol group (-OH), this functional group is referred to either as a thiol group or a mercaptan group.

[0029] There are generally five known isotopes (types) of antibodies **208A** and **208B** for mammals. In FIG. 3, the Y-shape of antibodies **208A** and **208B** are that of monomer antibodies. There are three isotopes of monomer antibodies: IgD, IgE, and IgG, where the prefix Ig is the symbol for Immunoglobulin. These monomer antibodies each have one unit of Ig. IgD antibodies function mainly as antigen receptors on B cells that have not been exposed to antigens. IgD antibodies have been shown to activate basophils and mast cells to produce antimicrobial factors. B cells are lymphocytes that play a large role in the humoral immune response, as opposed to the cell-mediated immune response, which is governed by T cells. The principal functions of B cells are to make antibodies against antigens, perform the role of Antigen Presenting Cells (APCs) and eventually develop into memory B cells after activation by antigen interaction. B cells are an essential component of the adaptive immune system. IgE antibodies binds to allergens and triggers histamine release from mast cells and basophils, and are involved in allergies. In its four forms, IgG antibodies provide the majority of antibody-based immunity against invading antigens, and thus IgG antibodies are the preferred antibodies **208A** and **208B**. IgG antibodies are the only antibody capable of crossing the placenta to give passive immunity to fetus.

[0030] In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, the base of the stem in a Y-shaped monomer antibody **208A** is bonded to biosample tracks **180** via amide, SAMS, alkoxy silane, organic functional trialkoxysilane, or thiol bonds. There is only one isotope of a dimer antibody, IgA, which has two Ig units. IgA antibodies can be found in mucous membrane areas, such as the gut, respiratory track, and urogenital track, as well as in saliva, tears, and maternal milk. Lastly, there is only one isotope of pentamer antibody, IgM, which has five Ig units. IgM antibodies are expressed on the surface of B cells. IgM antibodies eliminate antigens in the early stages of B cell humoral immunity before there are sufficient IgG antibodies in a person's body.

[0031] Other analytes may have different antibodies, such as the tetrameric antibody with four Ig units, an example of which is the IgM found in the teleost fish. Thus, analytic process **400** applies to biological analyses in medical and veterinary medicine, as well as to other biological applications. In the exemplary embodiments of the invention, nanoparticles **212** may be bonded to any biological matter and steps in analytic process **400** may be used to track and identify antigens present in a sample of the biological matter.

[0032] In the illustrated embodiment of analytic process **400**, step **408** comprises rinsing substrate **199** with water such as distilled water or other rinsing agent, which may have its surface tension reduced via a very mild surfactant such as a mild detergent solution. The rinsing removes any antibodies **208A** that are not specifically bonded to analytic tracks **180**. After rinse step **408**, antibodies **208A** are exposed to antigens **210** in step **410**. In one example, this may be accomplished by placing a blood sample or other biological sample on substrate **199** and then gently rocking substrate **199** for a period of time, up to six hours. Antigens **210** may comprise cancer cells, viruses such as Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), or bacteria. Human Papilloma Virus can lead to infections and cancers of the human reproductive organs. Antibodies **208A** are specifically chosen based on the targeted antigens **210**.

[0033] In step **410**, antigens **210** are bonded to monomer antibodies **208A** at antigen receptors **209A** which are diagrammatically shown to be at the v-shaped end of antibodies

208A. Each monomer antibody **208A** has two antigen receptors **209A**. Step **410** may include repetitive rocking of substrate **199** to facilitate the bonding of antigens **210** and antibodies **208A** at antigen receptors **209A**. Then, in step **412**, another rinse is performed on substrate **199** with water such as distilled water or other rinsing agent, which may have its surface tension reduced via a very mild surfactant such as a mild detergent solution. Step **412** is analogous to step **408**, but this time for removing antigens **210** not bonded to antibodies **208A**.

[0034] In parallel with steps **404**, **406**, **408**, **410**, **412** is the creation of nanoparticle-labeled antibodies in steps **414**, **416**, **418**, **420**, and **422** of the illustrated analytic process. In step **414**, magnetic inner cores, shown as inner core **216** in FIG. 2, may be heated above their Curie temperature to demagnetize the inner cores. The demagnetization keeps the nanoparticles that comprise the inner cores as individual particles by mitigating the forming of lumps which magnetized nanoparticles are prone to form. Magnetic inner cores **216** may comprise hard magnetic materials with high coercivity, such as Fe_2O_3 , CrO_2 , and Barium Ferrite BaFe . As examples, magnetic inner cores **216** may comprise iron oxide based nanoparticle materials, including MFe_2O_4 (where M may be Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, Cr, Ti, Ba, or Mg) nanomaterials, and iron oxide coated nanoparticle materials or other structures with similar functionality. The forming of such nanoparticles is taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 6,962,685, entitled "Synthesis of Magnetite Nanoparticles and the Process of Forming," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. Then, in step **416**, the heated magnetic inner cores **216** are allowed to cool. Steps **414** and **416** are optional steps, as the manufacture of inner cores **216**, which may include high temperature sintering, may render inner cores **216** demagnetized during the manufacturing process.

[0035] Following step **416**, step **418** may comprise coating inner cores **216** with an outer-shell **214**, for example, of nonmagnetic gold, silicon, or SiO_2 , to create nanoparticles **212**. The step of coating the inner cores **216** with outer-shells **214** is analogous to creating biosample tracks **180** in step **404**. Then, in step **420**, antibodies **208B** are bonded to nanoparticles **212** via amide, self-assembled-monolayers (SAMS), alkoxyisilane, organic functional trialkoxysilane, or thiol bonds **206B**. This bonding is analogous to bonding antibodies **208A** to biosample tracks **180** in step **406**. The bonding of the antibodies **208B** may be accomplished by first coating nanoparticles **212** with amide, self-assembled-monolayers (SAMS), alkoxyisilane, organic functional trialkoxysilane, or thiol and then placing nanoparticles **212** in a solution containing antibodies **208B** and gently rocking this solution for a period of time, up to six hours. Antibodies **208A** and **208B** are biologically identical, as both bond to the same antigen **210**. Following step **420**, step **422** comprises rinsing nanoparticles **212** with water, such as distilled water, or other rinsing agent, which may have its surface tension reduced via a very mild surfactant such as a mild detergent solution to remove unbonded antibodies. The rinsing step **422** is analogous to the rinsing step **408** above. At the conclusion of both steps **412** and **422**, process **400** converges at step **424** and continues with step **430** in FIG. 4B.

[0036] In step **430**, antigens **210** are exposed to nanoparticles **212** which have antibodies **208B** bonded to them. This may be done by placing a solution of nanoparticle-labeled antibodies **208B** on substrate **199** and then gently rocking substrate **199** for a period of time, up to six hours. Antigen

receptors **209B** of antibodies **208B** bond with antigen **210**. Step **432** comprises rinsing substrate **199** with water, such as distilled water, or other rinsing agent, which may have its surface tension reduced via a very mild surfactant such as a mild detergent solution. The rinsing in step **432** removes any nanoparticles **212** not bonded to an antigen **210** and is analogous to step **408**. If substrate **199** is a Peltier substrate, in optional step **434**, a DC voltage of a first polarity may be applied to the Peltier substrate, to heat surface **208** and hence dry both biosample tracks **180** and biological sample **206A-208A-210-208B-206B-212**. Then, in optional step **436**, a DC voltage of a second and opposite polarity, may be applied to the Peltier substrate, to cool surface **203** and hence cool both biosample tracks **180** and biological sample **206A-208A-210-208B-206B-212**. Heat sink **200** may be used to dissipate excess heat generated by the Peltier substrate along surface **201**.

[0037] In the exemplary embodiment of the analytical process of the invention shown in FIG. 4B, scan step **438** involves moving head-module **104** linearly in the +Y direction relative to substrate **199**, which could equally be done by moving substrate **199** linearly in the -Y direction relative to head-module **104**. In previous step **414**, inner cores **216** were demagnetized. Now, in step **438**, write-head **106** writes to nanoparticles **212** to magnetize inner cores **216**. Write-head **106** may write with a constant "DC" magnetic polarity for the duration of scan steps **438** and **440**, so that there are no unwritten regions of substrate **199**. Then in read-after-write step **440**, read-sensor **108** detects the freshly magnetized inner cores **216** of nanoparticles **212**, and hence detecting antigens **210** because nanoparticles **212** are bonded to antibodies **208B**, which in turn are bonded to antigens **210**. The adjacent logical-steps **438** and **440**, as well as the physical proximity of write-head **106** and read-sensor **108** in a typical electromagnetic head module, provide an advantage when using tape drive products to detect antigens. The inner cores **216** of nanoparticles **212** are magnetized by write-head **106** along the Y-axis, in what is called longitudinal-recording in the tape drive industry. This is the same direction that read-sensor **108** magnetically detects nanoparticles **212**. As a result, the nanoparticles **212** may be magnetized by write-head **106** and then magnetically detected by read-sensor **108** in the same scan of the biosample tracks **180**. Magnetic shield **107** separates write-head **106** and read-sensor **108** so that there is no meaningful cross-talk between write-head **106** and read-sensor **108** during steps **438** and **440**.

[0038] As an alternate embodiment of the invention, once steps **438** and **440** are completed by moving head-module **104** linearly in the +Y direction relative to substrate **199**, write-head **106** may be turned off as nanoparticles **212** are now magnetized. Step **440** may be repeated multiple times across biosample tracks **180** along both the +Y and -Y directions during which read-sensor **108** repeatedly checks for magnetized nanoparticles **212** and hence detecting antigens **210**. The multiple read operations insure that all antigens **210** on biosample tracks **180** are detected. As described above with reference to FIG. 1, the antigens **210** are attached to nanoparticles **212** through antibodies **208A** and **208B**.

[0039] In another exemplary embodiment of the invention where there are more biosample tracks **180** than write-head **106** and read-sensor **108** pairs in head-module **104**, head-module **104** may scan the biosample tracks **180** in a serpentine pattern. The head-module **104** performs a scan in the +Y direction, as head-module **104** only provides read-after-write

capability in the +Y direction as illustrated in FIG. 1. Then a second head-module comprising a mirror image of head-module 104 may perform a read-after-write operation in the -Y direction.

[0040] The coercivity of a magnetic inner core 216 may be selectively chosen to have any of various values, depending upon the antigen 210 to be detected. The nanoparticles 212 with magnetic inner cores 216 of different coercivity values may be respectively bonded to different types of antibodies 208A and 208B to detect a various types of antigens 210 on the substrate 199 at the same time. A nanoparticle 212 thus may have different magnetic properties associated with each antigen-antibody combination. Read-sensor 108 detects the different magnetic properties of inner core 216 based on different materials used for that inner core, for example, Fe_2O_3 , CrO_2 , BaFe, $\text{M Fe}_2\text{O}_4$ (where M may be Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, Cr, Ti, Ba, or Mg), or other structures with similar functionality. Read-sensor 108 thus could detect different antigens 210 on the same scan of the biosample tracks 180, per steps 438 and 440 in FIG. 4B. To facilitate the detection of nanoparticles of different magnetic properties and hence the detection of different types of antigens, calibration of read-sensor 108 may be performed according to an exemplary calibration process 500 illustrated in FIG. 5.

Calibration of Read-Sensors

[0041] Referring to FIG. 5, in one exemplary embodiment of the calibration of read-sensor 108, calibration process 500 begins at step 502 and proceeds with step 504, where a first "DC" bias current (I_0+I_1) is applied to read-sensor 108. This first bias current may consist of an offset DC current I_0 plus a DC current I_1 . In succeeding step 506, the process 500 measures resistance R_1 of read-sensor 108 while DC current (I_0+I_1) is applied. In step 508, second DC bias current I_2 may be applied to read-sensor 108, where $I_2=I_0-I_1$. In steps 506 and 508, offset current I_0 is typically zero milliamperes, but may have a positive or negative value. In succeeding step 510, the calibration process 500 measures resistance R_2 of read-sensor 108 while DC current I_2 is applied, where $I_2=I_0-I_1$. Then in step 512, a determination is made whether resistance R_1 or R_2 exceeds threshold resistance R_0 and thus indicating a non-operational read-sensor 108. If resistance R_1 or R_2 exceeds the threshold, then process 500 branches to step 524 where a message is displayed to the user to replace head-module 104 as the read-sensor 108, which is an integral part of head-module 104, may be non-operational. If neither resistance R_1 nor resistance R_2 exceeds the threshold per the determination in step 512, then process 500 branches to step 514 and calculates resistance R_3 , where $R_3=R_1-R_2$.

[0042] In step 516, calibration process 500 calculates a bias current I_3 , where $I_3=I_1*(R_{\text{calibrate}}/R_3)$ and $R_{\text{calibrate}}$ is a preset value maintained by processor 602 shown in FIG. 7. In step 518, calibration process 500 applies bias current I_3 to read-sensor 108 when performing step 440 as part of the bio-assay process 400. In step 520, a determination is made whether calibration time T exceeds a time threshold T_0 , where T is the time elapsed during the calibration steps 504 to 518. If time T has not exceeded the threshold T_0 , then calibration process 500 cycles back to step 520 and continues checking time T against the threshold T_0 . Otherwise, process 500 resets time T to zero in step 522 before returning to step

504 to begin the calibration process again. Process 500 is executed by processor 602, as described below with reference to FIG. 7.

Mitigation of Corrosion in Head-Module

[0043] When read-sensor 108 is not in use for detecting magnetized nanoparticles 212, in one exemplary embodiment of the invention, a current may be passed through read-sensor 108 in order to mitigate corrosive effects of ambient air. This current may be, for example, a direct current in the range of three to seven milliamperes. Alternately, the current may be a pulse-width-modulated (PWM) direct current or alternating current (AC) having an amplitude of, for example, three to seven milliamperes. This current causes read-sensor 108 to be sufficiently warm to minimize corrosive effects of water vapor, chlorine, and other gases present in ambient air in the vicinity of the biosample tracks 180. In one exemplary embodiment of the invention, this current may be applied based on signals sent by processor 602 to a power amplifier 716, as illustrated in FIG. 7. The power amplifier 716 supplies electric power to Wheatstone Bridge 706, where read-sensor 108 is a component of the Wheatstone Bridge 706.

[0044] Read-sensor 108 is essentially an impedance device, such as a resistor, which exhibits a change in resistance when exposed to a magnetic field. In the illustrated exemplary embodiment of the calibration, process 500 assumes that read-sensor 108 responds linearly when not saturated by the applied magnetic field, and to a first order approximation, read-sensor 108 does respond linearly. Correlation coefficients of up to 99.9% have been empirically measured, regarding the change in resistance in read-sensor 108 versus applied magnetic field, indicating a sufficiently high degree of linearity for application of calibration process 500.

[0045] Per Ohm's law, $V=IR$, voltage and current are directly proportional to each other in read-sensor 108. Thus, as an alternate embodiment of calibration process 500, first and second voltages V_1 , V_2 could be used to obtain the first resistance R_1 and second resistance R_2 , respectively, without loss of generality.

A Servo Control Circuit

[0046] FIG. 6 shows an exemplary embodiment of a servo control system 600 for controlling the X-axis and Y-axis motion of head-module 104. As an example, FIG. 6 shows one biosample track 180, and one pair of write-head 106 and read-sensor 108. Processor 602 receives position-error-servo (PES) signals from PES read-head 192 when PES read-head 192 reads servo-alignment marks 193 in servo track 194. Based on this PES information, processor 602 sends a signal to power amplifier 604 to control X-axis actuator 606 which in turn controls the motion of head module 104 in the X-axis direction. With X-axis actuator 606 connected to head-module 104 via mechanical connector 608, head-module 104 may be positioned to center write-head 106 and read-sensor 108 on biosample track 180. Processor 602 may send signals to power amplifier 614 to control Y-axis actuator 610 for conducting a scan by head module 104 across substrate 199. With Y-axis actuator 610 connected to X-axis actuator via mechanical connector 612, head-module 104 can be moved along the Y-axis in a controllable manner.

[0047] As an example, when a predetermined number of servo-alignment marks 193 are read by PES read-head 192,

processor 602 stops the Y-axis motion of head-module 104. A servo-system for control of X-axis actuator 606 and head-module 104 along the X-axis direction, particular to servo-alignment marks 193 shown in servo track 194 in FIG. 1, is taught without limitation by U.S. Pat. No. 5,689,384, entitled "Timing Based Servo System for Magnetic Tape System," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. The servo-system may comprise other structures with similar functionality. As previously described regarding Z-pattern 130, the velocity of head module 104 relative to substrate 199 along the Y-axis can be calculated by dividing distance AB+BC by the time it takes for head module 104 to transit Z-pattern 130. This velocity measurement can be used by processor 602 to control Y-axis actuator 610 to keep head module 104 at a constant Y-axis velocity V_y relative to substrate 199. The position along the Y-axis of head module 104 relative to substrate 199 can be obtained by counting servo-alignment marks 193 or Z-pattern 130 by PES read-head 192 and processor 602.

A Write and Read Circuit

[0048] FIG. 7 shows an exemplary embodiment of a write and read circuitry 700 for writing to the biosample tracks 180 (i.e., for magnetizing nanoparticles 212) and reading from the biosample tracks 180 (i.e., for sensing and detecting the magnetized nanoparticles 212). Processor 602 may send signals to power amplifier 704 which provides power to write-head 106 for magnetizing nanoparticles 212. Processor 602 may further send signals to power amplifier 716 which powers Wheatstone bridge 706. Read-sensor 108 is one component in Wheatstone bridge 706 and thus receives DC current from Wheatstone bridge 706. Wheatstone bridge 706 serves the function of balancing out the zero-magnetism resistance of read-sensor 108 so that only the change in resistance of read-sensor 108 is passed onto amplifier 714. Such resistance change is due to the detection of a magnetized nanoparticle 212, which is sent to amplifier 714 and filter 718 before being received by processor 602.

[0049] Filter 718 filters out 60 Hz noise, which is pervasive noise in an office or laboratory with lighting where processes of the invention are typically performed. Processor 602 makes the determination of whether a nanoparticle 212 was detected, and hence an antigen 210 being detected. The change in resistance of read-sensor 108 is directly proportional to the magnetic field provided by nanoparticle 212, which may have different coercivities depending upon whether inner core 216 is Fe_2O_3 , CrO_2 , BaFe , $\text{M Fe}_2\text{O}_4$ ($\text{M}=\text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Cu}, \text{Zn}, \text{Cr}, \text{Ti}, \text{Ba}, \text{Mg}$), etc. In addition, particular antibodies 208A and 208B could be associated with inner cores 216 of nanoparticles 212 having a given coercivity. As a result, processor 602 could register the detection of different antigens 210 during steps 438 and 440 of process 400 depending on corresponding combinations of antibodies 208A and 208B and nanoparticles 212. The identification of the various antigens 210 simultaneously on the same biosample track 180 may be facilitated by a lookup table 720 in processor 602. In one exemplary embodiment of the invention, the lookup table 720 contains a list of (a) antigens 210, (b) the antibodies 208A and 208B used for bonding antigens and nanoparticles, and (c) the coercivity of the inner cores 216 of nanoparticles 212 bonded to the antibodies 208B.

Correlation of Detection Results

[0050] In another embodiment of the invention, a correlation calculation may be performed by the write and read

circuit of FIG. 7 to improve the accuracy of the detection of magnetized nanoparticles 212. Referring to FIGS. 3, 4A, 4B, 6 and 7, processor 602 performs correlation calculation $C(y)$ in equation [1] between a detection signal profile $g(y)$ read by read-sensor 108 when a nanoparticle 212 is detected and a matched filter. The matched filter comprises an impulse response $h(y)$ of an ideal signal profile of a detected nanoparticle. Since $h(y)$ is used repetitively, it may be calculated once and stored as matched filter 730 in processor 602. In equation [1], η is the integration variable along the Y-axis as read-sensor 108 scans along the Y-axis.

$$C(y) = \int g(\eta)h(\eta-y)d\eta \quad \text{Equation [1]}$$

[0051] The range of correlation $C(y)$ is between -1 and $+1$, where $+1$ represents the ideal correlation of one hundred percent (100%). The electrical waveform $g(y)$ of each potential detection of a nanoparticle 212 by read-sensor 108 has its correlation $C(y)$ calculated in step 442 of FIG. 4A. Processor 602 then compares this correlation $C(y)$ against a threshold correlation value C_0 before accepting the signal $g(y)$ as a valid detection of a nanoparticle 212. This correlation removes spurious electrical noise from actual detections of nanoparticles, and thus mitigates false-positive detections of antigens. In step 444 of FIG. 4B, the results of a scan may be displayed to a physician or clinician to inform the physician or clinician of the presence (or absence) of target antigens in the biological sample. The results may include items such as the antigen(s) tested for, the types of antibodies used, a simple positive-detection or negative-detection indication for each antigen, the number of nanoparticles counted for each antigen to give an indication of the prevalence of the targeted antigen, and the number of rejected detections based on the correlation calculation of step 442. In addition, the results may include patient name, date of test, time of test, and name of attending doctor or clinician. Process 400 ends at step 446 in FIG. 4B.

[0052] Those of skill in the art will understand that changes may be made with respect to the exemplary embodiments described above, including, but not limited to, changes to the ordering of the steps. Further, those of skill in the art will understand that differing specific component arrangements may be employed than those illustrated herein.

[0053] While the exemplary embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described in detail, it should be apparent that modifications and adaptations to those embodiments may occur to one skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting nanoparticle-labeled antigens on a biosample track, comprising:

labeling the antigens with demagnetized nanoparticles;
magnetizing the nanoparticles with an electromagnetic write head; and
scanning the biosample track with a magneto-resistive read sensor to detect the antigens via the magnetized nanoparticles.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the magnetizing and scanning are performed by a head module having a plurality of electromagnetic write heads and magneto-resistive read sensors arranged in pairs corresponding to a plurality of biosample tracks.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the write heads magnetize the nanoparticles and the read sensors immediately read the biosample tracks to detect the magnetized nanoparticle-labeled antigens in a read-after-write operation.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the write heads simultaneously magnetize the nanoparticles on the corresponding biosample tracks and the read sensors simultaneously detect the antigens on the corresponding biosample tracks.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the number of the biosample tracks is an integral multiple of the write head and read sensor pairs.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein biosample tracks are deposited on a substrate and the head module moves relative to the substrate linearly in the direction of the biosample tracks during the magnetizing and scanning.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the head module is stationary and the substrate is swept across the head module linearly in the direction of the biosample tracks during the magnetizing and scanning.

8. The method of claim 2, wherein the head module is a helical-scan rotary head module and the biosample tracks are deposited on a flexible media moving at an angle to the Y-axis of the helical-scan rotary head module.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the read sensor repeatedly reads the biosample track to confirm the detection of the nanoparticles.

10. The method of claim 2, wherein the head module comprises eight adjacent pairs of write heads and read sensors, said eight adjacent pairs respectively corresponding to eight adjacent biosample tracks and eight bits in a byte of data.

11. The method of claim 2, wherein the biosample tracks are scanned in a serpentine pattern if there are more biosample tracks than write-head and read-sensor pairs.

12. The method of claim 2, wherein the write heads are longer than the read sensors in the direction perpendicular to the biosample tracks to improve the accuracy of the detection of the antigens.

13. A method for detecting nanoparticle-labeled antigens on a plurality of biosample tracks deposited on a magnetic tape media, the method comprising:

- labeling the antigens with demagnetized nanoparticles;
- writing to the tape media with an electromagnetic write head to magnetize the nanoparticles; and
- reading from the tape media with a magneto-resistive read sensor to detect the antigens labeled by the nanoparticles, wherein the write head and the read sensor are part of a magnetic tape drive.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the antigens are labeled with the demagnetized nanoparticles via antibodies.

15. An apparatus for detecting nanoparticle-labeled antigens, comprising:

- a biosample track carrying a biological sample having antigens labeled with demagnetized nanoparticles;
- an electromagnetic write head for magnetizing the nanoparticles; and
- a magneto-resistive read sensor for scanning the biosample track to detect the antigens via the magnetized nanoparticles.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the biosample track is deposited on a tape media and the write head and read sensor are part of a tape drive that writes to and reads from the tape media.

17. The apparatus of claim of claim 15, wherein the write head and the read sensor are separated by a magnetic shield to prevent cross-talk between the write head and the read sensor.

18. The apparatus of claim of claim 15, wherein the magneto-resistive read sensor is selected from the group consisting of an anisotropic magneto-resistive (AMR) read sensor, a giant magneto-resistive (GMR) read-sensor, and a tunnel magneto-resistive (TMR) read-sensor.

19. The apparatus of claim of claim 15, wherein the write head and read sensor are part of a head module, the head module further comprising a position-error-servo (PES) read sensor for maintaining the head module in linear alignment with the biosample track.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the PES read sensor reads magnetically encoded servo-alignment marks along the biosample track.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the magnetically encoded servo-alignment marks are on a servo track parallel to the biosample track.

22. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the servo-alignment marks are magnetically encoded on a substrate on which the biosample track is deposited.

23. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the servo-alignment marks are magnetically encoded on a magnetic tape adhered to a substrate on which the biosample track is deposited.

24. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the servo-alignment marks are magnetically encoded on a magnetic recording layer deposited on a substrate on which the biosample track is deposited.

25. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the servo-alignment marks are timing based servo (TBS) marks.

26. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the servo-alignment marks comprise a magnetically-encoded Z-pattern and the PES read sensor is aligned in the center of the Z-pattern during the scanning.

27. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the PES read sensor is an optical laser sensor and reads non-magnetic servo-alignment marks along the biosample track to align the head-module with the biosample track.

28. The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the non-magnetic servo-alignment marks are deposited by lithography, silk-screening, or ink-jet printing on a substrate on which the biosample track is deposited.

29. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the PES read sensor is selected from the group consisting of an anisotropic magneto-resistive (AMR) read sensor, a giant magneto-resistive (GMR) read-sensor, and a tunnel magneto-resistive (TMR) read-sensor.

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