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(71) Applicant
Brother Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha

(Incorporated in Japan)

35 Horita-dori, 9-chome, Mizuho-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi-ken, Japan

(72) Inventors
Toshiaki Mizuno
Shinji Kimura
Toshiaki Sugiura
Mikio Sakuma
Tasuku Sugimoto
Mamoru Imaizumi

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
J A Kemp and Co
14 South Square, Gray's Inn, London, WC1R 5EU, United Kingdom

(51) INT CL⁴
G01N 21/84, G01B 11/02

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U1S S2247

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GB 2066949 A GB 2064101 A GB 1164189 A
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(58) Field of search
UK CL (Edition J) G1A AMB AMH AMZ
INT CL⁴ G01N 21/84 21/86

(54) Sheet detection apparatus

(57) The presence of a sheet eg in a printer and the type of sheet are detected by comparing the outputs from a pair of optical sensors 4a, 4b with reference values. The sensors may both be reflection types mounted on a carriage 2 and facing high and low reflectivity plates 5a, 5b respectively, so that the positions of the edges of the sheets may be determined. Alternatively, fixed transmission and reflectance sensors may be used to detect sheet pressure only. One or two reflectance sensors mounted on a carriage may also be used to detect the edges of a sheet passing over a plate with alternating high and low reflectivity stages. Traversing of the carriage produces an alternating signal when no sheet is present.

FIG.2

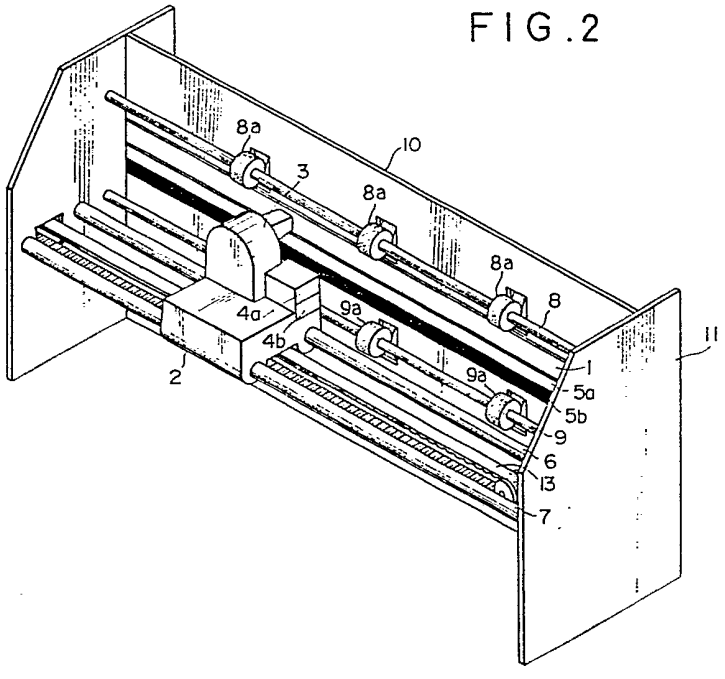

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FIG. 1

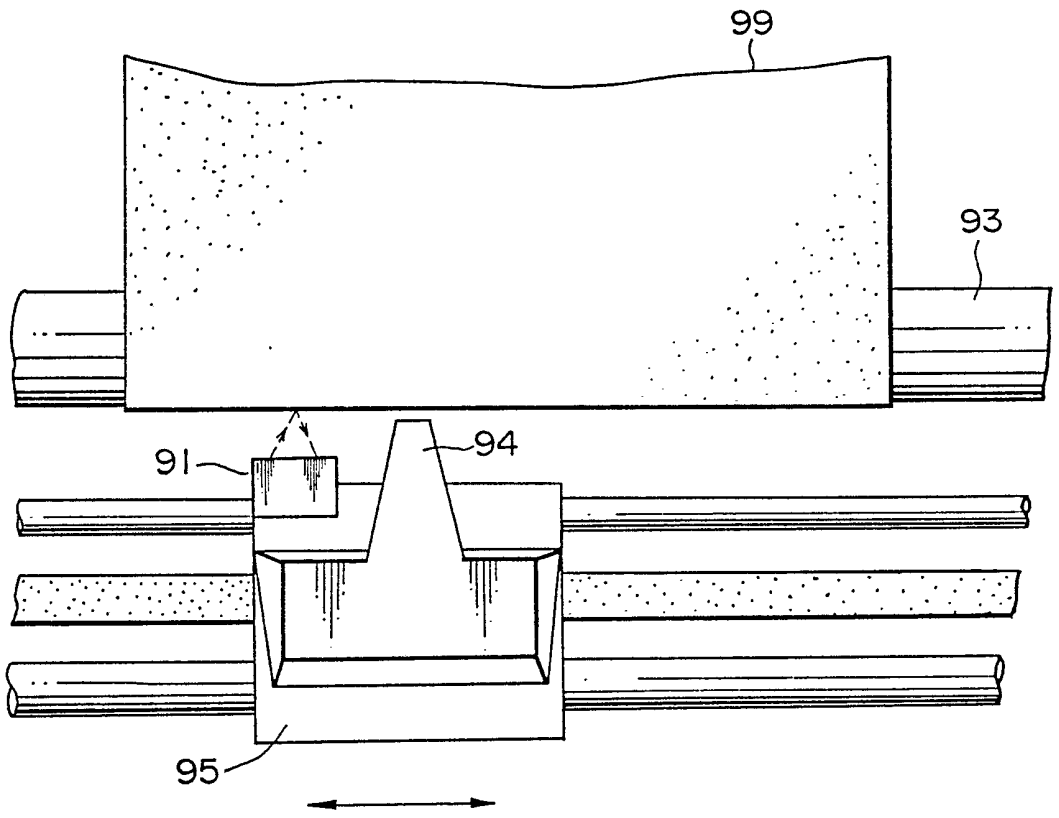


FIG.2

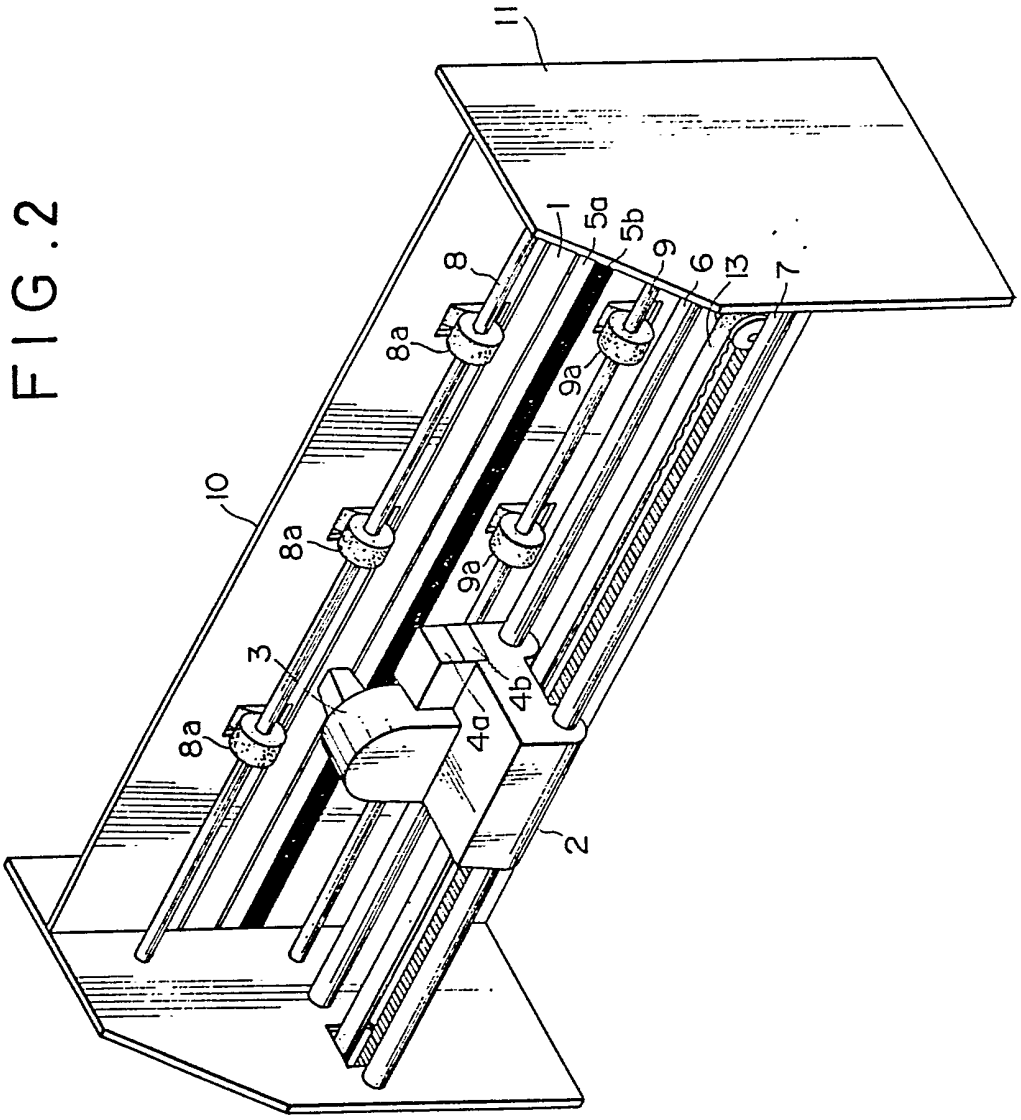


FIG. 3

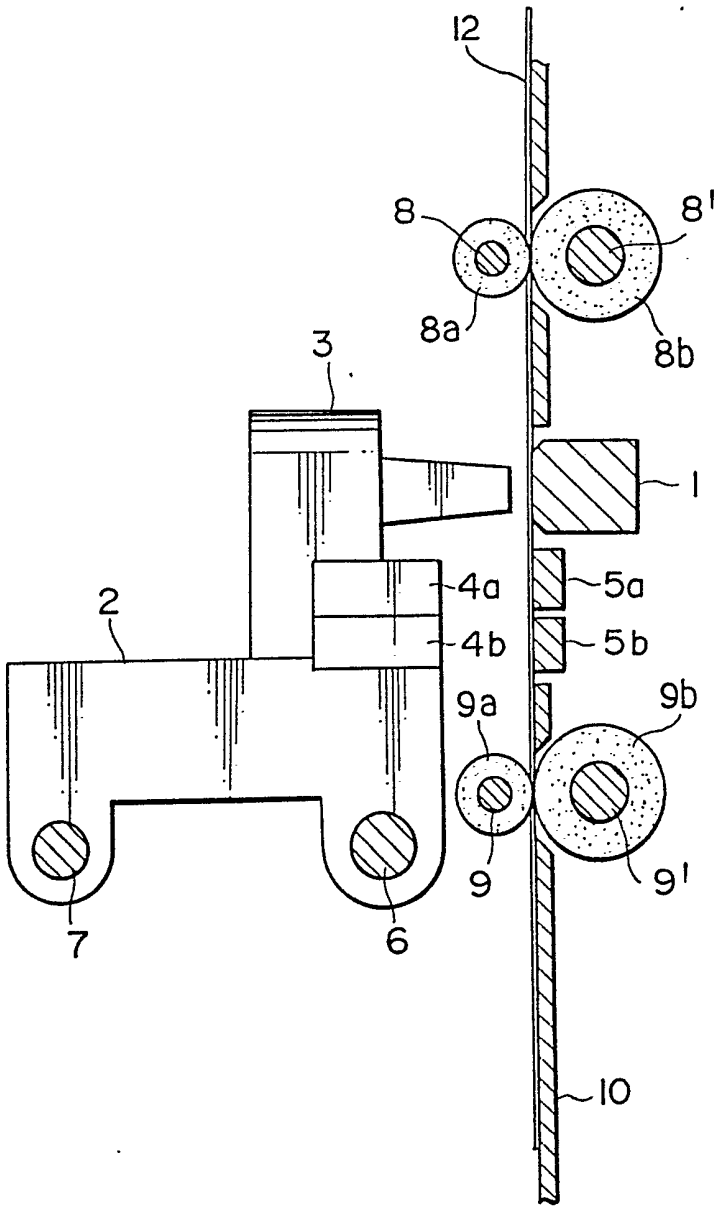


FIG. 4

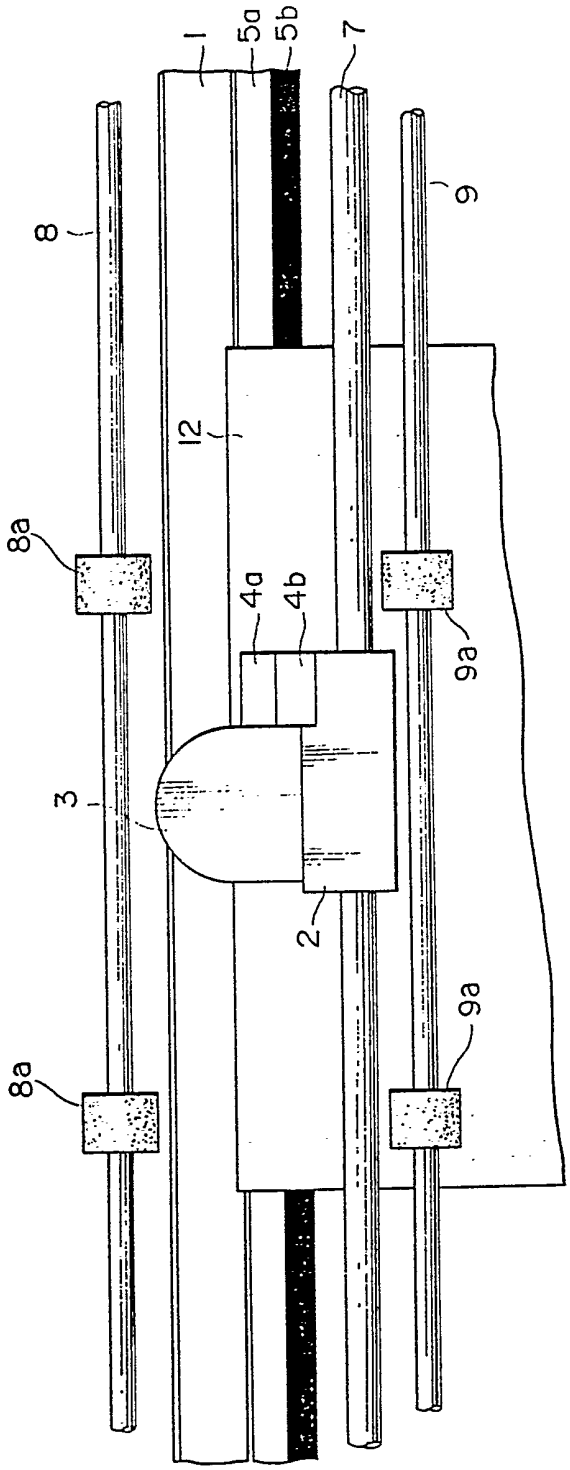


FIG. 5(a)

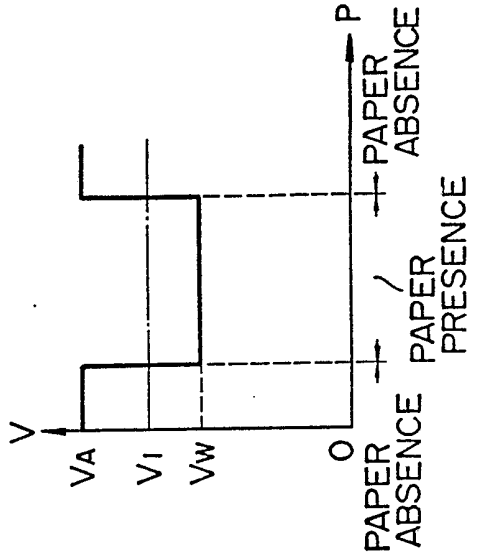


FIG. 5(b)

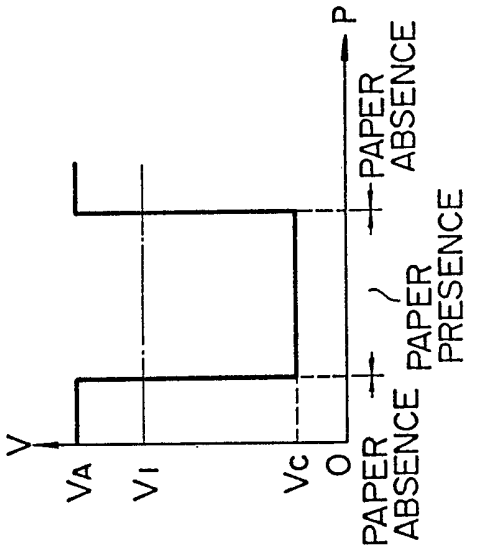


FIG. 5(c)

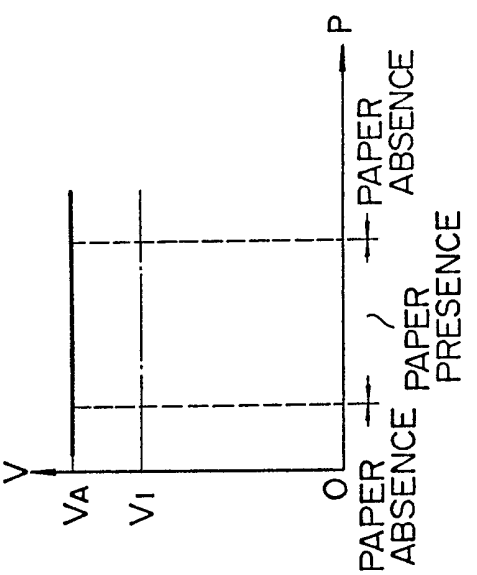


FIG. 5(d)

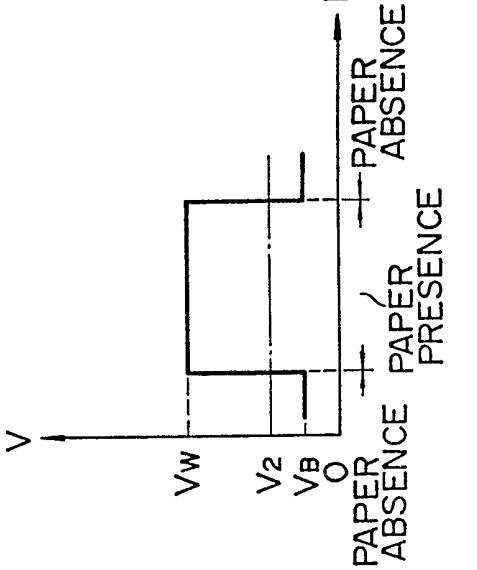


FIG. 5(e)

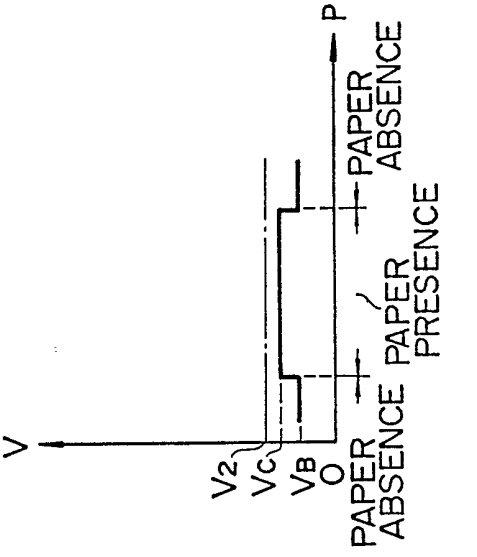


FIG. 5(f)

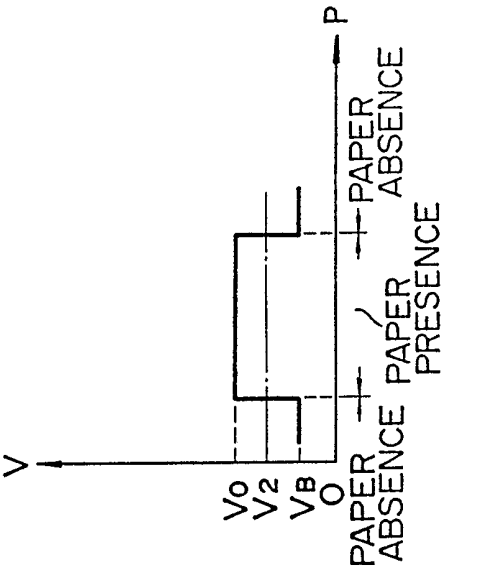


FIG. 6

	PAPER ABSENCE	WHITE	DARK	OHP
FIRST SENSOR 4a	V_A	V_W	V_C	V_A
SECOND SENSOR 4b	V_B	V_W	V_C	V_O
COMPARISON MEANS 21	$V_1 < V_A$	$V_1 > V_W$	$V_1 > V_C$	$V_1 < V_A$
COMPARISON MEANS 22	$V_2 > V_B$	$V_2 < V_W$	$V_2 > V_C$	$V_2 < V_O$
SIGNAL A	1	0	0	1
SIGNAL B	0	1	0	1
SIGNAL $\overline{A}$	0	1	1	0
SIGNAL C ($\overline{A}$ + B)	0	1	1	1
COMPARISON CONDITION	$V_A > V_1 > V_W > V_O > V_2 > V_C > V_B$			

FIG. 7

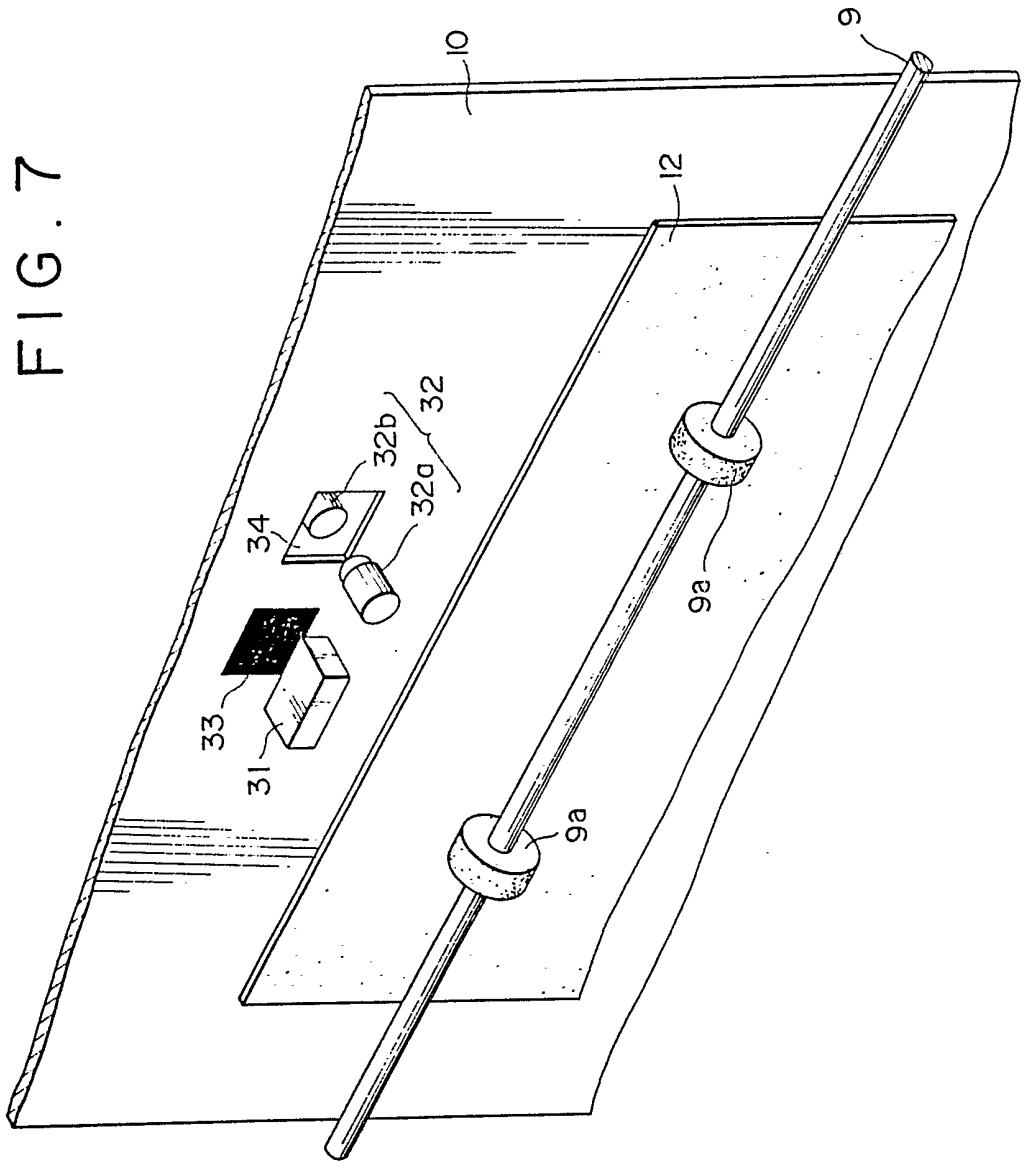


FIG. 8(a)

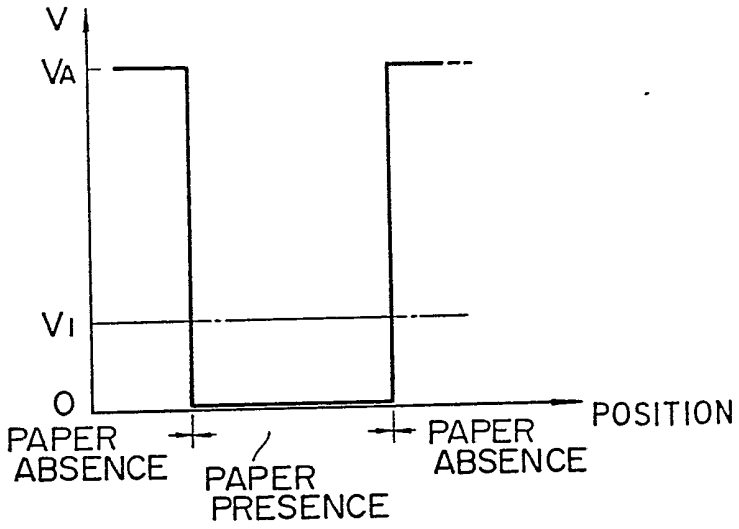


FIG. 8(b)

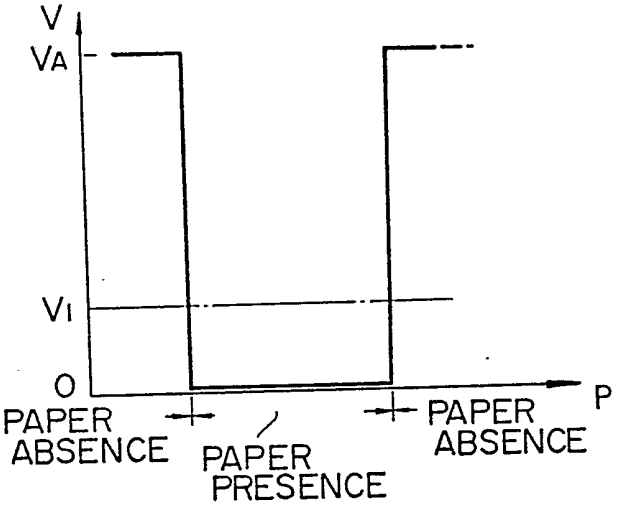


FIG. 8(c)

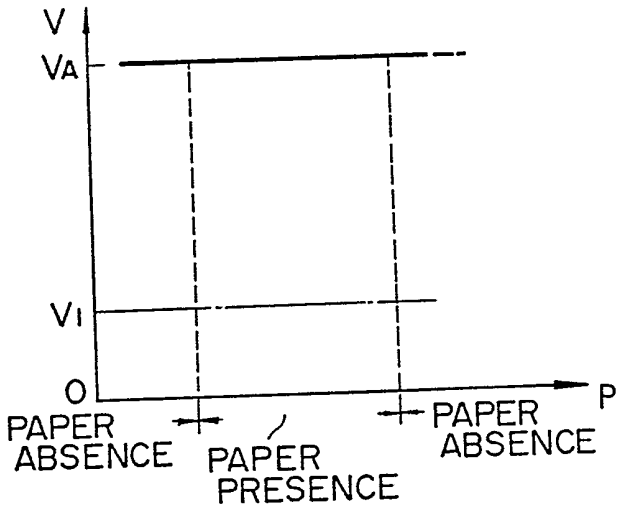


FIG. 8(d)

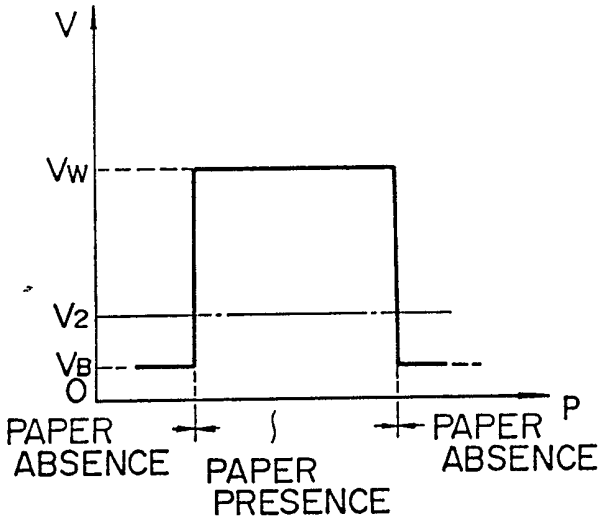


FIG. 8(e)

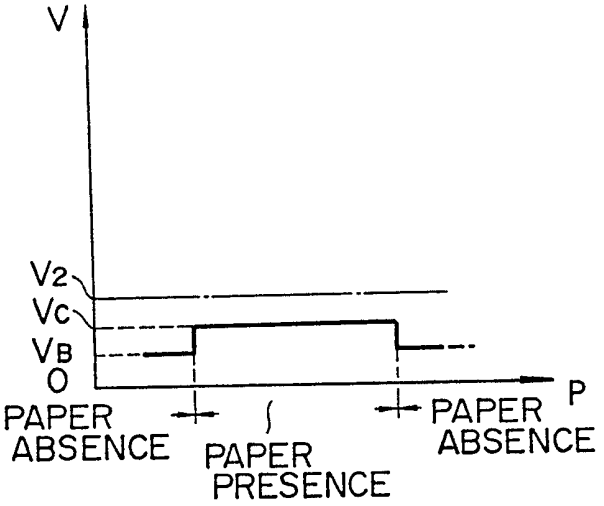


FIG. 8(f)

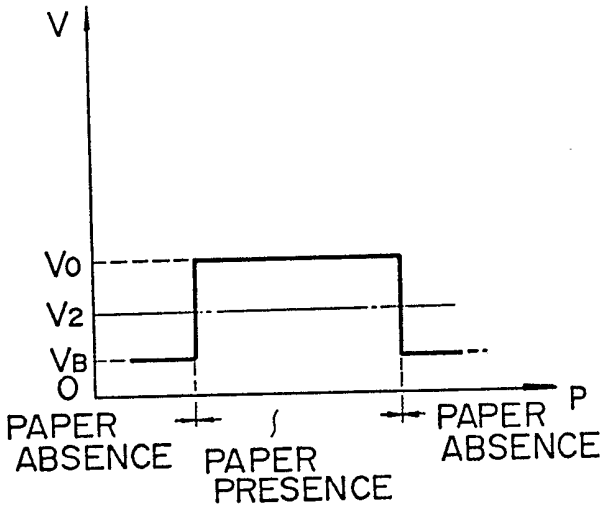


FIG. 9

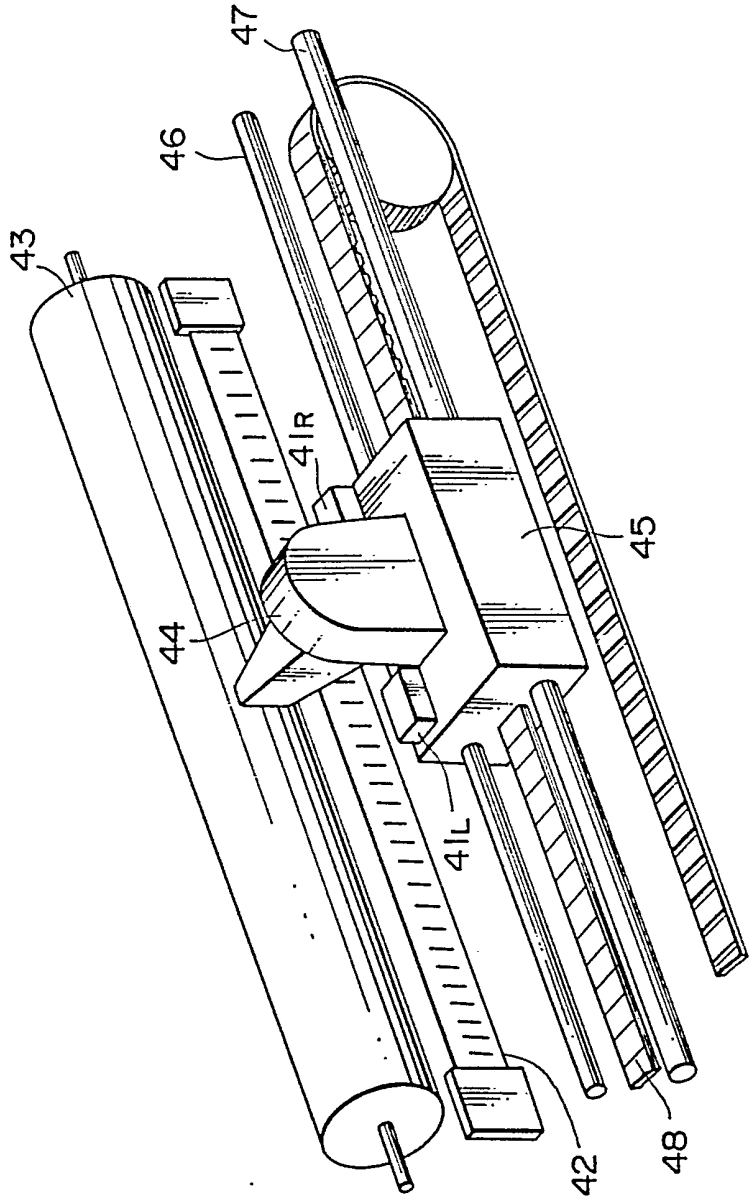


FIG. 10

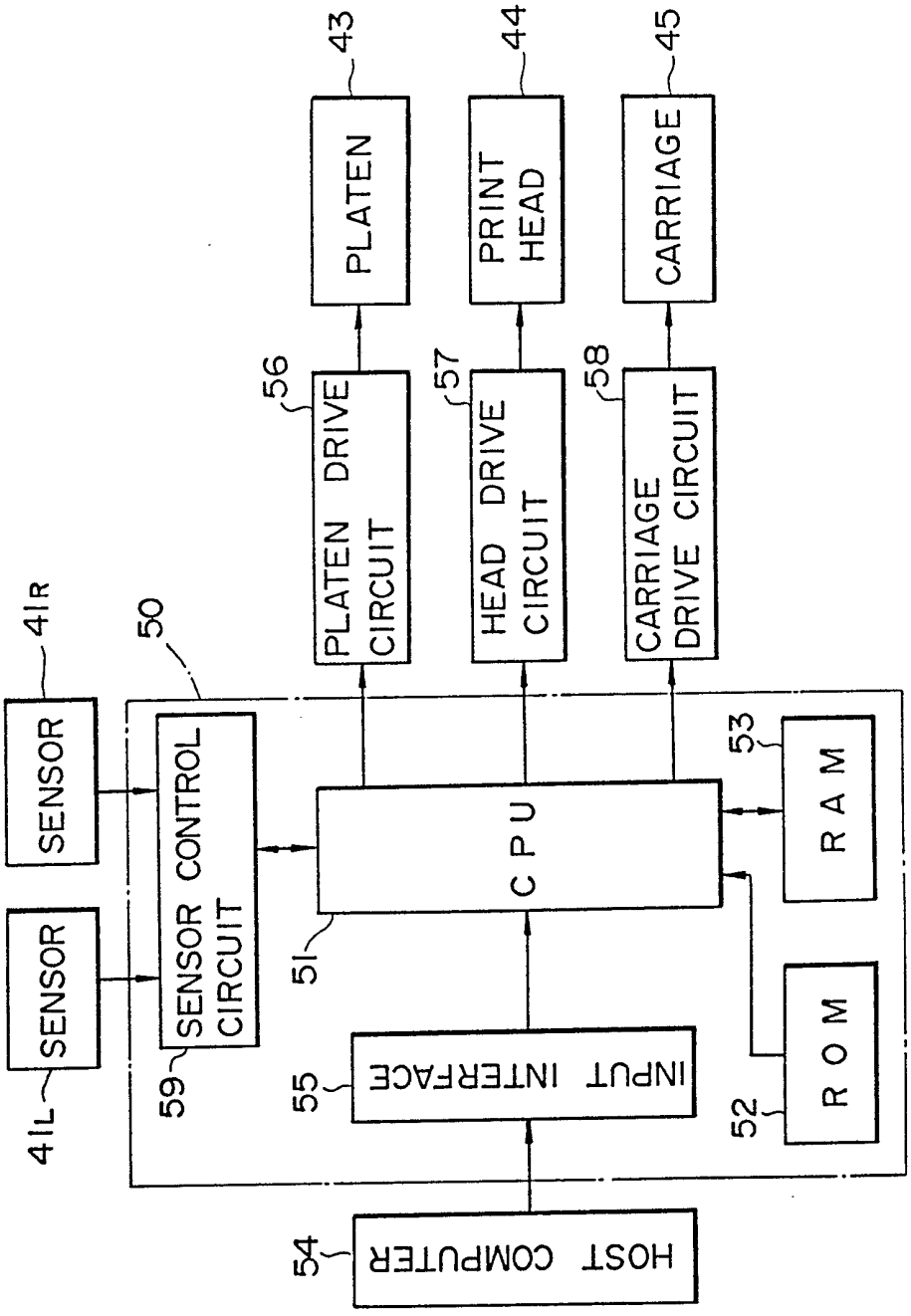

41R
SENSOR
41L
SENSOR
50
SENSOR CONTROL CIRCUIT
59
51
CPU
55
INPUT INTERFACE
54
HOST COMPUTER
52
ROM
53
RAM
56
PLATEN DRIVE CIRCUIT
57
HEAD DRIVE CIRCUIT
58
CARRIAGE DRIVE CIRCUIT
43
PLATEN
44
PRINT HEAD
45
CARRIAGE

FIG. 11

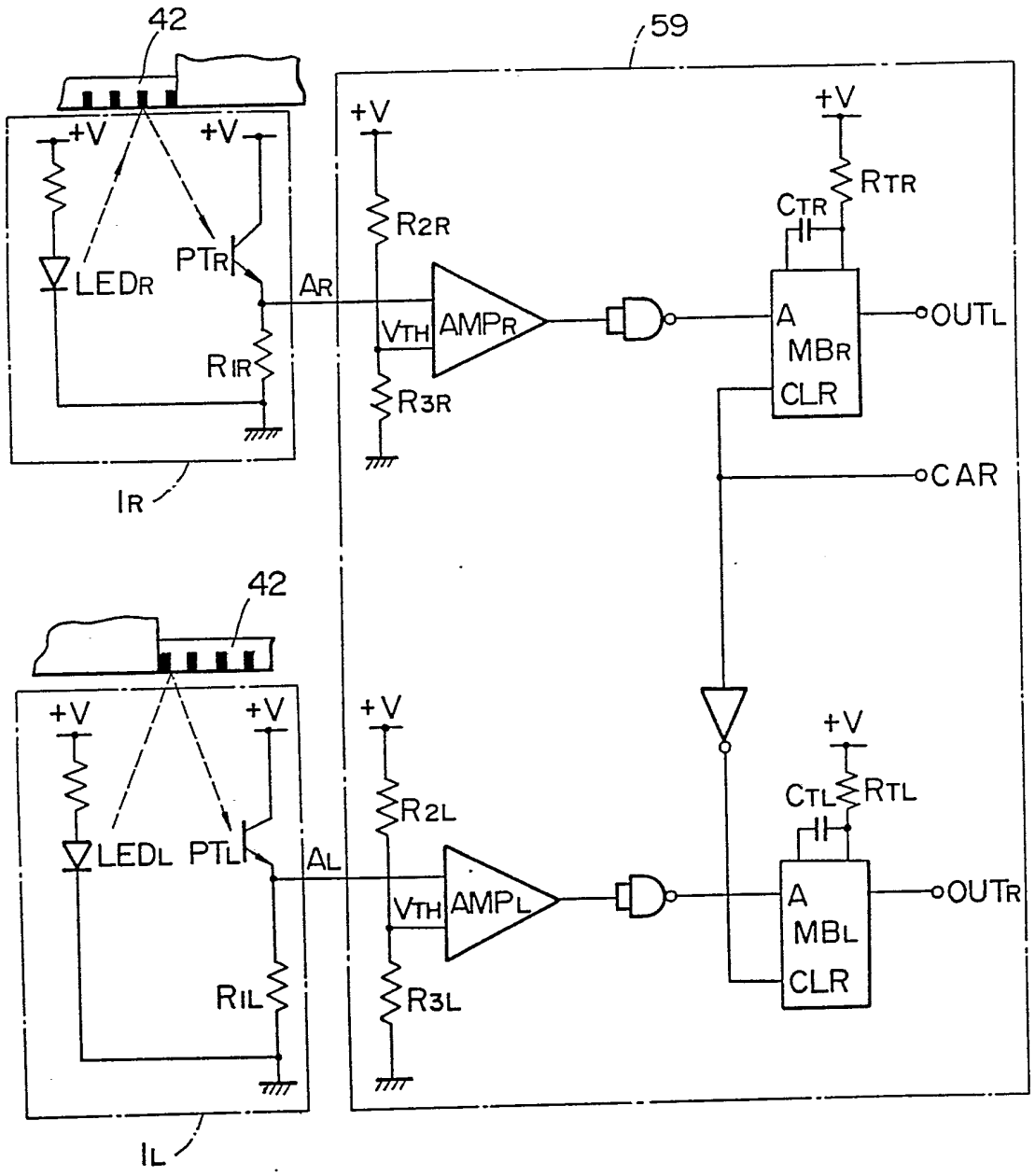

42
59
+V
+V
+V
LEDR
PTR
AR
R2R
RTR
CTR
R1R
VTH
AMPR
R3R
A
MBR
CLR
OUTL
CAR
IR
42
+V
+V
+V
+V
LEDL
PTL
AL
R2L
CTL
RTL
R1L
VTH
AMPL
R3L
A
MBL
CLR
OUTR
IL

FIG. 12

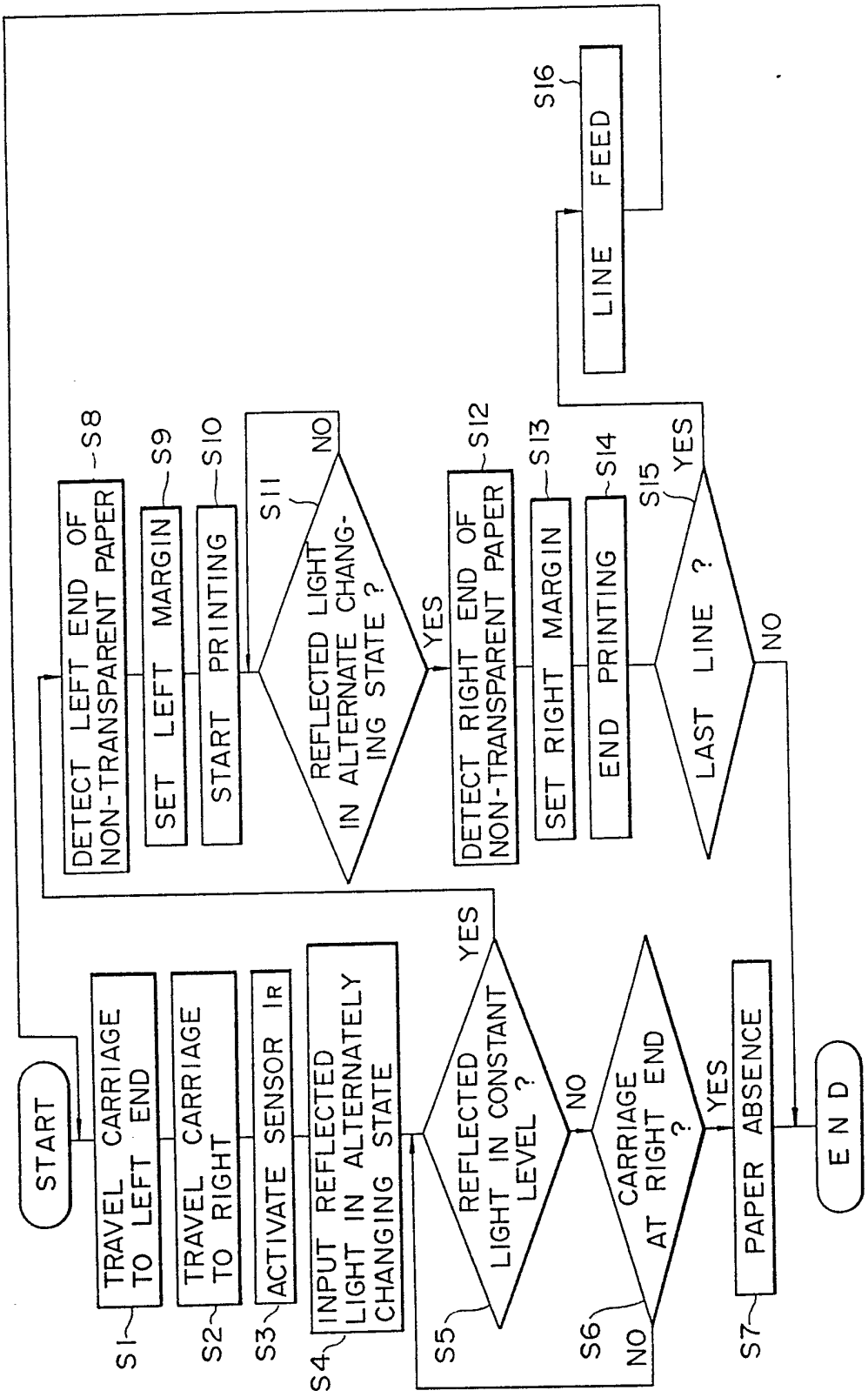

START
TRAVEL CARRIAGE TO LEFT END
S1
TRAVEL CARRIAGE TO RIGHT
S2
ACTIVATE SENSOR IR
S3
INPUT REFLECTED LIGHT IN ALTERNATELY CHANGING STATE
S4
REFLECTED LIGHT IN CONSTANT LEVEL ?
S5
YES
NO
CARRIAGE AT RIGHT END ?
S6
NO
YES
PAPER ABSENCE
S7
END
DETECT LEFT END OF NON-TRANSPARENT PAPER
S8
SET LEFT MARGIN
S9
START PRINTING
S10
REFLECTED LIGHT IN ALTERNATE CHANGING STATE ?
S11
NO
YES
DETECT RIGHT END OF NON-TRANSPARENT PAPER
S12
SET RIGHT MARGIN
S13
END PRINTING
S14
LAST LINE ?
S15
YES
NO
LINE FEED
S16

FIG. 13(a)

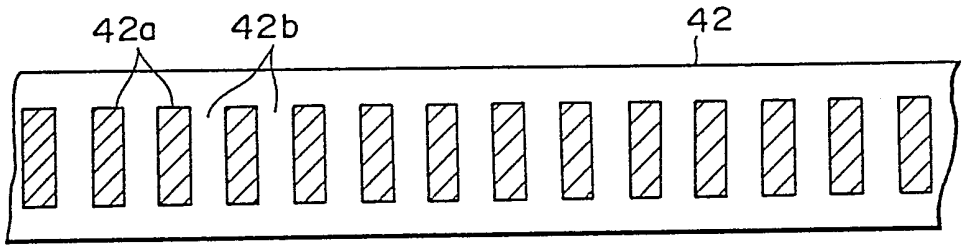


FIG. 13(b)

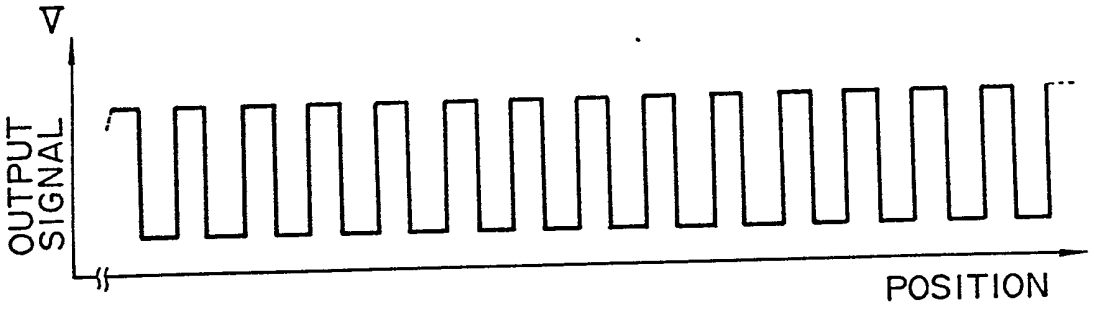


FIG. 14(a)

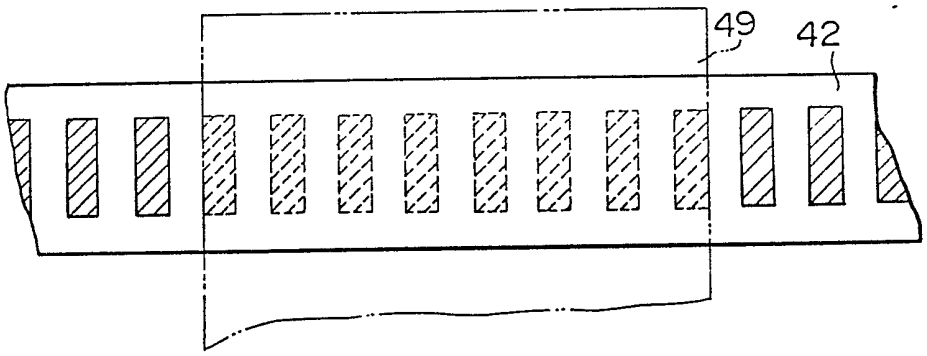


FIG. 14(b)

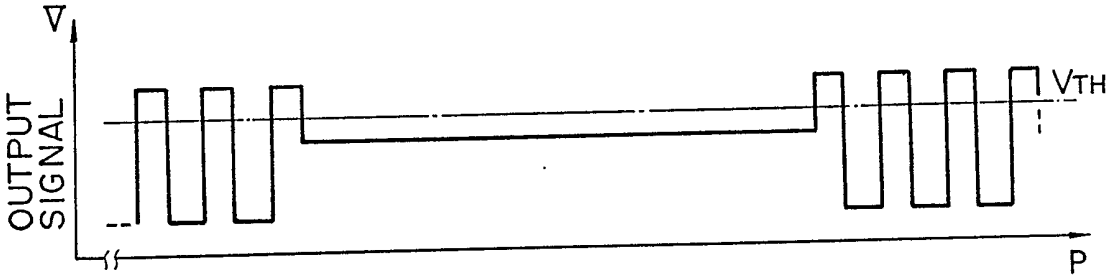


FIG. 14(c)

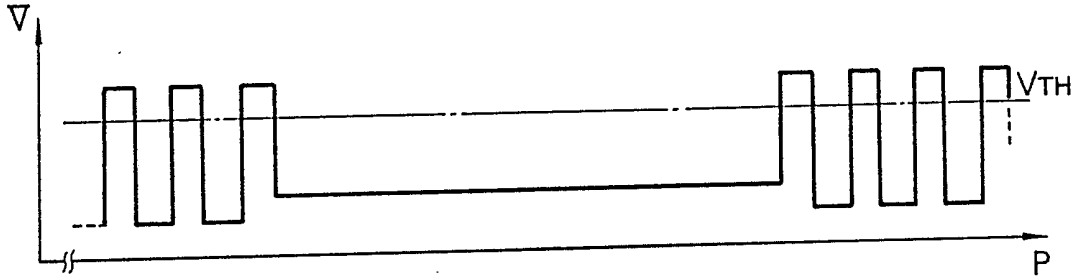
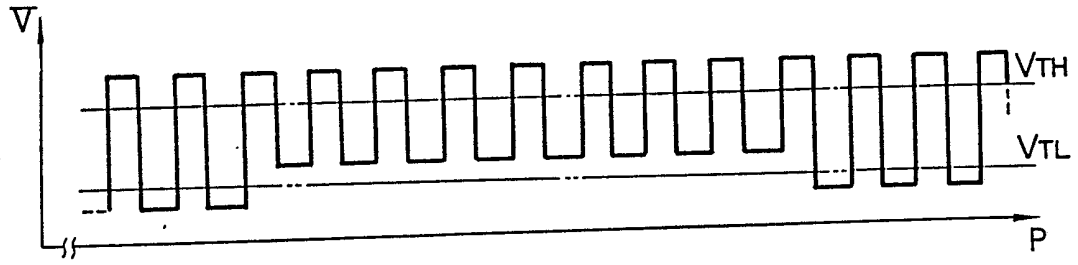


FIG. 14(d)



Sheet Detection Apparatus

This invention relates to a sheet detection apparatus for detecting a sheet loaded on a printer or typewriter for instance.

There has been known a sheet detection apparatus using a sensor of light reflection type or a sensor of light transmission type for detecting whether a sheet is present or absent.

In paper detection apparatus which is known, as shown in Fig. 1, a sensor of light reflection type 91 comprising a light emission element and a light reception element is provided adjacent to a print head 94 on a carriage 95 transversely movable along a platen 93, as the print head 94 is moved, the amount

of reflected light being detected, thereby determining whether paper is present or absent and where it is. In the structure, the platen 93 is positioned opposite the sensor of light reflection type 91 and the surface of the platen 93 is dark so as to reduce the amount of reflected light when paper 99 is absent. Namely, platens with dark rubber or aluminum whose surface is painted or coated dark have been used.

In the structure described above, when the white paper 99 is fed to the platen 93, the carriage 95 which is provided with the sensor of light reflection type 91 moves. When the sensor of light reflection type 91 is located at a position opposed to the white paper 99, the sensor of light reflection type 91 receives much light compared with a state where the white paper 99 is absent, thereby detecting that the white paper 99 is present.

However, in the paper detection apparatus described above, several practical problems have arisen. For example, when the apparatus is used for a long time and the surface of the platen 93 is dirtied by ink or the dark paint applied on the platen 93 is peeled off, the sensor of light reflection type 91 cannot input proper amount of reflected light,

whereby the white paper 99 may not be occasionally detected.

In addition, to detect the white paper 99 using reflected light, the color of the surface opposed to the sensor of light reflection type 91 should be dark. Since the surface of the platen 93 has been usually dark, presence of absence of a dark paper or high tone color paper and its position could not be precisely detected. Moreover, when detecting a transparent film used for overhead projection, it has been impossible to determine whether the transparent film is present or absent and where it is by detecting a change of reflected light like the situation of the dark paper.

Meanwhile, in recording apparatus which has been recently announced, as multiple color printing technologies have advanced, a variety of printing sheet types have been used such as high tone color sheets and dark sheets besides white sheets.

However, in conventional sheet detection apparatus described above, when a variety of sheet types are detected, errors occur because the light reflection factor and light transmission factor depend on the sheet type to be used.

Although it is possible to consider using a

mechanical contact type switch which does not use light to detect a sheet, the contacts of the switch have a life restricted by operation time. Therefore, when the contacts do not work due to a long time use, the sheet cannot be detected.

According to the present invention there is provided a sheet detection apparatus including at least two radiation sources for outputting light, respective sensors associated with the sources to receive light originating from the sources, in a manner depending on whether a sheet is present and if so on its nature and determination means for determining whether one, and which, of various types of sheet is present by comparing output values from the sensors with reference values.

In some embodiments there are at least two reflection members provided opposite said sensor means, respectively, for reflecting the light from said radiation means; depending on the presence or absence and nature of an intervening sheet.

In other embodiments there is a reflection member provided opposite a first one of said sensor means, said reflection member reflecting the light to one said sensor means. Preferably, then, a second sensor is positioned to receive light direct from the associated source in the absence of an intervening sheet.

In another aspect the present invention provides a sheet detection apparatus including:

light radiation means for outputting light;

sensor means provided on a position opposite a sheet feed path for receiving the light from said light radiation means by way of a sheet;

a reflection member provided opposite said sensor means, said reflection member being alternately formed with portions of high and low reflection factors;

carriage means for moving said sensor means transversely on said sheet, so that

the reflected light is in an alternately changing state of high and low level inputted to said sensor means, during carriage movement in non sheet loaded state; and

determination means for determining which one of various types of sheet is in existence in accordance with said light inputted to said sensor means in the presence of a sheet.

The above two aspects may be used together.

The invention will be more clearly understood from the following description which is given by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of printer which is provided with conventional paper detection apparatus;

Fig. 2 is an outlined perspective view of a printer according to the first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a sectional center view of a printer according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is an outlined front view of the printer according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5(a) through 5(f) are diagrams showing

comparisons of output values;

Fig. 6 is a diagram showing a process of determining the sheet presence;

Fig. 7 is a perspective view of sheet detection apparatus according to the second embodiment;

Figs. 8(a) through 8(f) are diagrams showing comparisons of output values;

Fig. 9 is an outlined perspective view of a printer according to the third embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 10 is a block diagram showing the structure of the printer according to the third embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 11 is an electric circuit diagram of a sensor and sensor control circuit of the printer according to the third embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 12 is a flowchart showing an operation of the printer according to the third embodiment of this invention; and

Figs. 13(a) and 13(b), and 14(a) through 14(d) are diagrams showing operations of the printer according to the third embodiment of this invention.

Figs. 2 and 3 are an outlined perspective view of a printer having sheet detection apparatus according to the present invention and a sectional side view thereof, respectively.

The printer is provided with an aluminum platen 1 on a frame chassis 11,

a carriage 2 being supported slidably on a main guide bar 7 and a side guide bar 6, the carriage 2 being movable transversely by a well-known carriage drive step motor (not shown) through a drive belt 13 along the platen 1.

The carriage 2 is provided with first and second sensors of light reflection types 4a and 4b and a print head 3.

On the frame chassis 11, upper pinch roller shafts 8 and 8' and lower pinch roller shafts 9 and 9' are rotatably supported., The upper pinch roller shaft 8 and the lower pinch roller shafts 9 are rotated by a well-known line feed motor (not shown). The upper and lower pinch roller shafts 8, 8', 9, and 9' are provided with a plurality of pinch rollers 8a, 8b, 9a and 9b so as to feed a paper along a paper guide plate 10 forming a paper feed path.

First and second reflection plates 5a and 5b adjacent to the platen 1 are provided opposite the first and second reflection type sensors 4a and 4b disposed on the carriage 2.

The first reflection plate 5a is made of a lustrous aluminum plate whereby the reflection factor of the surface thereof is higher than that of a white paper. On the second reflection plate 5b, a dark delustrous paint which prevents light from being reflected is coated whereby the reflection factor of the surface thereof becomes lower than that of the surface of a transparent film used for the over head projector (referred to simply as an OHP paper in the succeeding description).

The first and second sensors of light reflection types 4a and 4b cooperating with the carriage 3 which are transversely moved are provided opposite the first and second reflection plates 5a and 5b, respectively. Each of the sensors of light reflection types 4a and 4b has a well-known light source, a well-known light reception element, and a well-known photoelectric converter (which are not shown) whereby the light source radiates light, the light reception element receives the light being reflected by the reflection plate, and the

photoelectric converter converts it into a voltage to be output.

An operation of the paper detection apparatus of the first embodiment as structured above is described in the following.

V_1 and V_2 are reference values according to output voltages of the first and second sensors 4_A and 4_B. In this embodiment, the reference value V_1 is set in the range between an output voltage V_A at which the first sensor 4a receives reflected light from the first reflection plate 5a and an output voltage V_W at which it receives that from a white paper. On the other hand, the reference value V_2 is set in the range between an output voltage V_B at which the second sensor 4b receives reflected light from the reflection plate 5b and an output voltage V_O at which it receives that from an OHP paper. Output voltages from the first and second sensors 4a and 4b are compared with the reference values V_1 and V_2 in comparison means 21, 22. When the output voltage from the sensor is higher than the reference value, "1" is output; when the output voltage from the sensor is lower than the reference value, "0" is output. It is determined whether a paper is present or not using the "1" and "0" signals from the logical circuit. When a paper has not been loaded

on the printer, the carriage 3 which is provided with the first and second sensor of light reflection types 4a and 4b is traveled along the platen 1. The first and second sensor of light reflection types 4a and 4b radiate light toward the reflection plates, receive reflected light, and output output voltages corresponding to the amount of light. At the time, since the first sensor of light reflection type 4a receives the reflected light from the first reflection plate 5a, it outputs the output voltage V_A. On the other hand, the second sensor of light reflection type 4b receives reflected weak light from the second reflection plate 5b and then outputs the output voltage V_B. It is compared that the output voltage V_A with the reference value V_1. Since $V_A > V_1$, the comparison means 21 outputs "1" as an output signal A. Then, it is compared that the output voltage V_B with the reference value V_2. Since $V_B < V_2$, the comparison means 22 outputs "0" as an output signal B. The output signal A is put through a NOT circuit (namely, "0"), then put through an OR circuit with the output signal B (namely, "0"), and then "0" is outputted as an output signal C. If the output signal C is "0", no paper exists in the printer.

When a paper is fed to the printer and then sent

by the pinch roller along the paper guide, as shown in Fig. 4, a state where a paper 12 exists at the detection positions of the first and second sensor of light reflection types takes place. At the time, like the state where no paper exists describe above, by traveling the carriage 2, the first and second sensors 4a and 4b detect that the paper exists. When the result of paper detection is changed, namely, when the state is changed from the paper absence state to the paper presence state or vice verse, the left and right ends of the paper are detected in accordance with the number of steps for which the carriage drive step motor rotates.

For the printer according to the first embodiment, besides conventional white papers, high tone color papers, dark papers, and transparent OHP papers can be used. An operation for detecting various types of papers, particularly, white papers, dark papers, and OHP papers by the paper detection apparatus according to the present embodiment is described.

Figs. 5(a) through 5(f) show comparisons between output voltages of the first and second sensor of light reflection types 4 depending on whether a paper exists or not and the reference values V_1 and V_2, thereof. The abscissa shows the position of a sensor. Figs.

5(a) and 5(c) show the output voltages of the first sensor of light reflection type. Figs. 5(d) through 5(f) show the output voltages of the second sensor of light reflection type. Figs. 5(a) and 5(d) show the output voltages depending on whether a white paper exists or not. Figs. 5(b) and 5(e) show the output voltages depending on whether a dark paper exists or not. Figs. 5(c) and 5(f) show the output voltages depending on whether an OHP paper exists or not.

In Figs. 5(a) through 5(f), when no paper exists, because the reflection factor of the first reflection plate 5a is set to a higher value than that of the white paper, the output voltage from the first sensor of light reflection type 4a becomes a higher value V_A than the output value V_W which is output when the white paper is detected. In addition, because the reflection factor of the second reflection plate 5b is set to a lower value than that of the OHP paper, the output voltage from the second sensor of light reflection type 4b becomes a lower value V_B than the output value V_O which is output when the OHP paper is detected. The output values of the first and second sensor of light reflection types 4a and 4b are V_W when a white paper is detected and V_C which is slightly higher than V_B when a dark paper is detected, respectively. When an OHP

paper exists, light from the sensor is transmitted therethrough, reflected on the reflection plate and then received to the sensor. Therefore, the reflection factor of the reflection plate provided on the rear side of the OHP paper should be considered. In other words, the light from the first sensor 4a is partially reflected on the OHP paper. The other is transmitted through the OHP paper, reflected on the surface of the first reflection plate 5a which has a high reflection factor, and then transmitted therethrough. Actually, the amount of light received by the first sensor 4a is nearly equal to that of which no paper exists. Therefore, the output value where the first sensor 4a and the OHP paper are opposed is equal to the output value V_A for which no paper exists. On the other hand, since the second sensor 4b and the second reflection plate 5b are on opposite sides of the second reflection plate 5b which has a low reflection factor, when the second sensor 4b is opposed to the OHP paper, the output value becomes V_0 which accords with the amount of light reflected only by the surface of the OHP paper. The reference values V_1 and V_2 are set in the range between V_A and V_W and between V_0 and V_B. Therefore, the order of the output values from the first and second sensors 4a and 4b and reference values

is represented as follows:

$V_A > V_1 > V_W > V_0 > V_2 > V_C > V_B$ (See Fig. 6)

Fig. 6 shows a process for determining whether a paper exists or not by comparing above output values with the reference values.

When no paper exists, the first sensor 4a and the second sensor 4b output the values V_A and V_B, respectively. It is compared that the output value V_A from the first sensor 4a with the reference value V_1. Since the result is $V_1 < V_A$, namely, the output value is larger than the reference value, a comparison means 21 outputs "1" as the output signal A. It is compared that the output value V_B from the second sensor 4b with the reference value V_2. Since the result is $V_2 > V_B$, namely, the output value is smaller than the reference value, a comparison means 22 outputs "0" as the output signal B. The output signal A is put through the NOT circuit (namely, "0"), put through the OR circuit with the output signal B (namely, "0"), and then "0" is outputted as the output signal C; and it is determined that no paper exists.

When a white paper is present at the detection position, the output values from the first and second sensors 4a and 4b become V_W. The output values are compared with the reference values and output "0" as

the signal A and "1" as the signal B. A logical operation is performed and "1" is outputted as the output signal C; and it is determined that the paper is present.

When a dark paper is present at the detection position, the output values from the first and second sensors 4a and 4b become V_C. The output values are compared with the reference values and "0" is outputted as the signal A and "0" as the signal B. A logical operation is performed and "1" is outputted as the signal C, thereby it is determined that the paper is present.

When an OHP paper is present at the detection position, the output values from the first and second sensors 4a and 4b become V_A and V_O, respectively. The output values are compared with the reference values and the comparison means 21 outputs "1" as the signal A; the comparison means 22 outputs "1" as the signal B. A logical operation is performed and "1" is outputted as the signal C; it is determined that the OHP paper is present.

In the first embodiment of the present invention, when a paper does not exist, the first output value from the first sensor of light reflection type is higher than that of the first reference value. The

second output value from the second sensor of light reflection type is lower than the second reference value. When a white paper is fed to the detection position, the first output value becomes lower than the first reference value, the second output value becoming higher than the second reference value. When a dark paper is fed, the first output value becomes lower than the first reference value, the second output value becoming lower than the second reference value like the state where no paper exists. When an OHP paper is fed, the first output value becomes higher than the first reference value like the state where no paper exists, the second output value becoming higher than the second reference value. The detection means detects that a paper exists when the first output value becomes lower than the first reference value or when the second output value becomes higher than the second reference value.

Moreover, in the first embodiment of the present invention, the first and second sensor of light reflection types are provided on the carriage which transversely travels on a paper, thereby detecting the left and right ends of the paper. However, it is also possible to fixedly provide both the sensors at predetermined positions adjacent to the paper feed path

and to provide two reflection members on opposite sides thereof so as to only detect whether a paper is present or absent; and it is also possible to substitute the platen 1 for at least one of the first and second reflection plates.

Referring to attached drawings, the second embodiment of the present invention is described in the following. The same portions as the first embodiment in structure are omitted in the following description.

Fig.7 is a perspective view of paper detection apparatus and thereabout of recording apparatus according to the paper detection apparatus of the second embodiment.

Although the structure of the recording apparatus of the second embodiment is nearly same as that of the first embodiment, the recording apparatus of the second embodiment is not provided with the first and second sensor of light reflection types 4a and 4b and the first and second reflection plates 5a and 5b.

On the lower side of the platen 1, two sensors are provided: one is a sensor of light reflection type 31 provided opposite the paper guide plate 10 forming a paper feed path and the other is a sensor of light transmission type 32 composed of a light emission element 32a and a light reception element 32b

which are provided on opposite sides of the paper guide plate 10 through a window portion 34 provided thereon. Part of the paper guide plate 10 opposed to the sensor of light reflection type 31 is delustrously painted in dark, the portion being a reflection portion 33 opposite the sensor of light reflection type 31. Namely, since the surface of the reflection member 33 is delustrously painted in dark, the reflection factor thereof is smaller than that of an OHP paper. The sensor of light reflection type 31 and the sensor of light transmission type 32 are securely supported with a well-known supporting member (not shown) so that they are in parallel with the end of a paper 12 being fed by the pinch rollers 9a, 9a on the lower pinch roller shaft 9.

Referring to Fig. 3, the paper detection apparatus of the second embodiment is described because it is nearly same as the first embodiment in structure.

In the paper detection apparatus according to the second embodiment, the sensor of light transmission type 32 and the sensor of light reflection type 31 are provided instead of the first sensor 4a and second sensor 4b, respectively. In addition, in the second embodiment, the reference values V_2 for the sensor of light reflection type 31 is nearly same as that in the

first embodiment. The reference value V_1 for the sensor of light transmission type 32 is set in the range between the output value V_A from the sensor of light transmission type 31b at which light is radiated from the light emission element 32a to the light reception element 32b and an output value at which no light is radiated to the light reception element 32b, namely, "0". (See Fig. 8(a))

An operation of the second embodiment of the present invention in the structure described above is described in the following.

Figs. 8(a) through 8(f) show comparisons between output voltages of the sensor of light transmission type 32 and the sensor of light reflection type 31 depending on whether a paper exists or not and the reference values V_1 and V_2. The abscissa shows the position of a sensor. Figs. 8(a) and 8(c) show the output voltages of the sensor of light transmission type 32. Figs. 8(d), through 8(f) show the output voltages of the sensor of light reflection type 31. Figs. 8(a) and 8(d) show the output voltages depending on whether a white paper exists or not. Figs. 8(b) and 8(e) show the output voltages depending on whether a dark paper exists or not. Figs. 8(c) and 8(f) show the output voltages depending on whether an OHP paper

exists or not.

Since the sensor of light reflection type 31, the reflection member 33, and the reference value V_2 in the second embodiment are the same as the second sensor of light reflection type 4b, the second reflection plate 5b, and the reference value V_2 in the first embodiment, respectively, the output values and the reference values in comparisons are same. Thus, Figs. 8(d) and 8(f) show the same results as in Figs. 5(d) and 5(f) in the first embodiment. When Figs. 8(a) and 8(c) and Figs. 5(a) and 5(c) are compared, the output values from the sensors for determining whether a paper is present or not are identically changed against the reference value V_1. Therefore, the results of the comparisons in the second embodiment are same as those in the first embodiment. It is obvious that the second embodiment can detect whether various types of papers are present or not.

In the second embodiment of the present invention, when no paper exists, the first output value from the sensor of light reflection type is lower than the first reference value, the second output value from the sensor of light transmission type being higher than the second output value. When a white paper is fed at the detection position, the first output value becomes

higher than the first reference value, the second output value becoming lower than the second reference value. When a dark paper is fed, the first output value becomes lower than the first reference value like the state where no paper exists, the second output value becoming lower than the second reference value. When an OHP paper is fed, the first output value becomes higher than the first reference value, the second output value becoming higher than the second reference value like the state where no paper exists. The determination means determines that a paper exists when the first output value becomes lower than the first reference value or when the second output value becomes higher than the second reference value.

Although in the first and second embodiments of the present invention, whether a paper is present or not and where it is were determined by comparing the output values from the first and second sensors with the predetermined reference values, since the signals depend on the types of papers, it is possible to determine the types of paper in accordance of the signals. Particularly, by considering that the fixation of ink or toner depends on the type of a paper, it is necessary to slightly change the recording method so as to obtain a clean recording result.

In addition, because the apparatus does not use mechanical contacts and the like, it provides a high durability.

Fig. 9 is an outlined perspective view of the third embodiment of the present invention. In the printer, a platen 43 is rotatably supported to a frame (not shown). On the front side of the platen 43, a carriage 45 supported by two carriage rails 46 and 47 is movably provided along the platen 43. The carriage 45 is transversely traveled though a drive belt 48 by a carriage drive motor (not shown), the carriage 45 being provided with an ink jet type print head 44 and two sensor of light reflection types 41_L and 41_R which sandwich the print head 44. On the lower side of the platen 43, a reflection plate 42 is opposite the sensor 41_L and 41_R, the reflection plate 42 being supported on the frame. As shown in Fig.13 (a) which is an enlarged view of the reflection plate 42 wherein the surface of an aluminum plate has two types of stripes: one type is bright stripes 42a whose reflection factor is high and the other type is dark stripes 42b whose light reflection factor is low which are alternately placed in an equal width. The reflection plate 42 is made by printing equal width stripes on an aluminum plate whose reflection factor is

very high with a dark paint whose reflection factor is very low using silk print method.

Fig.10 is a block diagram showing the structure of the printer. Control means 50 for controlling the printer is provided with a known CPU 51 (central processing unit), a ROM 52 (read only memory) for storing a program and so forth which controls the printer, a RAM 53 (random access memory) for storing various data to be rewritten, an input interface 55 for inputting data from a host computer 54, and a sensor control circuit 59 for controlling the sensors 41_L and 41_R. The CPU 51 is connected to a platen drive circuit 56 for driving the platen 3 through a well-known platen drive motor (not shown), a head drive circuit 57 for driving the print head 44, and a carriage drive circuit 58 for driving the carriage 45 through the carriage drive motor so as to control them.

Fig.11 is an electric block diagram of the sensors 41_R and 41_L and the sensor control circuit 59. Since the structure of the sensor 41_R is the same as that of the sensor 41_L, in the following description, only the sensor 41_L is described. The sensor 41_L is provided with a light emission element LED_L located between a power V and the ground for outputting the constant amount of light to the reflection plate 42 and with a

light reception element PT_L connected between the power V and the ground through a resistor R_{1L} for inputting the reflected light from the reflection plate 42. The light reception element PT_L is made from a photo transistor, the amount of current which flows therethrough depending on the amount of reflected light being input. A voltage signal where the voltage is proportional to the amount of reflected light being input is output to the sensor control circuit 59.

The sensor control circuit 59 is provided with an amplifier AMP_L wherein a threshold voltage V_{TH} which is determined by a terminal A_L of the sensor 41_L and resistors R_{2L} and R_{3L} between the power V and the ground is input and when the voltage from the sensor 41_L is higher than the voltage V_{TH}, a high level signal is output. A one-shot multivibrator MB_L is provided where the output from the amplifier AMP_L is input as a trigger through a NOT circuit and with a constant time delay determined by a condenser C_{TL} and a resistor R_{TL} by the trigger, the signal being output from an output terminal OUT_L is inverted. Likewise, the sensor 41_R is connected to an amplifier AMP_R and a multivibrator MB_R. Between the multivibrators MB_L and MB_R, a terminal CAR is provided so as to selectively operate one of sensors 41_L and 41_R along with the NOT circuit. The terminals

CAR, OUT_R, and OUT_L are connected to the CPU 51.

Fig.12 is a flowchart showing an operation of the printer in the structure described above. When a print command is input, the flow (namely, the program) gets started.

In step step S1, the program travels the carriage 45 to the most left position in the movable range where a paper 49 is absent. In step S2, the program starts traveling the carriage 45 in the right direction, which is the printing direction at a constant speed. In step S3, the CPU 51 outputs a signal from the terminal CAR so as to causing the sensor 41_R to be active. At the time, the light emission element LED_R of the sensor 41_R outputs the constant amount of light to the reflection plate 42.

In step S4, reflected light in an alternately changing state where high level light whose light amount is large and low level light whose light amount is small are alternately reflected from the bright stripes 42a and the dark stripes 42b on the reflection plate 42 is input to the light reception element PT_R. After the reflected light is input, the sensor 41_R outputs alternately changing signals where signal levels are alternately changed between a high level and a low level as shown in Fig.13 (b) to the sensor

control circuit 59. The signals are input and triggered to the multivibrator MB_R as pulse signals whose waveforms are trimmed by the amplifier AMP_R where the threshold voltage V_{TH} is applied. The multivibrator MB_R inverts the output signals with the constant time delay determined by the condenser C_{TR} and the resistor R_{TR} depending on the leading triggers. However, since the alternately changing signals have been input, the multivibrator MB_R are successively reset, whereby the output signals are not inverted. Therefore, while the CPU 51 continuously inputs signals in a constant level from the terminal OUT_R, it determines that the paper is absent.

In step S5, the program determines whether the light reception element PT_R has input reflected light in the constant state. When reflected light in the alternately changing state has been continuously input, the determined condition becomes NO in step S5. The program advances to step S6. In step S6, the program determines whether the carriage 45 has been located at the right end of the movable range. When the determined condition is NO, the program returns back to step S5. When the determined condition is YES in step S6, the program determines that the paper has not been loaded on the platen 43 and terminates the flow.

When the determined condition is YES in step S5, namely, the paper 49 has been loaded on the platen 43, it blocking a part of the reflection plate 42 as shown in Fig.14 (a) and the sensor 41_R has been traveled to an opposed position of the paper 49, the constant level of reflected light corresponding to the reflection factor of the paper 49 is input to the light reception element PT_R. When the reflection factor of the paper 49 is comparatively high, namely, white, the sensor 41_R outputs a signal shown in Fig.14 (b) to the sensor control circuit 59. When the reflection factor of the paper 49 is comparatively low, namely, dark, the sensor 41_R outputs a signal shown in Fig.14 (c) to the sensor control circuit 59. When the input signals to the multivibrator MB_R are changed from the alternately changing signals to the constant signals, the signals which are output from the terminal OUT_R to the CPU 51 are inverted with the constant time delay after the leading trigger which has been last input. In step S8, the CPU 51 determines that the opposite position of the sensor 41_R is the left end of the non-transparent paper by the inversion of the signals. In step S9, the left margin which is the print start position is set in accordance with the left end position. In step S10, the printing starts from the left margin. In step S11,

the program determines whether the light reception element PT_R has input the reflected light in the alternately changing state or not. This step is continued until the determined condition becomes YES. In step S11, when the determined condition becomes YES, the program advances to step S12 so as to detect the right end of the paper 49. After that, the right margin which is a print end position in accordance with the right end position is set. In step S14, the printing stops at the right margin position. In step S15, the program determines whether the printed line is the last line or not. When the determined condition is NO, the program returns back to step S1. When the determined condition is YES, the program terminates the flow.

In the above flow, the left and right end detection operations in printing operations have been described. In the printer, the paper 49 is also detected in an initial setting state such that the power is turned on. At the time, the steps S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S11, and S12 in the above flow are executed.

In addition, the printer can also detect the top end and bottom end of the paper 49. In other words, when the paper is fed, the carriage 45 is traveled near

the center of the platen 42 and it is reciprocatively traveled in the manner that the sensors 41_R or 41_L traverses several dark stripes 42a and dark stripes 42b on the reflection plate 42. In this state, when the paper 49 is fed between the sensors 41_R and 41_L and the opposed reflection plate 42 in accordance with a paper feed operation signal, the reflected light in the alternately changing state is changed to the constant state. When the reflected light in the constant state is received, the top end of the paper 49 can be detected. The bottom end of the paper 49 can be also detected in the same operation.

In the printer according to the present embodiment, any tone color paper can be also detected besides white papers. In addition, since the printer detects the left end and the right end of the paper 49 whenever each line is printed, it does not print blank characters on the platen 43. Thus, this paper detector apparatus is particularly useful for ink jet type printers which print dark characters and deform the surface of the platen 43.

As describe above, according to the third embodiment of the present invention, the carriage and platen are traveled along the reflection plate. When reflected light which is not in the alternately

changing state representing that a paper has been loaded is input to the sensor of light reflection type, the control means determines that the paper is present, whereby various types of papers can be detected besides white papers.

In the third embodiment of the present invention, any tone color paper can be also detected besides white papers. In addition, since the printer detects the left end and the right end of the paper 49 whenever each line is printed, it does not print blank characters on the platen 43. Thus, this paper detector apparatus is particularly useful for ink jet type printers which print dark characters and deform the surface of the platen 43.

In the third embodiment of the present invention, non-transparent papers could be detected. However, it is also possible to detect transparent papers such as OHP papers. In this case, a pair of amplifiers where threshold voltages V_{TL} are applied is provided besides the amplifiers AMP_R and AMP_L where threshold voltages V_{TH} are applied. A pair of multivibrators same as the multivibrators MB_R and MB_L is connected to the amplifiers and the output terminals are connected to the CPU 51.

An OHP paper is loaded on the platen 43 and the

flow shown in Fig.12 is executed. In S5, reflected light in a second alternately changing state where second high level light which is transmitted through the OHP paper and reflected from the bright stripes 42a on the reflection plate 42 and which is slightly weaker than the high level light and second low level light which is reflected from the OHP paper which is on the front side of the dark stripes 42b and which is slightly stronger than the low level light are alternately changed is input to the right reception element PT_R of the sensor 41_R. When the reflected light is input, the sensor 41_R outputs the second alternately changing signals where the second high level and the second low level are continuously changed to the control circuit 59. The second high level is higher than the threshold voltage V_{TH} and the second low level is lower than the threshold voltage V_{TL}. The sensor control circuit 59 outputs the reversed signals relating to the threshold voltage V_{TH} and the constant level signals relating to the threshold voltage V_{TL} to the CPU 51. With these signals, the CPU 51 detects the left end of the transparent paper. In S12, the program detects the right end of the transparent paper.

In the third embodiment described above, the printing was conducted only in the right direction. It

is also possible to conduct the printing both in the right and left directions. The sensor 41_R and the sensor 41_L are used to detect the printing in the right direction and that in the left direction, respectively, whereby the ends of a paper can be detected before starting the printing.

In the third embodiment described above, the printing was made by the print head 44 on a paper. It is also possible to proved a read head on the carriage 45 so as to read characters on the paper 49.

In the third embodiment described above, the reflection plate 42 was provided independently from the platen 43. Using a flat metal plate such as aluminum, bright stripes and dark stripes can be formed, thereby obtaining the same good result as the embodiment described above. In this case, as practical means for forming the bright stripes and dark stripes, they are printed at positions on the opposite sides of the sensors 41_R and 41_L using plate-resisting resist ink by silk screen printing method and the like. After that, the surface of the aluminum platen is dark-oxidized. After that, by removing the resist ink using a solvent, the portion where the resist ink was printed and removed becomes the bright stripes and the remaining portion becomes the dark stripes.

In the third embodiment described above, the bright stripes 42a and the dark stripes 42b were regularly formed in an equal width. However, when the width of the bright stripes (X) and that of the dark stripes (Y) are set in the range of $X < Y < 3X$ to $5Y$, the output levels of the light reception elements PT_R and PR_L can be changed more remarkably than those of the embodiment described above. Moreover, the shapes of the bright stripes and dark stripes are not limited to vertical stripes disposed in parallel. It is sufficient to detect changes of output levels exceeding a predetermined width as the sensors 41_R and 41_L travel along the reflection surface. Therefore, as means for forming the bright stripes and the dark stripes, they can be painted on the surface of the reflection plate 42. On a metal surface, by forming rough portions which diffusely reflect light, the same effect as the paint described above can be obtained. In this case, as a machining method, although it is possible to form diffusely reflecting portions by a chemical etching method, part of metal can be regularly dented by a press machining method using a mold having shapes for bright stripes and dark stripes, thereby obtaining the same result.

In the third embodiment described above, the

bright stripes and the dark stripes were formed on an aluminum plate. However, it is also possible to form them using a slit plate which has stripe shape holes disposed in a regular interval and a rubber sponge which is provided on the rear position thereof, the slit plate and the rubber sponge having a high reflection factor and a low reflection factor, respectively.

It is still also possible in the third embodiment that the reflection member ia substituted by a board member which has a plurality of slits at predetermined intervals, and the sensor of light reflection type is substituted by a sensor of light transmission type.

As described above, according to the first, second and third embodiments of the present invention, a paper is detected to be present or absent regardless of what type of paper is used in the recording apparatus; namely, besides conventional white papers, high tone color papers, dark papers, and transparent OHP paper can be used.

Although in the first and second embodiments, the reference value storage means stored the reference values to be compared with the output values from the first and second sensors, it is also possible to cause reference values of constant voltages to be provided by

an electric circuit.

Although three embodiments of the invention have been illustrated in the accompanying drawings and described in the foregoing "Description of the Embodiments", it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiment disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions without departing from the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A sheet detection apparatus including at least two radiation sources for outputting light, respective sensors associated with the sources to receive light originating from the sources, in a manner depending on whether a sheet is present and if so on its nature and determination means for determining whether one, and which, of various types of sheet is present by comparing output values from the sensors with reference values.

2. Apparatus according to claim 1 including at least two reflection members provided opposite said sensor means, respectively, for reflecting the light from said radiation means; depending on the presence or absence and nature of an intervening sheet.

3. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 2 wherein said reflection members are so arranged that they are capable of reflecting the light to said sensor means over a range of movement of a carriage.

4. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 3 wherein said sensor means are provided on said carriage means, and said determination means can determine the positions of left and right ends of a sheet by comparing said output values with predetermined reference values.

5. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 2, 3 or 4 wherein said reflection members comprise a

first reflection member and a second reflection member, and the reflection surface of said first reflection member has a higher reflection factor than that of the surface of a first predetermined sheet, and the reflection surface of said second reflection member has a lower reflection factor than that of the surface of a second predetermined sheet.

6. A sheet detecting apparatus according to claim 5 wherein said first predetermined sheet is a white sheet, and said second predetermined sheet is a transparent sheet.

7. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 5 to 6 wherein a first predetermined reference value associated with a first sensor is set in the range between an output value at which said first sensor detects said first reflection member and that at which it detects said first predetermined sheet; and

a second predetermined reference value associated with a second sensor is set in the range between an output value at which said second sensor detects said second reflection member and that at which it detects said second predetermined sheet.

8. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 7 wherein a sheet is determined to be absent when said first output value is higher than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is lower than said second predetermined reference value;

said sheet is determined to be a white sheet when said first output value is lower than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is higher than said second predetermined reference value; and

said sheet is determined to be a dark sheet when said first output value is lower than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is lower than said second predetermined reference value.

9. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 7 or 8 wherein a sheet is determined to be absent when said first output value is higher than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is lower than said second predetermined reference value; and

said sheet is determined to be a transparent sheet when said first output value is higher than said first predetermined refrence value and said second output value is higher than said second predetermined reference value.

10. Apparatus according to claim 1 including a reflection member provided opposite a first one of said sensor means, said reflection member reflecting the light to one said sensor means.

11. A sheet detecting apparatus according to claim 10 wherein a reflection surface of said reflection

member has a lower reflection factor than that of a surface of a predetermined sheet.

12. A sheet detecting apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said predetermined sheet is a transparent sheet.

13. Apparatus according to calim 10, 11 or 12 wherein a second sensor is positioned to receive light direct from the associated source in the absence of an intervening sheet.

14. A sheet detecting apparatus according to claim 10, 11, 12 or 13 wherein a first predetermined reference value associated with the first sensor is set in the range between an output value at which said first sensor detects said reflection member and that at which it detects a first predetermined sheet, said second sensor detects said predetermined sheet; and a second predetermined reference value is set in the range between an output value at which said second sensor detects a non-transparent type sheet and that at which it detects no sheet.

15. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 14 wherein said sheet is determined to be absent when said first output value is lower than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is higher than said second predetermined reference value;

said sheet is determined to be a white sheet when said first output value is higher than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is lower than said second predetermined reference value; and

said sheet is determined to be a dark sheet when said first output value is lower than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is lower than said second predetermined reference value.

16. The sheet detection apparatus according to claim 14 or 15 wherein said sheet is determined to be absent when said first output value is lower than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is higher than said second predetermined reference value; and

said sheet is determined to be a transparent sheet when said first output value is higher than said first predetermined reference value and said second output value is higher than said second predetermined reference value.

17. A sheet detection apparatus including:

light radiation means for outputting light;

sensor means provided on a position opposite a sheet feed path for receiving the light from said light radiation means by way of a sheet;

a reflection member provided opposite said sensor means, said reflection member being alternately formed with portions of high and low reflection factors;

carriage means for moving said sensor means transversely on said sheet, so that

the reflected light is in an alternately changing state of high and low level inputted to said sensor means, during carriage movement in non sheet loaded state; and

determination means for determining which one of various types of sheet is in existence in accordance with said light inputted to said sensor means in the presence of a sheet.

18. A sheet detecting apparatus according to claim 17 wherein said sensor means comprises a sensor of light reflection type, and in use said sheet is determined to be absent when said carriage means is moved and the input state of said sensor is in said alternately changing state; and a

non-transparent sheet is determined to be present when said carriage means is moved and the input state of said sensor is in a constant state where reflected light of a constant level is continuously present.

19. The sheet detection apparatus according to claim 18 wherein in use it is determined that a position opposite to said sensor is an end of said non-transparent sheet when said carriage means is moved and the input state

of said sensor is switched between said alternately changing state and said constant state.

20. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 17, 18 or 19 wherein in use it is determined that a transparent sheet is present when said carriage is moved and the reflected light is in a second alternately changing state having a second high level lower than high level and a second low level higher than said low level.

21. A sheet detection apparatus according to claim 20 wherein it is determined that a position opposite to said sensor is an end of said non-transparent sheet when said carriage means is traveled and the input state sensor is switched between said alternately changing state and said second alternately changing state involving said second low and high levels.

22. A sheet detection apparatus according to any one of claims 17 to 21 including two radiation sources and sensors.

23. A sheet detection apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 16 and also including the features of any one of claims 17 to 21.

24. A sheet detection apparatus substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in Figures 2 to 13 of the accompanying drawings.

25. A printer or copier including apparatus according to any preceding claim.

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