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WO 2003/040697 A1 WO 2000/062035 A1

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INT CL<sup>7</sup> B01L, G01N  
Other: WPI, EPODOC, PAJ

(54) Abstract Title: **System and method for unequivocal association of histological cassettes and specimen slides**

(57) A system (100) for unequivocal association of histological cassettes and specimen slides comprises a microtome (1) and at least one reading unit (80). Data on the cassette and data on at least one specimen slide are read by means of the reading unit (80). The reading unit (80) includes at least one indicating element (83) which issues a signal in accordance with the degree of correspondence between the data on the cassette and the data on the slide. The reading unit (80) may be a scanner and the data on the cassette and slide may be barcodes and/or readable characters. The indicating signal may be an optical and/or an acoustic signal.

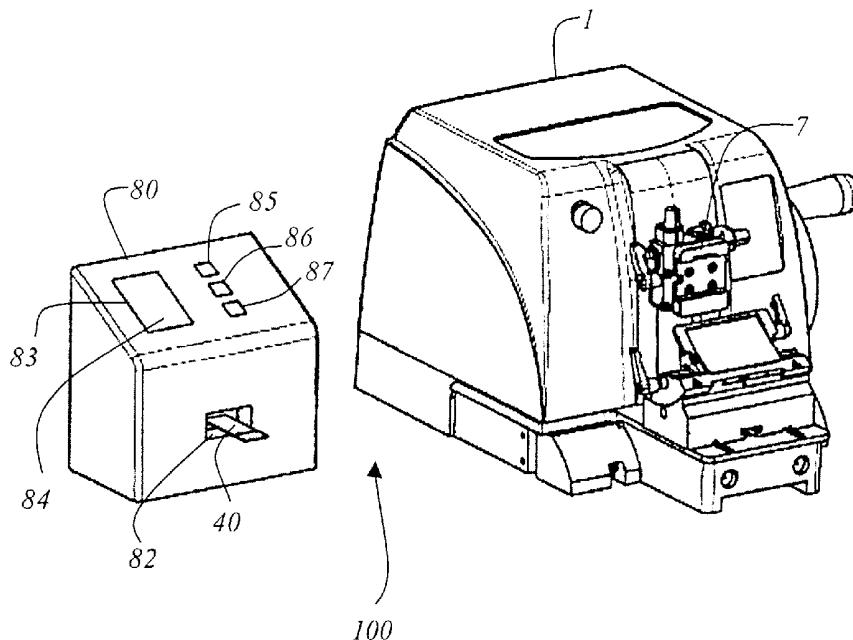


Fig. 2

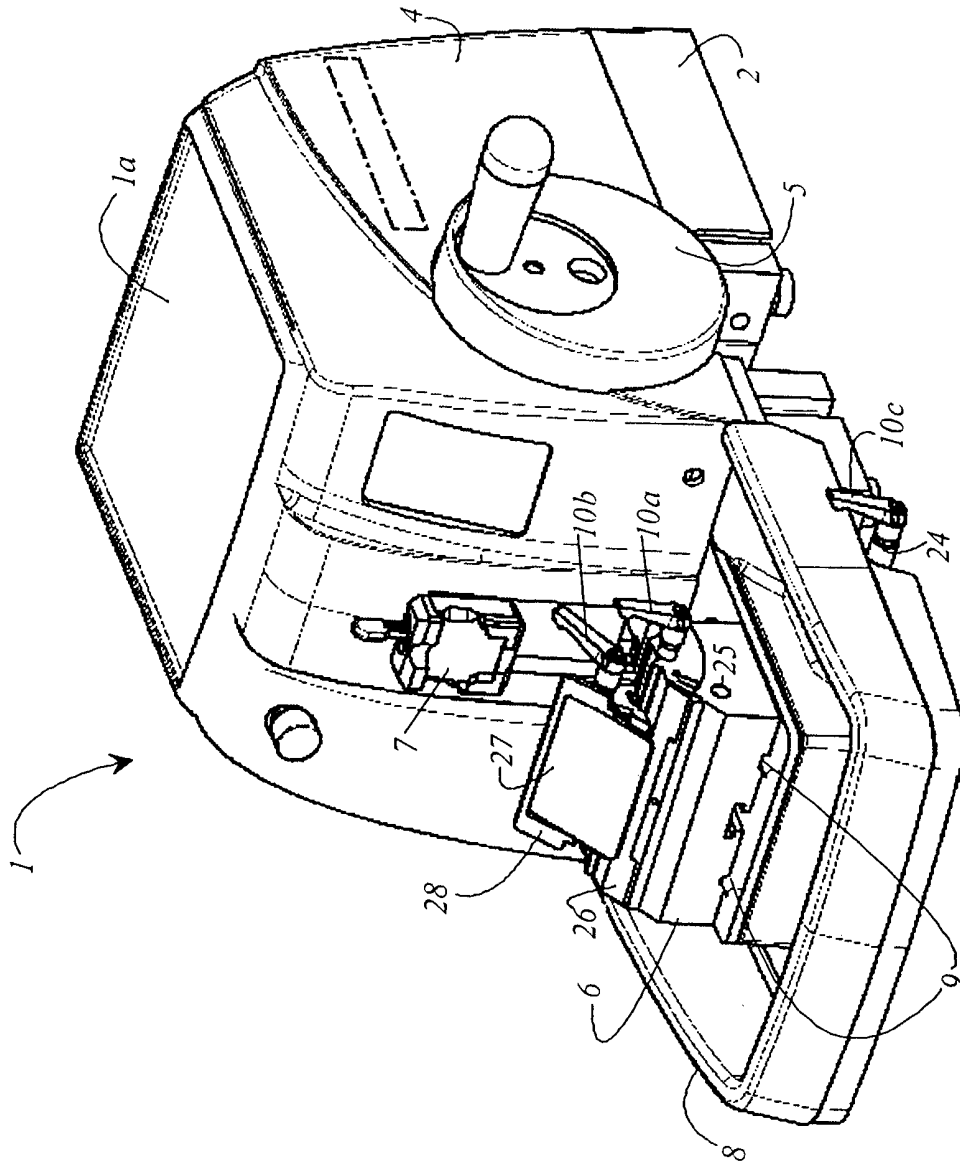


Fig. 1

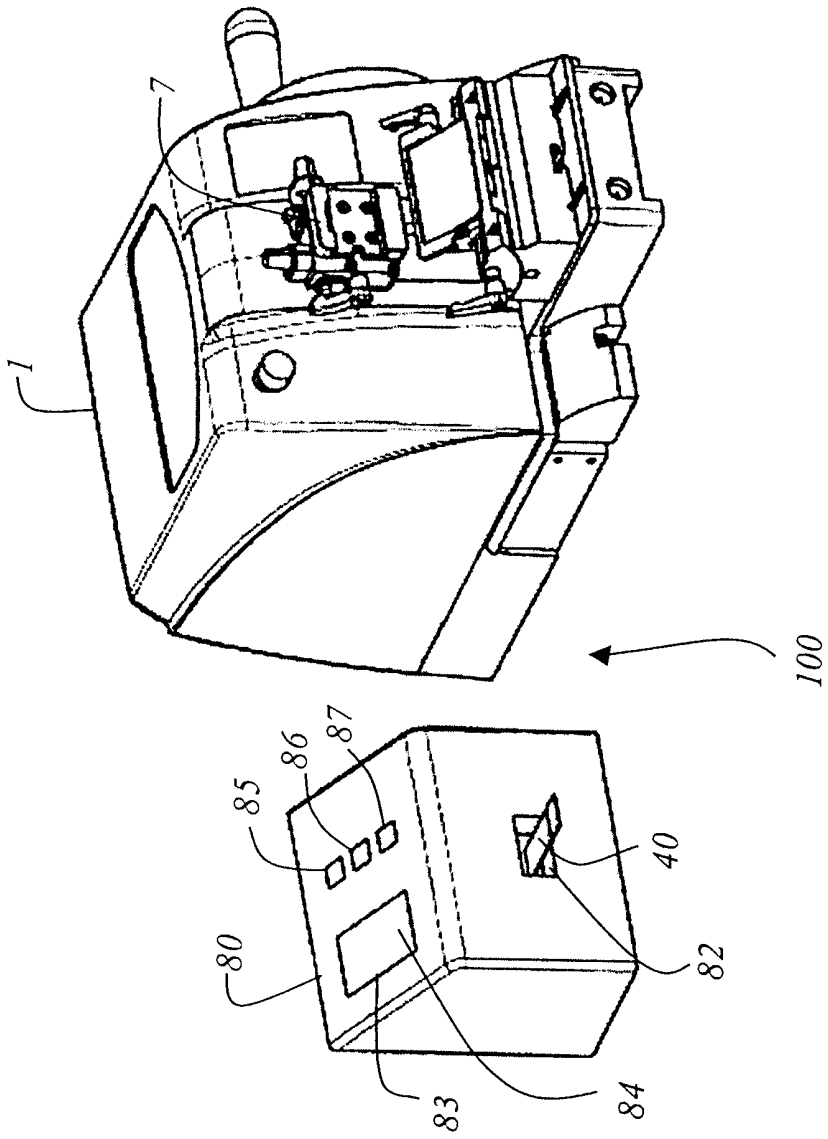


Fig. 2

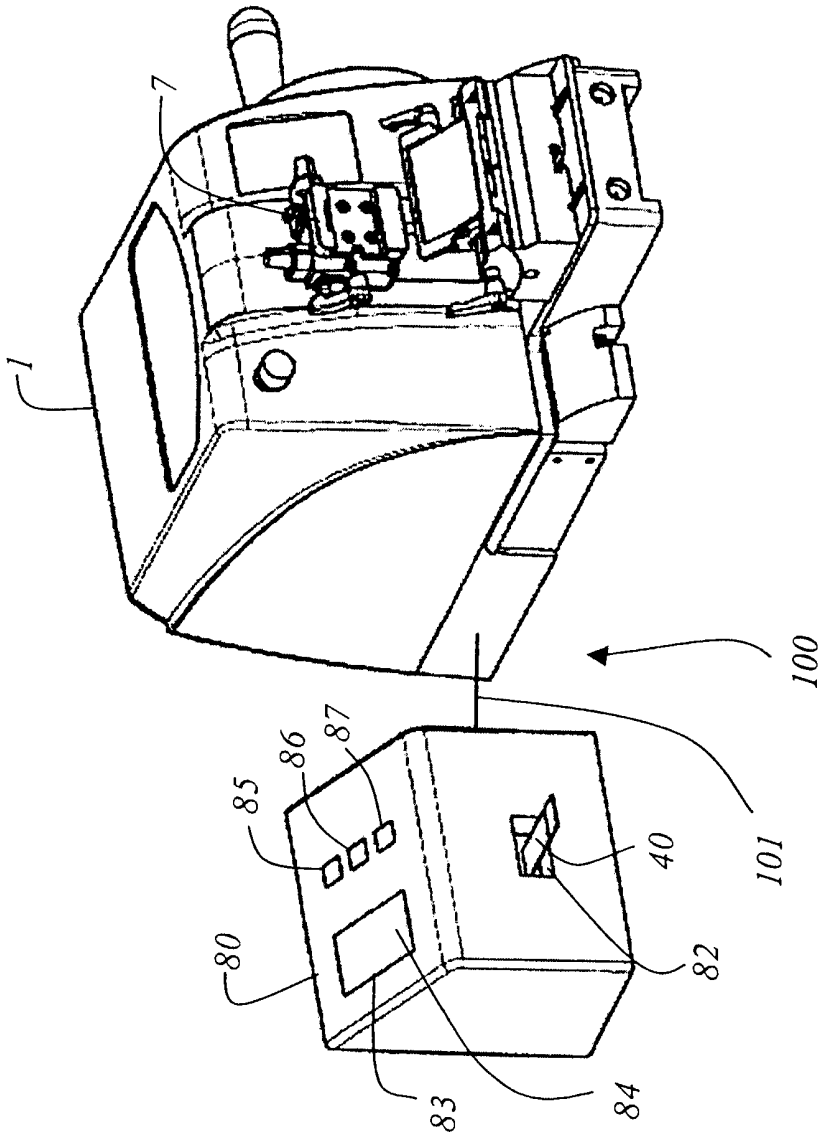
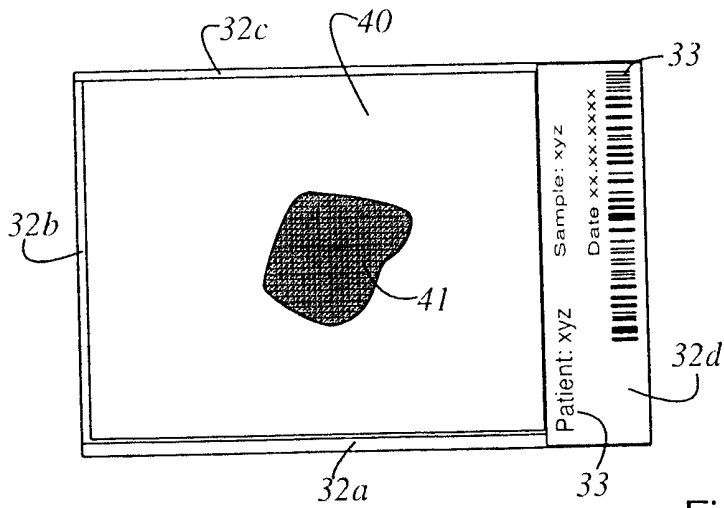
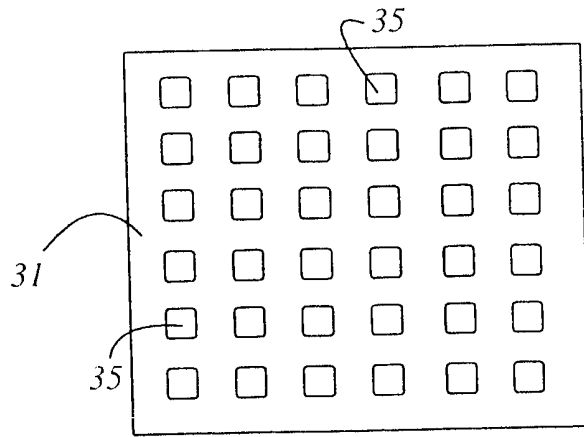
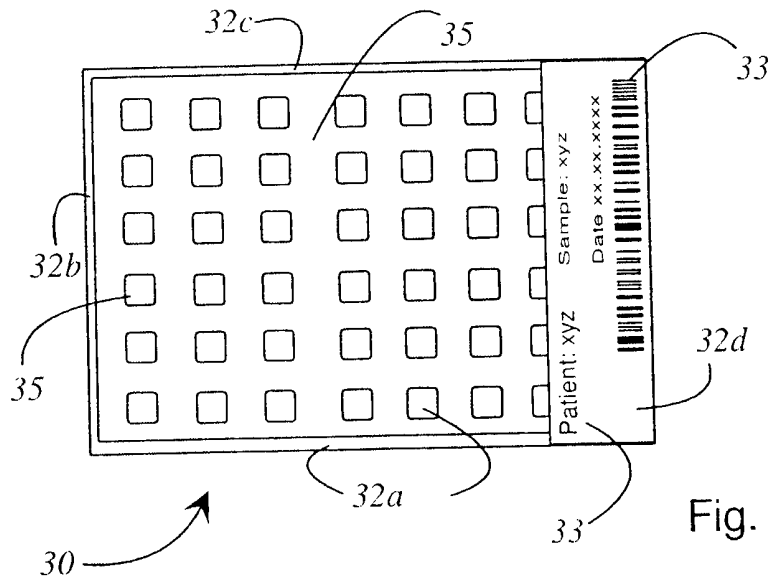


Fig. 3

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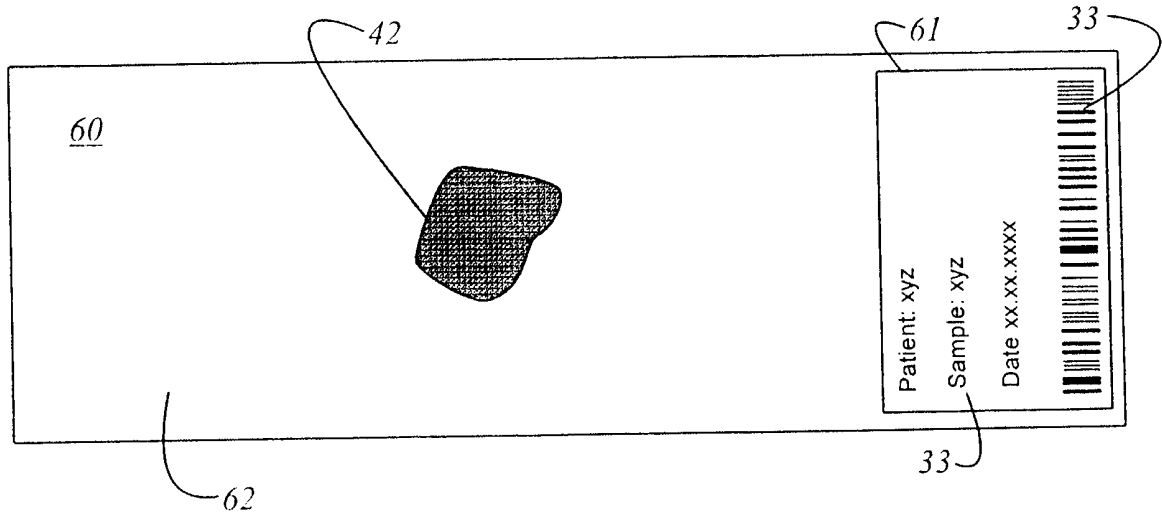


Fig. 6

## SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR UNEQUIVOCAL ASSOCIATION OF HISTOLOGICAL CASSETTES AND SPECIMEN SLIDES

The invention concerns a system and method for unequivocal association of histological cassettes and specimen slides.

German Unexamined Application DE 101 54 843 discloses a method and an apparatus for labeling specimen slides for microtomed tissue samples. The data applied onto the histological cassettes are sensed upon insertion into the microtome. Associated with the microtome is a printer to which the data read in the microtome are transferred. Only those specimen slides that correspond to the tissue sample clamped in the microtome are then printed.

It is the object of the invention to create a system that enables dependable and unmistakable allocation of thin sections to preprinted specimen slides

The aforesaid object is achieved by way of a system for the unequivocal allocation of histological cassettes and specimen slides, the system encompassing a microtome, wherein at least one reading unit that reads data of the histological cassette and data of the at least one specimen slide is associated with the microtome; and the reading unit is provided with at least one indicating element that outputs a signal in accordance with the degree of correspondence between the data of the histological cassette and the data on the specimen slide.

A further object of the invention to create a method that enables dependable, unmistakable allocation of thin sections to preprinted specimen slides

The aforesaid object is achieved by way of a method for the unequivocal allocation of histological cassettes and specimen slides, characterized by the following steps:

- reading data using at least one reading unit, the data being allocated to the histological cassette and the specimen slides;

- comparing the data read from the histological cassette with the data read from the specimen slides; and
- outputting, by means of an indicating element, a signal that indicates the degree of correspondence between the data of the histological cassette and the data on the specimen slide.

The advantage of the present invention is that the system is suitable for the unequivocal allocation of histological cassettes and specimen slides. The system encompasses a microtome and at least one reading unit that reads the data of the histological cassette and data of the at least one specimen slide, and that the reading unit is provided with at least one indicating element that outputs a signal in accordance with the degree of correspondence between the data of the histological cassette and the data on the specimen slide.

The data are applied onto the histological cassette and the specimen slides in an extra printer. As a rule, for each histological cassette one to five specimen slides are printed with the same data as the histological cassette.

Data on the specimen slide and on the histological cassette can be applied in any form. The forms can also be mixed with one another. It is thus possible to apply only a barcode, only readable written characters, or a mixture of barcode and readable written characters onto the specimen slide or the histological cassette.

An additional advantage exists when a data connection is provided between the microtome and the reading unit. Operation of the microtome is then, furthermore, blocked in the event of lack of correspondence between the data on the histological cassette and the specimen slide.

Further advantageous embodiments of the invention are evident from the dependent claims.

The subject matter of the invention is depicted schematically in the drawings and will be described below with reference to the Figures, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the rotary microtome having a reading unit arranged on the microtome housing;



FIG. 2 schematically depicts a first embodiment of the system of microtome and reading unit;

FIG. 3 schematically depicts a second embodiment of the system of microtome and reading unit;

FIG. 4a is a view of a histological cassette with the data printed thereonto;

FIG. 4b is a view of a cover with which the histological cassette is closed off for embedding of the sample in paraffin wax;

FIG. 5 is a view of a histological cassette in which a sample is embedded in paraffin wax; and

FIG. 6 is a view of a specimen slide with the data printed thereonto.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of rotary microtome 1. Rotary microtome 1 comprises substantially a base part 2 and a microtome housing 4 provided on the base part. A knife holder 6 is placed on base part 2. Provided opposite knife holder 6 on microtome housing 4 is a sample holder 7 that can be moved up and down by means of a handwheel 5 provided on microtome housing 4.

Histological cassettes 30 (see FIG. 3) can be clamped in sample holder 7. Cover 31 is removed from histological cassettes 30 so that a sample 41 embedded in paraffin wax 40 can be cut by means of the microtome. Knife holder 6 and sample holder 7 are arranged opposite one another. Provided on base part 2 are two rail elements 9 on which knife holder 6 can be adjusted in terms of its distance with respect to sample holder 7. Knife holder 6 is surrounded by a pan 8. Pan 8 is U-shaped and adjoins microtome housing 4 and base part 2 without a step. Arranged on knife holder 6 is a knife support element 26 that can be immobilized by means of a hex socket screw 25. Knife holder 6 has a convexly curved plane that coacts with a concavely curved plane on the knife support element. Knife holder 6 can be moved freely on the convexly curved plane of the knife support element, and every angular position is clamped in place with hex socket screw 25. This likewise makes possible free angular adjustment of a knife 27 provided on knife support element 26. A knife carriage 28 is provided on knife support element 26, a first clamping lever 10a mounted on knife support element 26 serving to clamp and immobilize knife carriage 28. A second clamping

lever 10b that serves to clamp the knife is provided on knife carriage 28. A third clamping lever 10c is provided on a side wall of pan 8, and coacts via a mechanical coupling 24 with knife holder 6. By means of third clamping lever 10c, knife holder 6 is clamped with respect to base part 2.

FIG. 2 shows system 100 according to the present invention that is made up of microtome 1 and at least one reading unit 80. In this exemplary embodiment, reading unit 80 is separate from microtome 1. It is also conceivable for reading unit 80 to be mounted directly on microtome 1. In addition, a reading unit 80 could be integrated into sample holder 7. This reading unit would read exclusively the data that are printed onto histological cassette 30. A further reading unit 81 would be provided that reads exclusively data that are printed onto the specimen slide.

Reading unit 80 can be connected to microtome 1 via a data connection 101 (see FIG. 3). Data connection 101 can be created by way of a conventional electrical conductor or a wireless connection.

Data 33 present on histological cassette 30 are read first at reading unit 80. Next to be read at the reading unit are data 33 of specimen slide 60, onto which thin sections 42, produced from samples 41 embedded in paraffin wax 40, are to be placed. As depicted in FIG. 2 and FIG. 3, reading unit 80 encompasses an opening 82 or a window in or on which are positioned data 33 to be read on specimen slide 60 or histological cassette 30. Reading unit 80 encompasses at least one indicating element 83 that is embodied as display 84 in the exemplary embodiment depicted here, or as colored light sources 85, 86, 87. On display 84, a text message can be outputted to the user if the data on histological cassette 30 and on one of the several specimen slides 40 do not correspond. A notification can likewise be outputted to the user if a visual comparison by him of the data on specimen slide 40 and/or histological cassette 30 is additionally necessary. The notification or signal of reading unit 80 can be acoustic and/or optical. Only those specimen slides 40 that exhibit a correspondence between the data on histological cassette 30 and on specimen slide 40 must be conveyed to microtome 1.

When colored light sources 85, 86, 87 are used as the indication for the user, a green light signal then, for example, indicates a correspondence between the data on histological cassette 30 and on specimen slide 4. With a red light signal, there is a lack of correspondence between the data on histological cassette 30 and on specimen slide 4. A

yellow light signal indicates to the user that a visual comparison of the data on specimen slide 40 and/or histological cassettes 30 is necessary.

If, as depicted in FIG. 3, microtome 100 is connected to reading unit 80 via a data connection, the cutting process with the microtome can be stopped, for example, in the absence of a correspondence between the data on histological cassette 30 and on specimen slide 4. The cutting process is not continued until a correspondence exists between the data on histological cassette 30 and on specimen slide 4.

FIG. 4a is a view of a histological cassette 30 with data 33 printed thereon. Histological cassette 30 has a bottom 34 and a first, second, third, and fourth side wall 32a, 32b, 32c, and 32d. First, second, and third side walls 32a, 32b, and 32c are perpendicular to bottom 34. Fourth side wall 32a is inclined at an acute angle with respect to bottom 34. Bottom 34 possesses a plurality of openings 35 so that upon embedding of sample 41, the latter also has sufficient paraffin wax 40 flowing around it.

FIG. 4b is a view of a cover 31 with which histological cassette 30 is closed off for the embedding of sample 41 in paraffin wax 40. The cover likewise encompasses openings 38 to ensure that paraffin wax 40 passes through. In addition, cover 31 prevents sample 41 from falling out during the embedding operation.

FIG. 5 is a view of a histological cassette 30 in which sample 41 is embedded in paraffin wax 40. The cover is removed after paraffin wax 40 has solidified. The block of paraffin wax 40 and sample 41 embedded therein is located in pan 36 constituted by bottom 34 and the four side walls 32a, 32b, 32c, and 32d. Before sample 41 can be cut using microtome 1, the block of paraffin wax 40 is removed from the pan and mounted on the side of the bottom of the histological cassette that is located opposite the opening of pan 36. Histological cassette 30 is then clamped into sample holder 7 of microtome 1.

FIG. 6 is a view of a specimen slide 60 with data 33 printed thereon. A field 61 is provided on specimen slide 60 for data 33. At least one thin section 42 of sample 41 is applied onto a transparent part 62 of the specimen slide.

The invention has been described with regard to the preferred exemplary embodiments. It is self-evident to one skilled in the art that changes and modifications can be made without leaving the range of protection of the claims below.

CLAIMS

1. A system for unequivocal association of histological cassettes and specimen slides, the system comprising a microtome and at least one reading unit which is associated with the microtome and operable to read data on a histological cassette and data on at least one specimen slide, the reading unit being provided with at least one indicating element which issues a signal in accordance with the degree of correspondence of the data on the cassette and the data on the slide.
2. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide have the form of barcodes.
3. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide have the form of barcodes and in part readable characters.
4. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide are applied in the form of readable characters.
5. A system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the reading unit is a scanner.
6. A system as claimed in claim 5, wherein the scanner is a barcode scanner.
7. A system as claimed in claim 5, wherein the scanner incorporates a barcode recognition system and a character recognition system.
8. A system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the reading unit has an opening or a window at which the data on the cassette or the slide can be detected.
9. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein a data connection is provided between the microtome and the reading unit.
10. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the indicating element comprises a display and the signal is information regarding the correspondence between the data on the cassette and the data on the slide.

11. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the indicating element comprises a first light source emitting green light, a second light source emitting yellow light and a third light source emitting red light.
12. A method for unequivocal association of histological cassettes and specimen slides, comprising the steps of reading data by way of at least one reading unit, the data being associated with a histological cassette and at least one specimen slide, comparing the data read from the cassette with the data read from the slide and issuing, by means of an indicating element, a signal indicating the degree of correspondence between the data on the cassette and the data on the slide.
13. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide are printed data.
14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide have the form of barcodes.
15. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide have the form of barcodes and in part readable characters.
16. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein the data on the cassette and the slide are applied in the form of readable characters.
17. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the reading unit is a scanner and the step of reading comprises presenting the data on the cassette or on the slide to the scanner.
18. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the indicating element comprises a display and the signal is information regarding the correspondence between the data on the cassette and the data on the slide.
19. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the indicating element comprises a first light source emitting green light, a second light source emitting yellow light and a third light source emitting red light.

20. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein a data connection is provided between the microtome and the reading unit.
21. A method as claimed in claim 20, comprising the step of blocking operation of the microtome in the event of lack of correspondence between the data on the cassette and the data on the slide.
22. A method as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 21, wherein the signal is an optical signal.
23. A method as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 21, wherein the signal is an acoustic signal.
24. A method as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 21, wherein the signal is an acoustic and optical signal.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Application No: GB0418872.8

Examiner: Dr Jonathan Corden

Claims searched: 1-24

Date of search: 7 January 2005

### Patents Act 1977: Search Report under Section 17

#### Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance
X	1-3, 5, 6, 9, 12-15, 17, 20	WO 00/62035 A1 (CULTERRA) see whole document especially Page 19 lines 9-19, page 21 lines 1-10 and page 26 line 5 to page 27 line 6
A	-	WO 03/040697 A1 (MICROM) see figures, whole document and also WPI Abstract Acc. No. 2003-449470

#### Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

#### Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC<sup>X</sup>:

G1B

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC<sup>07</sup>

B01L; G01N

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report

WPI, EPODOC, PAJ