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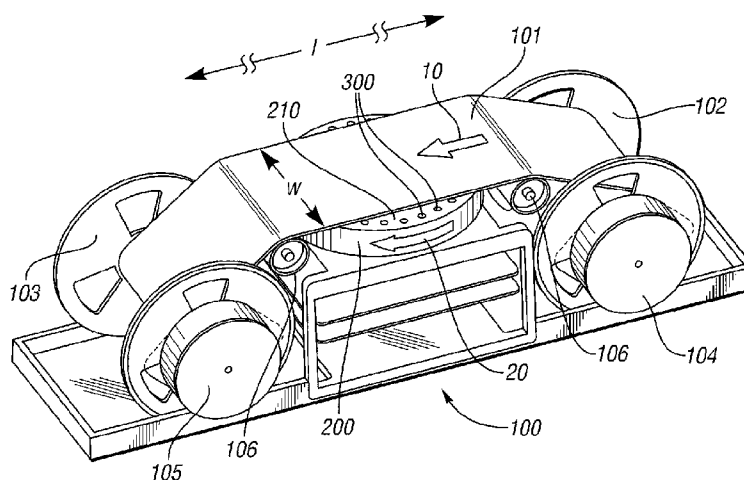
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(54) Title: ROTARY HEAD DATA STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM AND METHOD



(57) Abstract: A head carriage unit in a data storage and retrieval system and method has a substantially planar working surface and multiple heads disposed at the working surface. The head carriage unit is adapted for rotational motion about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface. A tape drive unit moves a tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit, the tape media having a width approximately equal to a width of the working surface of the head carriage unit. The multiple heads record multiple data tracks on or retrieve multiple data tracks from the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates while the tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit.

ROTARY HEAD DATA STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM AND METHOD

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The following relates to a system and method for data storage and retrieval utilizing a tape medium and a rotary head.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Typical tape data storage and retrieval methods involve recording or writing data in tracks running length-wise down the tape, as well as retrieving or reading such data tracks from the tape. A multiple stripe head is used to write and/or read many parallel tracks. Magnetic heads may have more than 96 tracks with the ability to jog along the width of a magnetic tape to write and/or read more tracks. Optical tape data storage and retrieval systems using laser heads operate in a similar fashion.

[0003] Magnetic and optical tape media are frequently used for long-term storage of large quantities of data, such as in data backup or archive operations. However, the multiple stripe head designs mentioned above become inefficient as tape length is increased for greater capacity, such as in archive operations, because of the increased time it takes to access the data stored at the end of the tape. While shorter tapes result in quicker access time than longer tapes, shorter tape lengths also result in more limited storage capacity, thereby hindering archive operations where large data quantities are involved.

[0004] A wide tape to boost capacity requires many more transducers in the head. Data throughput is also a factor of tape width and the number of heads. Limits to multiple stripe head designs include the number of read and write heads and overall tape width.

[0005] Thus, there exists a need for an improved tape media data storage system and method. Such a system and method would include a rotary head design that would put more tape surface area in contact with the heads.

SUMMARY

[0006] According to one embodiment disclosed herein, a data storage and retrieval system is provided. The system comprises a head carriage unit having a substantially planar working surface and a plurality of heads disposed at the working surface. The head carriage unit is adapted for rotational motion about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface.

[0007] The system also comprises a tape drive unit for moving a tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit. The tape media has a width approximately equal to a width of the working surface of the head carriage unit. The plurality of heads perform one of recording a plurality of data tracks on and retrieving a plurality of data tracks from the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates while the tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit.

[0008] In an embodiment of the system, the plurality of heads move along the width of the tape media in a direction substantially perpendicular to a length of the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates and the tape media moves laterally past the working surface of the head carriage unit in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the tape media. Each of the resultant plurality of data tracks recorded on the tape media has an arcuate shape. The tape media may be an optical tape, and the plurality of heads may be optical heads.

[0009] According to another embodiment disclosed herein, a data storage and retrieval method is provided. The method comprises rotating a head carriage unit having a substantially planar working surface about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface. The head carriage unit has a plurality of heads disposed at the working surface.

[0010] The method also comprises moving a tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit. The tape media has a width approximately equal to a width of the working surface of the head carriage unit. The method further comprises performing one of recording a plurality of data tracks on and retrieving a plurality of data tracks from the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates while the tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit.

[0011] In an embodiment of the method, the plurality of heads move along the width of the tape media in a direction substantially perpendicular to the length of the tape media as the head

carriage unit rotates and the tape media moves laterally past the working surface of the head carriage unit in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the tape media. Each of the resultant plurality of data tracks recorded on the tape media has an arcuate shape. Here again, the tape media may be an optical tape, and the plurality of heads may be optical heads.

[0012] A detailed description of these embodiments and accompanying drawings is set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein;

[0014] FIGURE 2a is a top view of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein;

[0015] FIGURE 2b is a side view of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein;

[0016] FIGURE 3 is a top view of a tape media path in an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein; and

[0017] FIGURE 4 is a simplified flowchart depicting an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval method disclosed herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] With reference to FIGURES 1-4, a data storage and retrieval system and method utilizing a tape media and a rotary head will be described. For ease of illustration and to facilitate understanding, like reference numerals have been used herein for similar components and features throughout the drawings.

[0019] As previously described, typical tape data storage and retrieval methods involve recording or writing data in tracks running length-wise down the tape, as well as retrieving or

reading such data tracks from the tape. A multiple stripe head is used in magnetic tape storage and retrieval systems to write and/or read many parallel tracks, with the head having the ability to jog along the width of the tape to write and/or read more tracks. Optical tape storage and retrieval systems using laser heads operate in a similar fashion.

[0020] Magnetic and optical tape media are frequently used for long-term storage of large quantities of data, such as in data backup or archive operations. However, multiple stripe head designs become inefficient as tape length is increased for greater capacity because of the increased time it takes to access the data stored at the end of the tape. Shorter tape lengths result in quicker access time than longer tape lengths, but also result in more limited data storage capacity.

[0021] A wide tape to boost capacity requires many more transducers in the head. Data throughput is also a factor of tape width and the number of heads. Limits to multiple stripe head designs include the number of heads and overall tape width.

[0022] An improved tape media data storage system and method would include a rotary head design that would put more tape surface area in contact with the heads. According to an embodiment disclosed herein, a wide tape media provides a much greater tape surface area for a head, and achieves both high data capacity and fast access times. A head may be swept substantially perpendicularly across the tape width while the tape is moved longitudinally past the moving head.

[0023] More particularly, multiple heads may be assembled to a rotating head mechanism to write and/or read multiple tracks in approximate arcs on the tape. The data storage system and method disclosed herein allow for a large tape surface in proximity to many high speed heads. Such a design results in improved performance in data rates and data capacity per inch of tape. The design facilitates shorter tapes for fast searches, or longer tapes for extremely large data banks.

[0024] Referring now to FIGURE 1, a perspective view of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein is shown. A tape drive system such as that shown in FIGURE 1 comprises tape driving components and a head assembly. In that regard, the embodiment depicted in FIGURE 1 can be described by detailing the main components in the two functional areas.

[0025] More specifically, the tape driving components in FIGURE 1 comprise a tape media (101), which may be an optical tape, and the supporting servo drive system (100). The tape media (101) may be supplied on a supply reel (102) and can be transferred to a take-up reel (103) by servo action of a supply reel drive motor (104) and take-up reel drive motor (105). The two motors (104, 105) may act in unison to provide smooth movement of the tape (101) along the tape path.

[0026] As can be seen in FIGURE 1, the tape media (101) has a width (w), as well as a length (l) stretching from respective ends of the tape (101), which ends are attached (not shown) to the supply and take-up reels (102, 103). The tape (101) travels in a direction shown by arrow (10) along a tape path. The tape path has a series of guide rollers (106), which help to provide control of the tape (101) as it is driven past a head assembly (200). A servo control system (not shown) may be used to provide closed loop motion control for the tape (101) and accurately control the tape tension and position with respect to the head assembly (200).

[0027] As also seen in FIGURE 1, the head assembly (200) may be substantially disc-shaped, including a substantially circular and substantially planar working surface (210) proximate the tape media (101). The head assembly (200) may include multiple heads (300) for recording and/or reading data tape media (101). In that regard, the head assembly (200) rotates during operation in a direction shown by arrow (20).

[0028] Referring next to FIGURES 2a and 2b, top and side views of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein are shown. In particular, the head assembly (200) is illustrated therein. The head assembly (200) may be built upon a head carriage unit (201). The carriage (201) may hold multiple Optical Pickup Unit (OPU) laser assemblies (300), which perform the actual writing/reading or recording/retrieval of data to/from an optical tape (101). While 30 OPU assemblies (300) are illustrated in FIGURE 2a, any number of OPUs (300) may be used. As well, OPUs (300) may be similar assemblies as those used in Blu-Ray disc drives.

[0029] As seen in FIGURE 2b, the OPU assemblies (300) may be located radially on the rotating head carriage (201) at a fixed radius in a substantially circular pattern. Such positioning of the OPU assemblies (300) can ensure that as the head assembly (200) rotates, the optical beams from each OPU (300) transcribe substantially equal radius arcs onto the tape media (101).

[0030] The rotatable head assembly (200) may be mounted underneath the tape media (101). A spindle shaft (203) may be provided for support of the rotatable head assembly (200). The head assembly (200) may be driven to rotate by a head drive motor (204). As shown in FIGURE 2b, the head drive motor (204) may be built into the head assembly (200). In that regard, passive rotor magnets (205) associated with the rotating head assembly (200) may be driven by commutation of stator coils (not shown) fixed in the tape drive base (108).

[0031] Still Referring to FIGURE 2b, a head assembly circuit board (208) may be provided to control the function of OPU assemblies (300), as well as data communication. Power may be supplied to the head circuitry (208) through an inductive coupling (207). Data signals to and from the OPU assemblies (300) may be sent through the inductive coupling (207). Motor control and further data signal processing may be performed by circuit boards (206), which may be located in the tape drive base (108).

[0032] Referring next to FIGURE 3, a top view of a tape media path is shown in an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval system disclosed herein. More particularly, the path of tape media (101) over the head assembly (200) is illustrated. The tape media (101) is depicted passing over the head assembly (200), from left to right, in the direction shown by arrow (10). The head assembly (200) also rotates in the clockwise direction, as illustrated by arrow (20).

[0033] The passage of optical beams from each OPU (300) (3 OPU assemblies (300) are shown in FIGURE 3) past the tape media (101) may transcribe data tracks of recorded spots in substantially similar approximate arcs (301) on the tape media (101). The arcs (301) are only approximate in radius in that the movement of the tape media (101) past the heads (300) will skew the data tracks recorded from true arcs to elongated arcs (300) in proportion to the speed of the rotating heads (300) and the speed of the moving tape (101).

[0034] A servo control method and system (not shown) may also be provided to control the speed of the tape media (101) in such a way that the rotating laser spots from OPU assemblies (300) will individually write data tracks (301) with spacing set apart from one another as a function of the velocities of the tape media (101) and the rotating head assembly (200). More specifically, still referring to FIGURE 3, angle α is the angle between two consecutive laser spots created by OPU

assemblies (300A, 300B) on the head assembly (200). The distance X is the distance that the tape media (101) must translate in order to provide a separation of the data tracks (301) corresponding to consecutive OPU assemblies (300A, 300B). If the system is placed in motion at a constant velocity, then the displacement of the tape media (101) in relation to the head assembly (200) can be determined by knowing the velocity of the rotating head assembly (200), the angle α between consecutive OPUs (300A, 300B) on the head assembly (200), and the desired separation of the tracks.

[0035] In that regard, the relative speeds between tape media (101) and head assembly (200) that may be achieved by the data storage system and method disclosed herein are quite large, and can emulate the recording speed of a Blu-Ray DVD, while the speed of the tape media (101) can be quite slow. For example, a 4 inch diameter head assembly (200) with 30 OPU assemblies (300) rotating at 10,000 rpm may use a tape media speed less than .125 inches/sec. As a result, by moving both the tape media (101) and the recording heads (300), the data storage system and method disclosed herein having a rotating head assembly (200) may provide for very high data rates and very large storage capacity.

[0036] Referring still to FIGURE 3, as previously described, head carriage unit (200) has a plurality of heads (300) disposed at the working surface (210). As also previously described, the head carriage unit (200) is adapted for rotational motion about an axis (p) oriented substantially normal to the working surface (210). As can also be seen, the tape media (101) has a width (w) approximately equal to a width of the working surface (210) of the head carriage unit (200) (which in the embodiment shown is the diameter of the substantially circular working surface (210)).

[0037] As can also be seen, the plurality of heads (300) move along the width (w) of the tape media (101) in a direction substantially perpendicular to the length (l) of the tape media (101) as the head carriage unit (200) rotates and the tape media (101) moves laterally past the working surface (210) of the head carriage unit (200) in a direction substantially parallel to the length (l) of the tape media (101). As previously described, each of the resultant plurality of data tracks (301) recorded on the tape media (101) has an arcuate shape.

[0038] Still referring to FIGURE 3, as also previously described, the plurality of heads (300) disposed at the working surface (201) may be arrayed radially along the substantially circular working surface (201) substantially in a circle having a diameter less than the diameter of the working surface (201). As well, the tape media (101) may have a width (w) that is substantially equal to the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads (300). Alternatively, the tape media (101) may have a width (w) that is less than the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads (300), or that is greater than the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads (300). In that regard, as an example only, the plurality of heads (300) may be located on the working surface (210) of the head carriage (200) substantially in a circle have a radius, r , and the tape media (101) may be provided with a width falling in the range of about $1.5r$ to $2r$.

[0039] Referring next to FIGURE 4, simplified flowchart of an embodiment of the data storage and retrieval method (400) disclosed herein is shown. As seen therein, the method (400) comprises rotating (402) a head carriage unit having a substantially planar working surface about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface, the head carriage unit having a plurality of heads disposed at the working surface. The method further comprises moving (404) a tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit, the tape media having a length and a width, the tape media width approximately equal to a width of the working surface of the head carriage unit. The method still further comprises performing (406) one of recording a plurality of data tracks on and retrieving a plurality of data tracks from the tape media by the plurality of heads as the head carriage unit rotates while the tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit.

[0040] Once again, as described previously in connection with FIGURES 1-3, according to an embodiment of the data storage method disclosed herein, the plurality of heads may move along the width of the tape media in a direction substantially perpendicular to the length of the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates and the tape media moves laterally past the working surface of the head carriage unit in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the tape media. As a result, each of the plurality of data tracks recorded on the tape media may have an arcuate shape.

[0041] As also described above in connection with FIGURES 1-3, according to the data storage method disclosed herein, the head carriage unit may be substantially disc shaped, the working surface may be substantially circular, and the tape media width may be approximately equal

to a diameter of the substantially circular working surface. As well, the tape media may be an optical tape, and the plurality of heads disposed at the working surface may comprise a plurality of optical heads. The plurality of heads may also be arrayed radially along the substantially circular working surface, and may be arrayed substantially in a circle having a diameter less than the diameter of the working surface. Still further, the tape media width may be substantially equal to the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads, less than the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads, or greater than the diameter of the circle of the plurality of heads.

[0042] Still referring to FIGURE 4, according to an embodiment of the data storage method disclosed herein, and as previously described in connection with FIGURES 1-3, each of the plurality of heads may be arrayed in the circle at an equidistant angle, α , from immediately adjacent heads. The method may still further comprise controlling the rotational speed of the head carriage unit, the lateral speed of the tape media, and the angle, α , between each of the plurality of heads to achieve a desired distance between each of the plurality of data tracks recorded on the tape media. It should be noted that the operations of the method (400) described herein may be performed in the sequence described, or in any other sequence or combination as appropriate or desired.

[0043] As is apparent from the foregoing description, an improved tape media data storage and retrieval system and method having a rotary head design is provided. A wide tape media provides a much greater tape surface area for a head, and achieves both high data capacity and fast access times. In a disclosed embodiment, a head may be swept substantially perpendicularly across the tape width while the tape is moved longitudinally past the moving head. Multiple heads may be assembled to a rotating head mechanism to write and/or read multiple tracks oriented in arcs on the tape. The data storage system and method disclosed allow for a large tape surface in proximity to many high speed heads, resulting in improved performance in data rates and data capacity per inch of tape. The design facilitates shorter tapes for fast searches, or longer tapes for extremely large data banks.

[0044] While certain embodiments of a data storage and retrieval system and method utilizing a tape media and a rotary head have been illustrated and described herein, they are exemplary only and it is not intended that these embodiments illustrate and describe all those

possible. Rather, the words used herein are words of description rather than limitation, and it is understood that various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A data storage and retrieval system comprising:

a head carriage unit having a working surface and a plurality of optical heads disposed at the working surface, the head carriage unit adapted for rotational motion about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface, wherein each of said plurality of optical heads comprises an optical pickup unit laser assembly, and wherein the head carriage unit is substantially disc shaped and the working surface is substantially circular; and

a tape drive unit for moving a tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit, the tape media having a width approximately equal to the width of the working surface of the head carriage unit, wherein the plurality of optical heads are arrayed in a circle having a diameter $2r$ which is less than the diameter of the working surface, and wherein the optical tape media has a width in the range $1.5r$ to $2r$;

wherein the plurality of optical heads are configured to perform one of recording a plurality of data tracks on and retrieving a plurality of data tracks from the tape media as the head carriage unit rotates while the tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the plurality of optical heads are configured to move along the width of the optical tape media in a direction substantially perpendicular to the length of the optical tape media as the head carriage unit rotates and the optical tape media moves laterally past the working surface of the head carriage unit in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the optical tape media so that each of the plurality of data tracks recorded on the optical tape media has an arcuate shape.

3. The system of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein each of the plurality of optical heads is arrayed in the circle at an equidistant angle, α , from the immediately adjacent optical heads, and a desired distance between each of the plurality of recorded data tracks is achieved by control of the rotational speed of the head carriage unit, the lateral speed of the tape media, and the angle, α , between each of the plurality of optical heads.

4. The system of any preceding claim, wherein the working surface is substantially planar.
5. The system of any preceding claim, wherein power is provided to circuitry in the head carriage unit via inductive coupling.
6. The system of claim 5, wherein data signals are sent to and from the optical pickup unit laser assemblies through the inductive coupling.
7. A method of operating a data storage and retrieval system comprising:
 - rotating a head carriage unit having a working surface and a plurality of optical heads disposed at the working surface about an axis oriented substantially normal to the working surface, wherein each of said plurality of optical heads comprises an optical pickup unit laser assembly, and wherein the head carriage unit is substantially disc shaped and the working surface is substantially circular;
 - moving an optical tape media past the working surface of the head carriage unit, wherein the plurality of optical heads are arrayed in a circle having a diameter $2r$ which is less than the diameter of the working surface, and wherein the optical tape media has a width in the range $1.5r$ to $2r$; and
 - as the head carriage unit rotates while the optical tape media moves past the working surface of the head carriage unit, performing one of recording a plurality of data tracks on and retrieving a plurality of data tracks from the optical tape media by the plurality of optical heads disposed at the working surface of the head carriage unit.
8. The method of claim 7 further comprising moving the plurality of optical heads along the width of the optical tape media in a direction substantially perpendicular to the length of the optical tape media as the head carriage unit rotates and the optical tape media moves laterally past the working surface of the head carriage unit in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the optical tape media so that each of the plurality of data tracks recorded on the optical tape media has an arcuate shape.
9. The method of claim 7 or claim 8 wherein each of the plurality of optical heads is arrayed in the circle at an equidistant angle, α , from the immediately adjacent optical heads,

and a desired distance between each of the plurality of recorded data tracks is achieved by control of the rotational speed of the head carriage unit, the lateral speed of the tape media, and the angle, α , between each of the plurality of optical heads.

10. The method of any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the working surface is substantially planar.

11. The method of any one of claims 7 to 10, further comprising providing power to circuitry in the head carriage unit via inductive coupling.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein data signals are sent to and from the optical pickup unit laser assemblies through the inductive coupling.

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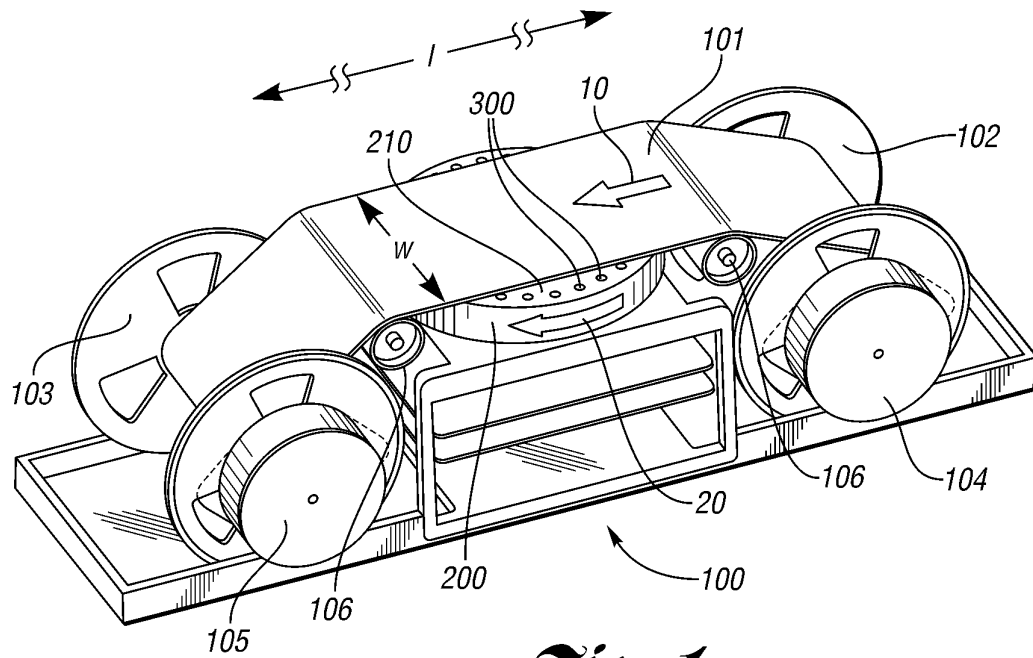


Fig. 1

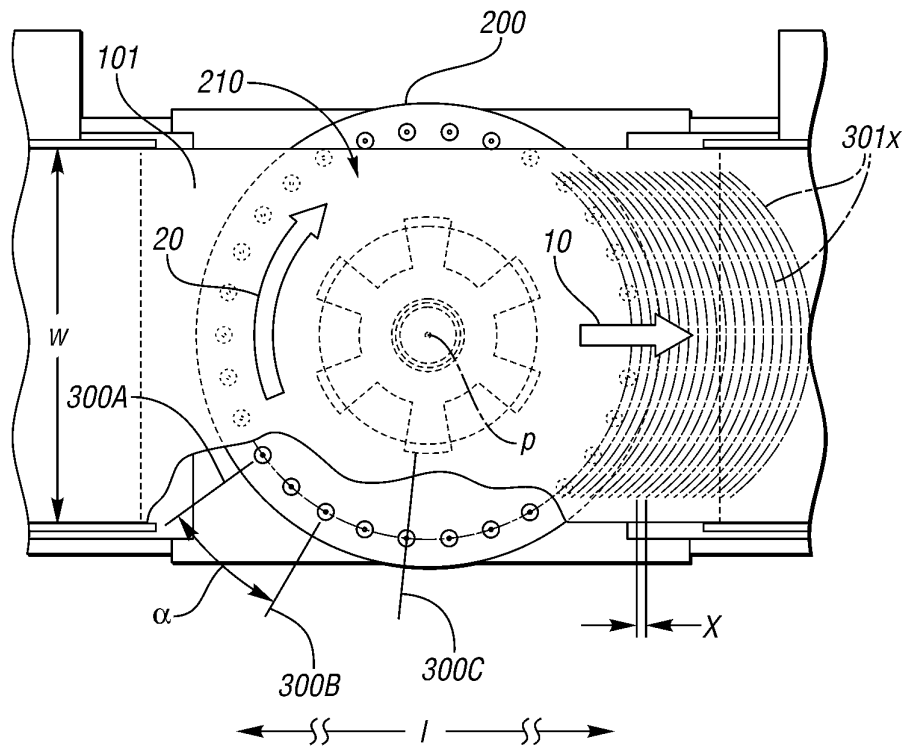


Fig. 3

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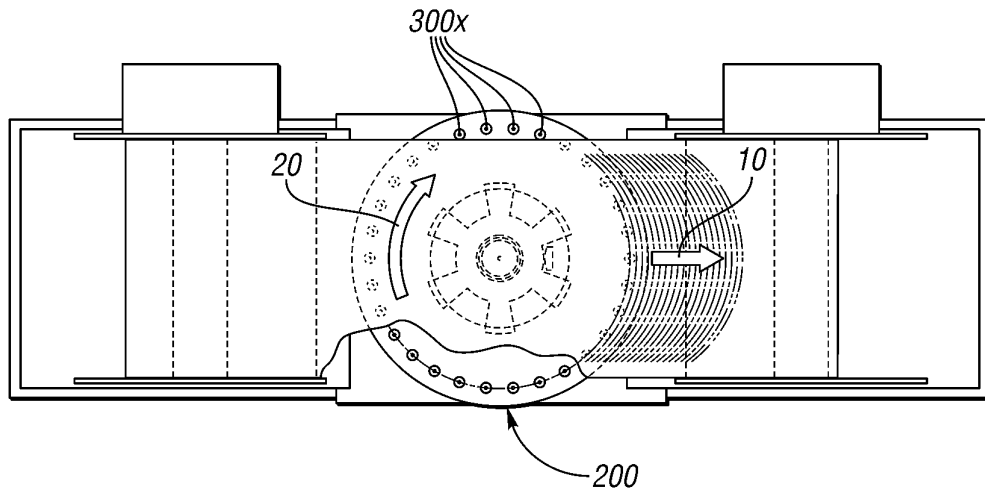


Fig. 2a

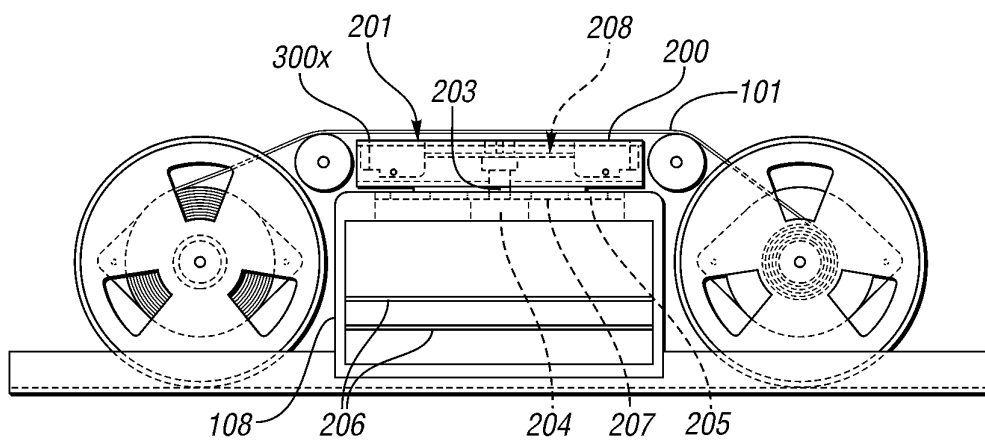
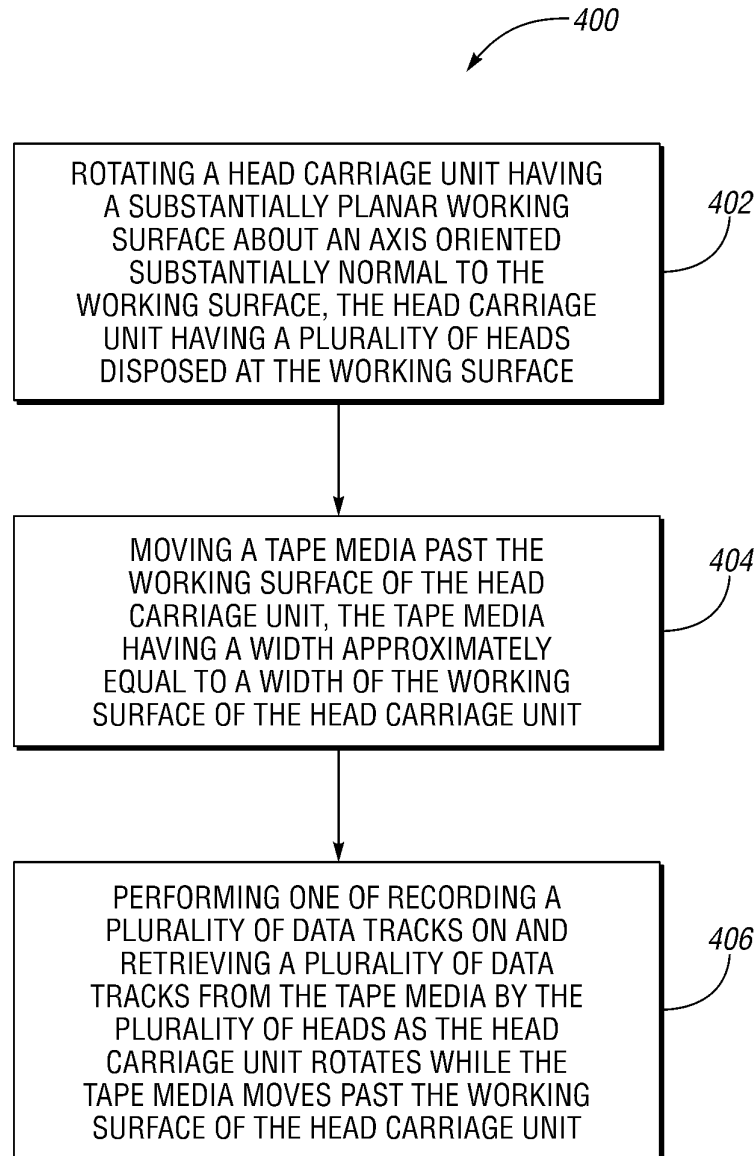


Fig. 2b

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*Fig. 4*