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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF ACTUATING MEMS DISPLAY ELEMENTS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

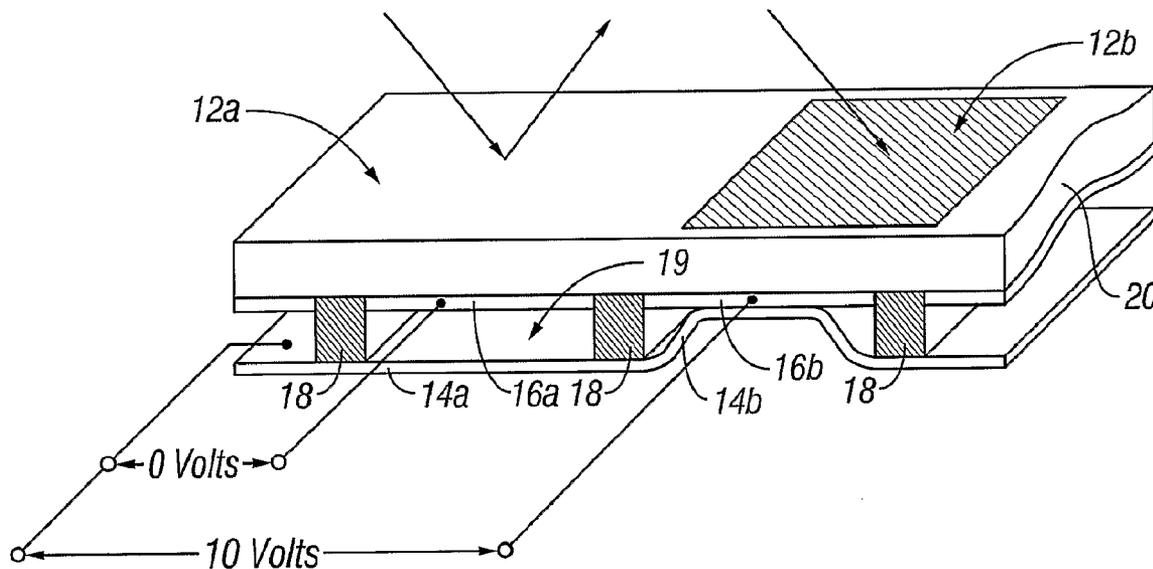
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(62) Division of application No. 11/159,073, filed on Feb. 25, 2005, now Pat. No. 7,560,299.

Methods of writing display data to MEMS display elements are configured to minimize charge buildup and differential aging. The methods may include writing data with opposite polarities, and periodically releasing and/or actuating MEMS elements during the display updating process. Actuating MEMS elements with potential differences higher than those used during normal display data writing may also be utilized.



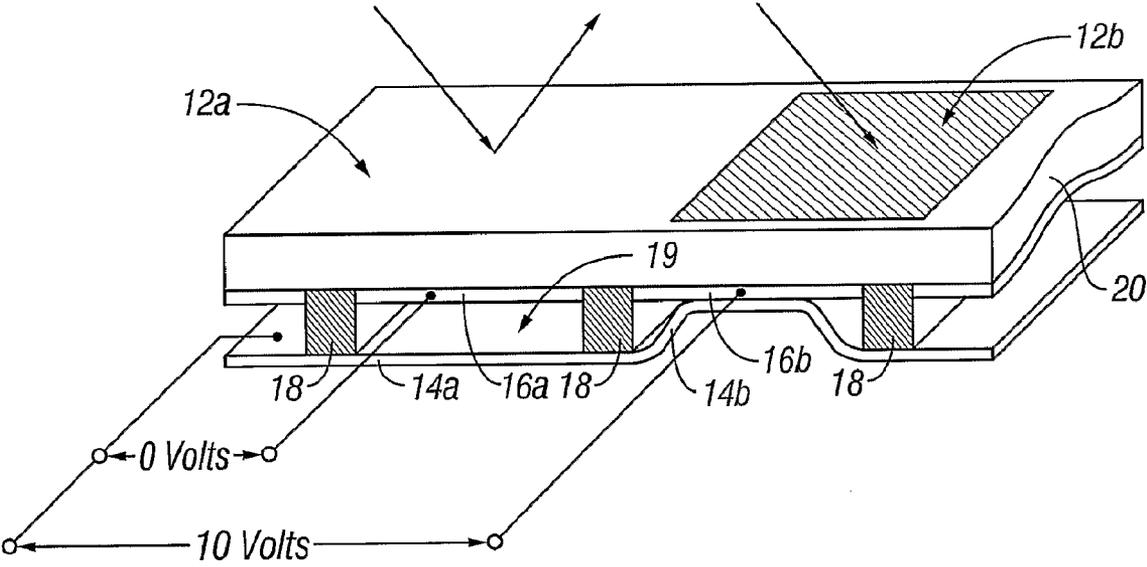


FIG. 1

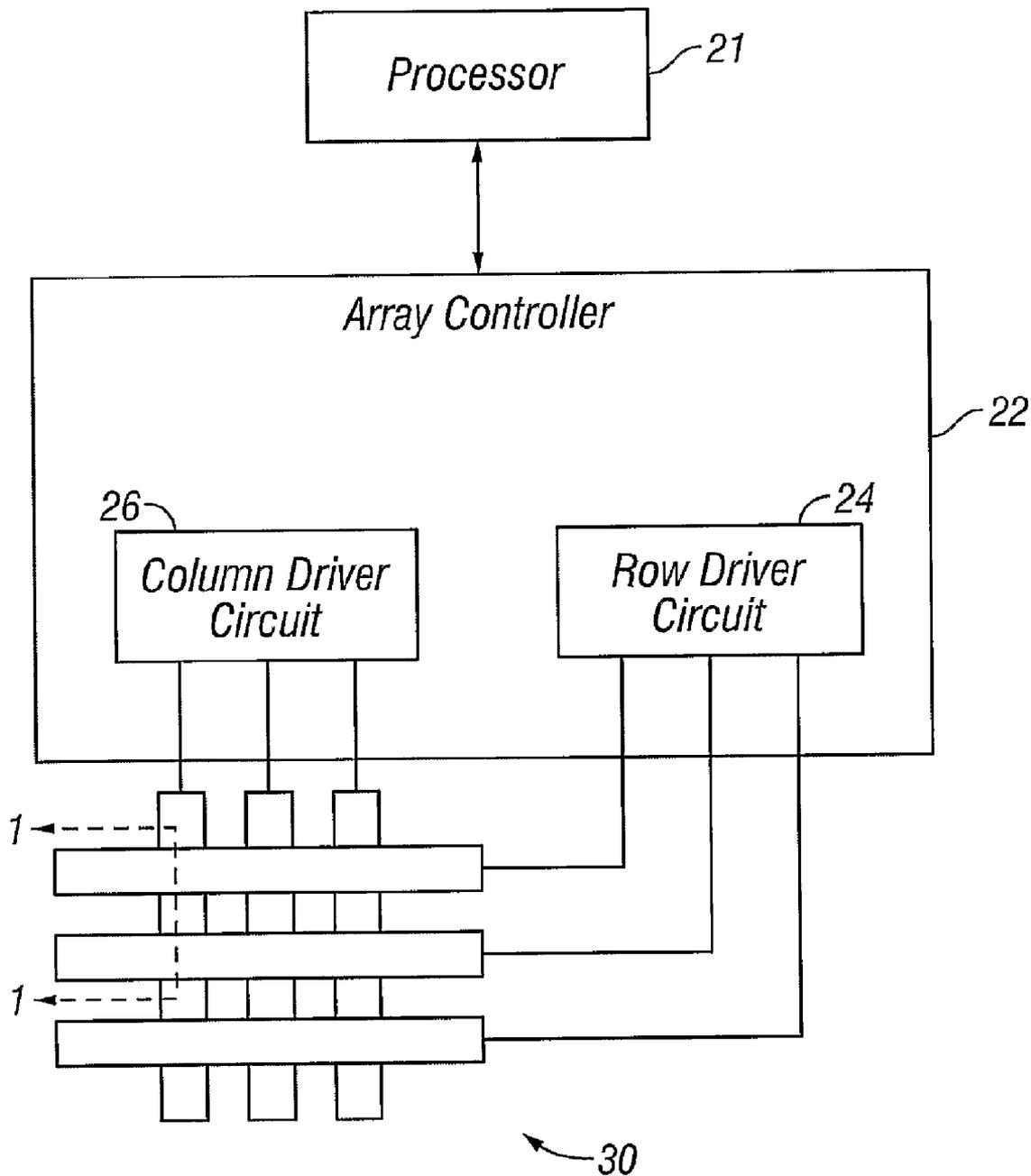


FIG. 2

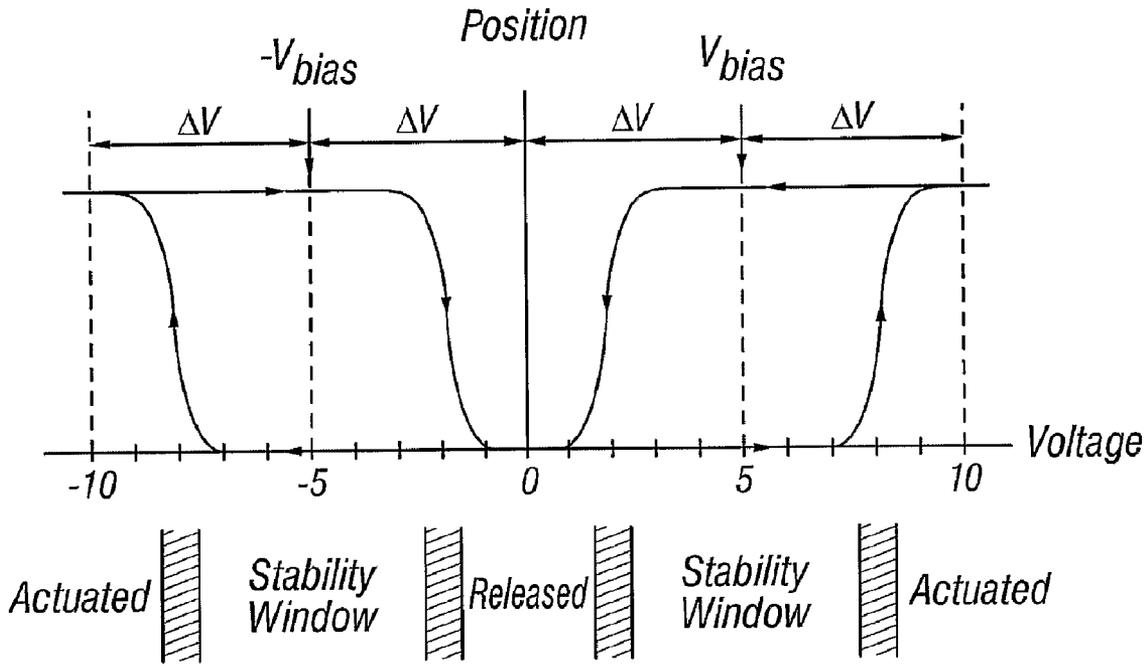


FIG. 3

		Column Output Signals	
		$+V_{bias}$	$-V_{bias}$
Row Output Signals	0	Stable	Stable
	$+\Delta V$	Release	Actuate

FIG. 4

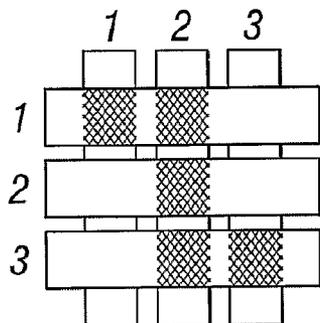


FIG. 5A

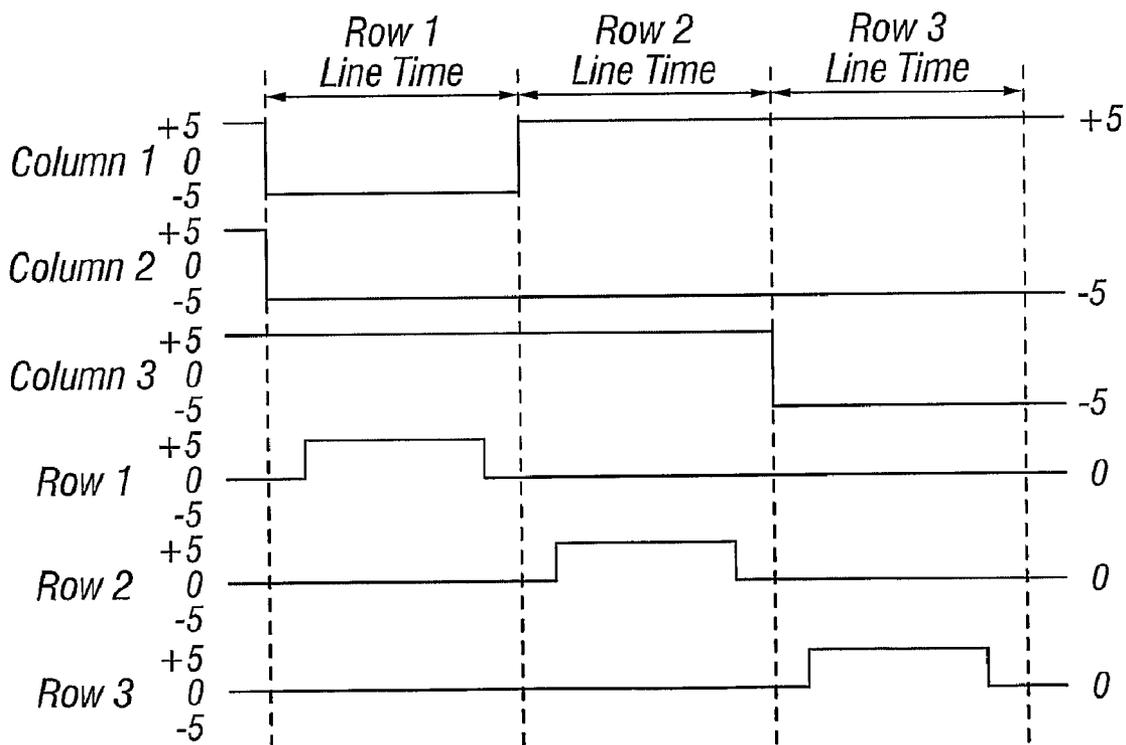


FIG. 5B

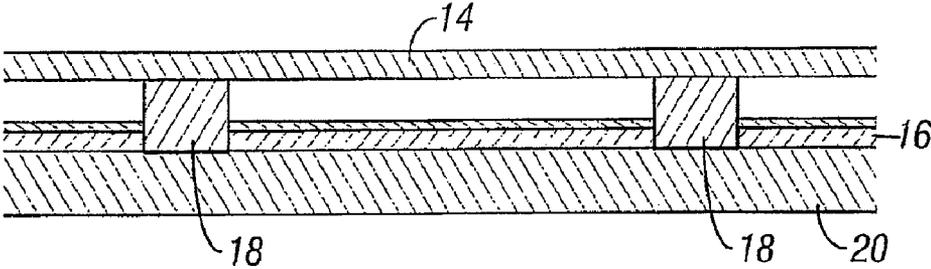


FIG. 6A

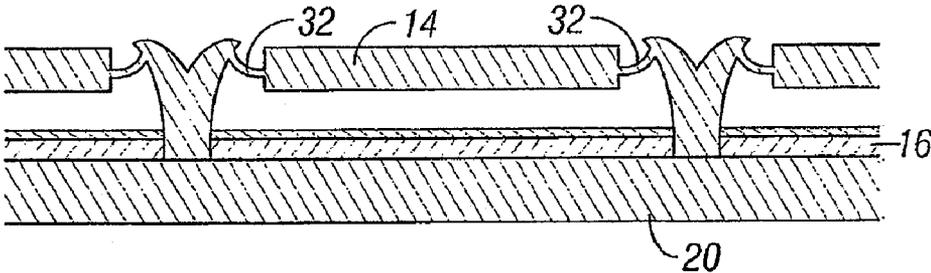


FIG. 6B

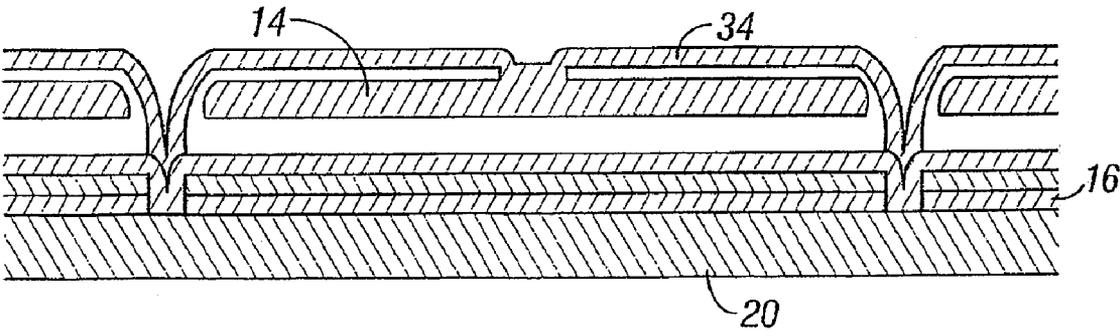


FIG. 6C

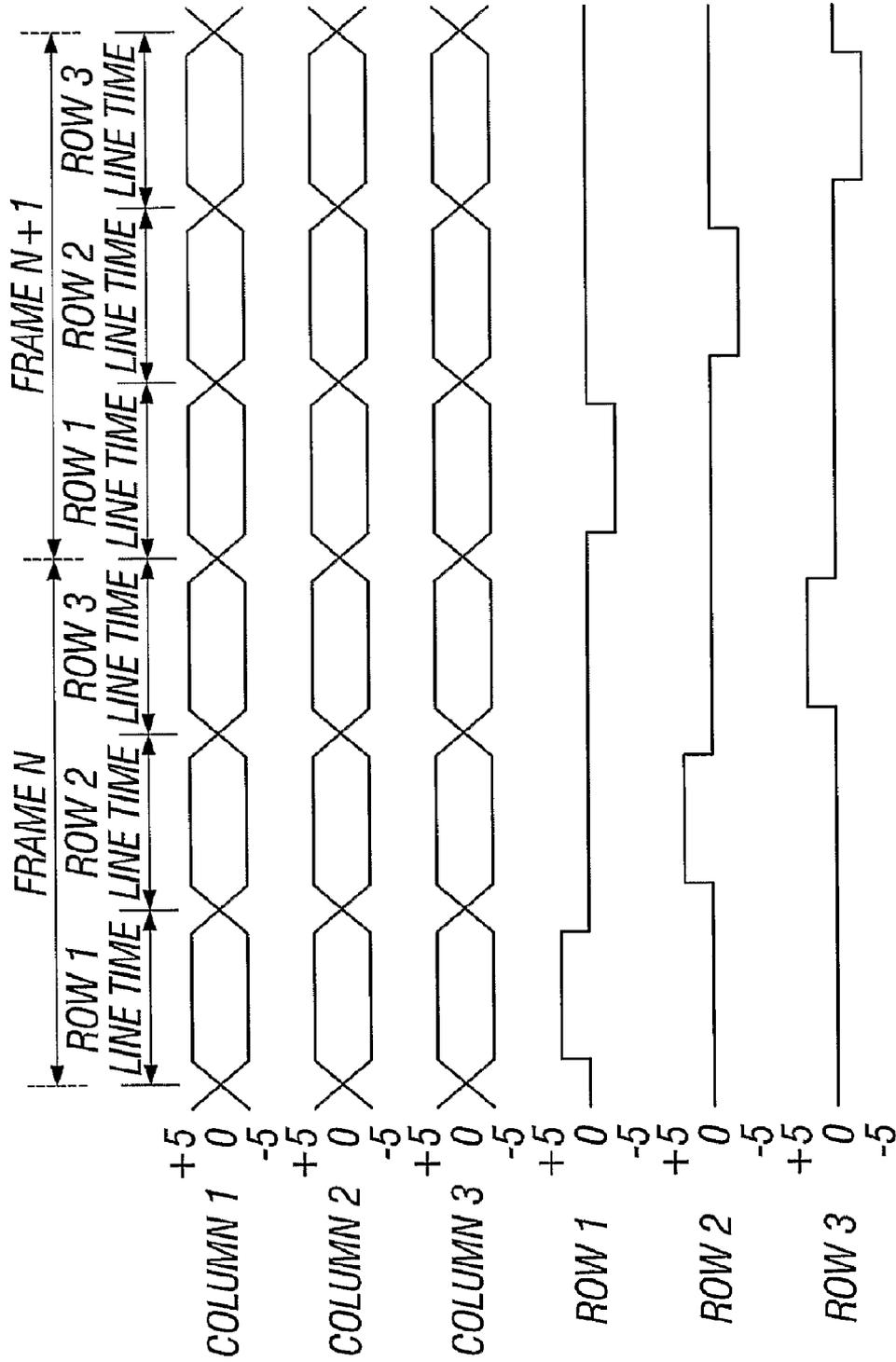


FIG. 7

		<i>Column Output Signals</i>	
		$+V_{bias}$	$-V_{bias}$
<i>Row Output Signals</i>	0	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Stable</i>
	$+\Delta V$	<i>Release</i>	<i>Actuate</i>

FIG. 8A

		<i>Column Output Signals</i>	
		$+V_{bias}$	$-V_{bias}$
<i>Row Output Signals</i>	0	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Stable</i>
	$-\Delta V$	<i>Actuate</i>	<i>Release</i>

FIG. 8B

SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF ACTUATING MEMS DISPLAY ELEMENTS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/159,073, filed Feb. 25, 2005, entitled "Systems and Methods of Actuating MEMS Display Elements," issued as U.S. Pat. No. 7,560,299, which claims priority under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Nos. 60/606,223, filed on Aug. 31, 2004, and 60/604,896, filed on Aug. 27, 2004, all of which applications are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) include micro mechanical elements, actuators, and electronics. Micromechanical elements may be created using deposition, etching, and or other micromachining processes that etch away parts of substrates and/or deposited material layers or that add layers to form electrical and electromechanical devices. One type of MEMS device is called an interferometric modulator. An interferometric modulator may comprise a pair of conductive plates, one or both of which may be transparent and/or reflective in whole or part and capable of relative motion upon application of an appropriate electrical signal. One plate may comprise a stationary layer deposited on a substrate, the other plate may comprise a metallic membrane separated from the stationary layer by an air gap. Such devices have a wide range of applications, and it would be beneficial in the art to utilize and/or modify the characteristics of these types of devices so that their features can be exploited in improving existing products and creating new products that have not yet been developed.

SUMMARY

[0003] The system, method, and devices of the invention each have several aspects, no single one of which is solely responsible for its desirable attributes. Without limiting the scope of this invention, its more prominent features will now be discussed briefly. After considering this discussion, and particularly after reading the section entitled "Detailed Description of Certain Embodiments" one will understand how the features of this invention provide advantages over other display devices.

[0004] An embodiment includes a method of writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements. The method includes periodically writing display data to MEMS elements in a portion of the array, and actuating all MEMS elements in the portion of the array prior to each periodic writing of the display.

[0005] Another embodiment includes a system for writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements. The system includes a column driver configured to apply a first voltage to one or more columns of the MEMS display elements, and a row driver configured to apply a second voltage to one or more rows of the MEMS display elements so as to create a potential difference between the first voltage and the second voltage across a plurality of MEMS elements. The column and row drivers are configured to periodically apply the first and second voltages so as to write display data to all MEMS elements in the plurality, and are further configured to

apply the first and second voltages so as to actuate all MEMS elements in the plurality prior to each periodic application of the first and second voltages.

[0006] Yet another embodiment includes a method of writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements. The method includes setting substantially all MEMS elements in the array to a common state, and writing display data to substantially all elements in the array.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is an isometric view depicting a portion of one embodiment of an interferometric modulator display in which a movable reflective layer of a first interferometric modulator is in a released position and a movable reflective layer of a second interferometric modulator is in an actuated position.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device incorporating a 3x3 interferometric modulator display.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a diagram of movable mirror position versus applied voltage for one exemplary embodiment of an interferometric modulator of FIG. 1.

[0010] FIG. 4 is an illustration of a set of row and column voltages that may be used to drive an interferometric modulator display.

[0011] FIGS. 5A and 5B illustrate one exemplary timing diagram for row and column signals that may be used to write a frame of display data to the 3x3 interferometric modulator display of FIG. 2.

[0012] FIG. 6A is a cross section of the device of FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 6B is a cross section of an alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0014] FIG. 6C is a cross section of another alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0015] FIG. 7 is an exemplary timing diagram for row and column signals that may be used in one embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIGS. 8A and 8B illustrate sets of row and column voltages that may be used to drive an interferometric modulator display in one embodiment of the invention

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0017] The following detailed description is directed to certain specific embodiments of the invention. However, the invention can be embodied in a multitude of different ways. In this description, reference is made to the drawings wherein like parts are designated with like numerals throughout. As will be apparent from the following description, the invention may be implemented in any device that is configured to display an image, whether in motion (e.g., video) or stationary (e.g., still image), and whether textual or pictorial. More particularly, it is contemplated that the invention may be implemented in or associated with a variety of electronic devices such as, but not limited to, mobile telephones, wireless devices, personal data assistants (PDAs), hand-held or portable computers, GPS receivers/navigators, cameras, MP3 players, camcorders, game consoles, wrist watches, clocks, calculators, television monitors, flat panel displays, computer monitors, auto displays (e.g., odometer display, etc.), cockpit controls and/or displays, display of camera views (e.g., display of a rear view camera in a vehicle), electronic photographs, electronic billboards or signs, projectors, architec-

tural structures, packaging, and aesthetic structures (e.g., display of images on a piece of jewelry). MEMS devices of similar structure to those described herein can also be used in non-display applications such as in electronic switching devices.

[0018] One interferometric modulator display embodiment comprising an interferometric MEMS display element is illustrated in FIG. 1. In these devices, the pixels are in either a bright or dark state. In the bright (“on” or “open”) state, the display element reflects a large portion of incident visible light to a user. When in the dark (“off” or “closed”) state, the display element reflects little incident visible light to the user. Depending on the embodiment, the light reflectance properties of the “on” and “off” states may be reversed. MEMS pixels can be configured to reflect predominantly at selected colors, allowing for a color display in addition to black and white.

[0019] FIG. 1 is an isometric view depicting two adjacent pixels in a series of pixels of a visual display, wherein each pixel comprises a MEMS interferometric modulator. In some embodiments, an interferometric modulator display comprises a row/column array of these interferometric modulators. Each interferometric modulator includes a pair of reflective layers positioned at a variable and controllable distance from each other to form a resonant optical cavity with at least one variable dimension. In one embodiment, one of the reflective layers may be moved between two positions. In the first position, referred to herein as the released state, the movable layer is positioned at a relatively large distance from a fixed partially reflective layer. In the second position, the movable layer is positioned more closely adjacent to the partially reflective layer. Incident light that reflects from the two layers interferes constructively or destructively depending on the position of the movable reflective layer, producing either an overall reflective or non-reflective state for each pixel.

[0020] The depicted portion of the pixel array in FIG. 1 includes two adjacent interferometric modulators **12a** and **12b**. In the interferometric modulator **12a** on the left, a movable and highly reflective layer **14a** is illustrated in a released position at a predetermined distance from a fixed partially reflective layer **16a**. In the interferometric modulator **12b** on the right, the movable highly reflective layer **14b** is illustrated in an actuated position adjacent to the fixed partially reflective layer **16b**.

[0021] The fixed layers **16a**, **16b** are electrically conductive, partially transparent and partially reflective, and may be fabricated, for example, by depositing one or more layers each of chromium and indium-tin-oxide onto a transparent substrate **20**. The layers are patterned into parallel strips, and may form row electrodes in a display device as described further below. The movable layers **14a**, **14b** may be formed as a series of parallel strips of a deposited metal layer or layers (orthogonal to the row electrodes **16a**, **16b**) deposited on top of posts **18** and an intervening sacrificial material deposited between the posts **18**. When the sacrificial material is etched away, the deformable metal layers are separated from the fixed metal layers by a defined air gap **19**. A highly conductive and reflective material such as aluminum may be used for the deformable layers, and these strips may form column electrodes in a display device.

[0022] With no applied voltage, the cavity **19** remains between the layers **14a**, **16a** and the deformable layer is in a mechanically relaxed state as illustrated by the pixel **12a** in

FIG. 1. However, when a potential difference is applied to a selected row and column, the capacitor formed at the intersection of the row and column electrodes at the corresponding pixel becomes charged, and electrostatic forces pull the electrodes together. If the voltage is high enough, the movable layer is deformed and is forced against the fixed layer (a dielectric material which is not illustrated in this Figure may be deposited on the fixed layer to prevent shorting and control the separation distance) as illustrated by the pixel **12b** on the right in FIG. 1. The behavior is the same regardless of the polarity of the applied potential difference. In this way, row/column actuation that can control the reflective vs. non-reflective pixel states is analogous in many ways to that used in conventional LCD and other display technologies.

[0023] FIGS. 2 through 5 illustrate one exemplary process and system for using an array of interferometric modulators in a display application. FIG. 2 is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device that may incorporate aspects of the invention. In the exemplary embodiment, the electronic device includes a processor **21** which may be any general purpose single- or multi-chip microprocessor such as an ARM, Pentium®, Pentium II®, Pentium III®, Pentium IV®, Pentium Pro, an 8051, a MIPS®, a Power PC®, an ALPHA®, or any special purpose microprocessor such as a digital signal processor, microcontroller, or a programmable gate array. As is conventional in the art, the processor **21** may be configured to execute one or more software modules. In addition to executing an operating system, the processor may be configured to execute one or more software applications, including a web browser, a telephone application, an email program, or any other software application.

[0024] In one embodiment, the processor **21** is also configured to communicate with an array controller **22**. In one embodiment, the array controller **22** includes a row driver circuit **24** and a column driver circuit **26** that provide signals to a pixel array **30**. The cross section of the array illustrated in FIG. 1 is shown by the lines 1-1 in FIG. 2. For MEMS interferometric modulators, the row/column actuation protocol may take advantage of a hysteresis property of these devices illustrated in FIG. 3. It may require, for example, a 10 volt potential difference to cause a movable layer to deform from the released state to the actuated state. However, when the voltage is reduced from that value, the movable layer maintains its state as the voltage drops back below 10 volts. In the exemplary embodiment of FIG. 3, the movable layer does not release completely until the voltage drops below 2 volts. There is thus a range of voltage, about 3 to 7 V in the example illustrated in FIG. 3, where there exists a window of applied voltage within which the device is stable in either the released or actuated state. This is referred to herein as the “hysteresis window” or “stability window.” For a display array having the hysteresis characteristics of FIG. 3, the row/column actuation protocol can be designed such that during row strobing, pixels in the strobed row that are to be actuated are exposed to a voltage difference of about 10 volts, and pixels that are to be released are exposed to a voltage difference of close to zero volts. After the strobe, the pixels are exposed to a steady state voltage difference of about 5 volts such that they remain in whatever state the row strobe put them in. After being written, each pixel sees a potential difference within the “stability window” of 3-7 volts in this example. This feature makes the pixel design illustrated in FIG. 1 stable under the same applied voltage conditions in either an actuated or released

pre-existing state. Since each pixel of the interferometric modulator, whether in the actuated or released state, is essentially a capacitor formed by the fixed and moving reflective layers, this stable state can be held at a voltage within the hysteresis window with almost no power dissipation. Essentially no current flows into the pixel if the applied potential is fixed.

[0025] In typical applications, a display frame may be created by asserting the set of column electrodes in accordance with the desired set of actuated pixels in the first row. A row pulse is then applied to the row 1 electrode, actuating the pixels corresponding to the asserted column lines. The asserted set of column electrodes is then changed to correspond to the desired set of actuated pixels in the second row. A pulse is then applied to the row 2 electrode, actuating the appropriate pixels in row 2 in accordance with the asserted column electrodes. The row 1 pixels are unaffected by the row 2 pulse, and remain in the state they were set to during the row 1 pulse. This may be repeated for the entire series of rows in a sequential fashion to produce the frame. Generally, the frames are refreshed and/or updated with new display data by continually repeating this process at some desired number of frames per second. A wide variety of protocols for driving row and column electrodes of pixel arrays to produce display frames are also well known and may be used in conjunction with the present invention.

[0026] FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate one possible actuation protocol for creating a display frame on the 3x3 array of FIG. 2. FIG. 4 illustrates a possible set of column and row voltage levels that may be used for pixels exhibiting the hysteresis curves of FIG. 3. In the FIG. 4 embodiment, actuating a pixel involves setting the appropriate column to $-V_{bias}$, and the appropriate row to $+\Delta V$, which may correspond to -5 volts and $+5$ volts respectively. Releasing the pixel is accomplished by setting the appropriate column to $+V_{bias}$, and the appropriate row to the same $+\Delta V$, producing a zero volt potential difference across the pixel. In those rows where the row voltage is held at zero volts, the pixels are stable in whatever state they were originally in, regardless of whether the column is at $+V_{bias}$, or $-V_{bias}$.

[0027] FIG. 5B is a timing diagram showing a series of row and column signals applied to the 3x3 array of FIG. 2 which will result in the display arrangement illustrated in FIG. 5A, where actuated pixels are non-reflective. Prior to writing the frame illustrated in FIG. 5A, the pixels can be in any state, and in this example, all the rows are at 0 volts, and all the columns are at $+5$ volts. With these applied voltages, all pixels are stable in their existing actuated or released states.

[0028] In the FIG. 5A frame, pixels (1,1), (1,2), (2,2), (3,2) and (3,3) are actuated. To accomplish this, during a "line time" for row 1, columns 1 and 2 are set to -5 volts, and column 3 is set to $+5$ volts. This does not change the state of any pixels, because all the pixels remain in the 3-7 volt stability window. Row 1 is then strobed with a pulse that goes from 0, up to 5 volts, and back to zero. This actuates the (1,1) and (1,2) pixels and releases the (1,3) pixel. No other pixels in the array are affected. To set row 2 as desired, column 2 is set to -5 volts, and columns 1 and 3 are set to $+5$ volts. The same strobe applied to row 2 will then actuate pixel (2,2) and release pixels (2,1) and (2,3). Again, no other pixels of the array are affected. Row 3 is similarly set by setting columns 2 and 3 to -5 volts, and column 1 to $+5$ volts. The row 3 strobe sets the row 3 pixels as shown in FIG. 5A. After writing the frame, the row potentials are zero, and the column potentials

can remain at either $+5$ or -5 volts, and the display is then stable in the arrangement of FIG. 5A. It will be appreciated that the same procedure can be employed for arrays of dozens or hundreds of rows and columns. It will also be appreciated that the timing, sequence, and levels of voltages used to perform row and column actuation can be varied widely within the general principles outlined above, and the above example is exemplary only, and any actuation voltage method can be used with the present invention. For example, it will be appreciated that the array elements may be driven with voltages that are shifted from the circuit common voltage of the array driving circuit such that the row might go from 6.2 to $6.2V + V_{bias}$ and similarly the column would switch from a low voltage e.g. 1V to $1V + 2 * V_{bias}$. In this embodiment, the release voltage may be slightly different from zero volts. It can be as large as a couple of volts but is typically less than one volt.

[0029] The details of the structure of interferometric modulators that operate in accordance with the principles set forth above may vary widely. For example, FIGS. 6A-6C illustrate three different embodiments of the moving mirror structure. FIG. 6A is a cross section of the embodiment of FIG. 1, where a strip of metal material 14 is deposited on orthogonally extending supports 18. In FIG. 6B, the moveable reflective material 14 is attached to supports at the corners only, on tethers 32. In FIG. 6C, the moveable reflective material 14 is suspended from a deformable layer 34. This embodiment has benefits because the structural design and materials used for the reflective material 14 can be optimized with respect to the optical properties, and the structural design and materials used for the deformable layer 34 can be optimized with respect to desired mechanical properties. The production of various types of interferometric devices is described in a variety of published documents, including, for example, U.S. Published Application 2004/0051929. A wide variety of well known techniques may be used to produce the above described structures involving a series of material deposition, patterning, and etching steps.

[0030] It is one aspect of the above described devices that charge can build on the dielectric between the layers of the device, especially when the devices are actuated and held in the actuated state by an electric field that is always in the same direction. For example, if the moving layer is always at a higher potential relative to the fixed layer when the device is actuated by potentials having a magnitude larger than the outer threshold of stability, a slowly increasing charge buildup on the dielectric between the layers can begin to shift the hysteresis curve for the device. This is undesirable as it causes display performance to change over time, and in different ways for different pixels that are actuated in different ways over time. As can be seen in the example of FIG. 5B, a given pixel sees a 10 volt difference during actuation, and every time in this example, the row electrode is at a 10 V higher potential than the column electrode. During actuation, the electric field between the plates therefore always points in one direction, from the row electrode toward the column electrode.

[0031] This problem can be reduced by actuating the MEMS display elements with a potential difference of a first polarity during a first portion of the display write process, and actuating the MEMS display elements with a potential difference having a polarity opposite the first polarity during a second portion of the display write process. This basic principle is illustrated in FIGS. 7, 8A, and 8B.

[0032] In FIG. 7, two frames of display data are written in sequence, frame N and frame N+1. In this Figure, the data for the columns goes valid for row 1 (i.e., either +5 or -5 depending on the desired state of the pixels in row 1) during the row 1 line time, valid for row 2 during the row 2 line time, and valid for row 3 during the row 3 line time. Frame N is written as shown in FIG. 5B, which will be termed positive polarity herein, with the row electrode 10 V above the column electrode during MEMS device actuation. During actuation, the column electrode may be at -5 V, and the scan voltage on the row is +5 V in this example. The actuation and release for Frame N is thus performed according to the table in FIG. 8A, which is the same as FIG. 4.

[0033] Frame N+1 is written in accordance with the table in FIG. 8B. For Frame N+1, the scan voltage is -5 V, and the column voltage is set to +5 V to actuate, and -5 V to release. Thus, in Frame N+1, the column voltage is 10V above the row voltage, termed a negative polarity herein. As the display is continually refreshed and/or updated, the polarity can be alternated between frames, with Frame N+2 being written in the same manner as Frame N, Frame N+3 written in the same manner as Frame N+1, and so on. In this way, actuation of pixels takes place in both polarities. In embodiments following this principle, potentials of opposite polarities are respectively applied to a given MEMS element at defined times and for defined time durations that depend on the rate at which image data is written to MEMS elements of the array, and the opposite potential differences are each applied an approximately equal amount of time over a given period of display use. This helps reduce charge buildup on the dielectric over time.

[0034] A wide variety of modifications of this scheme can be implemented. For example, Frame N and Frame N+1 can comprise different display data. Alternatively, it can be the same display data written twice to the array with opposite polarities. It can also be advantageous to dedicate some frames to setting the state of all or substantially all pixels to a released state, and/or setting the state of all or substantially all the pixels to an actuated state prior to writing desired display data. Setting all the pixels to a common state can be performed in a single row line time by, for example, setting all the columns to +5 V (or -5 V) and scanning all the rows simultaneously with a -5 V scan (or +5 V scan).

[0035] In one such embodiment, desired display data is written to the array in one polarity, all the pixels are released, and the same display data is written a second time with the opposite polarity. This is similar to the scheme illustrated in FIG. 7, with Frame N the same as Frame N+1, and with an array releasing line time inserted between the frames. In another embodiment, each display update of new display data is preceded by a releasing row line time.

[0036] In another embodiment, a row line time is used to actuate all the pixels of the array, a second line time is used to release all the pixels of the array, and then the display data (Frame N for example) is written to the display. In this embodiment, Frame N+1 can be preceded by an array actuation line time and an array release line time of opposite polarities to the ones preceding Frame N, and then Frame N+1 can be written. In some embodiments, an actuation line time of one polarity, a release line time of the same polarity, an actuation line time of opposite polarity, and a release line time of opposite polarity can precede every frame. These embodiments ensure that all or substantially all pixels are actuated at

least once for every frame of display data, reducing differential aging effects as well as reducing charge buildup.

[0037] In some cases, it may be advantageous to use an extra high actuation voltage during the array actuation line times. For example, during the array actuation line times described above, the row scan voltages can be 7 V or 10 V instead of 5 V. In this embodiment, the highest voltages applied to the pixel occur during these "over-actuation" array actuation times, and not during display data updates. This can also help reduce differential aging effects for different pixels, some of which may change frequently during display updates, whereas others may change very infrequently during display updates, depending on the images being displayed.

[0038] It is also possible to perform these polarity reversals and actuation/release protocols on a row by row basis. In these embodiments, each row of a frame may be written more than once during the frame writing process. For example, when writing row 1 of Frame N, the pixels of row 1 could all be released, and the display data for row 1 can be written with positive polarity. The pixels of row 1 could be released a second time, and the row 1 display data written again with negative polarity. Actuating all the pixels of row 1 as described above for the whole array could also be performed. It will further be appreciated that the releases, actuations, and over-actuations may be performed at a lower frequency than every row write or every frame write during the display updating/refreshing process.

[0039] While the above detailed description has shown, described, and pointed out novel features of the invention as applied to various embodiments, it will be understood that various omissions, substitutions, and changes in the form and details of the device or process illustrated may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. As one example, it will be appreciated that the test voltage driver circuitry could be separate from the array driver circuitry used to create the display. As with current sensors, separate voltage sensors could be dedicated to separate row electrodes. The scope of the invention is indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.

1. A method of writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements, comprising:
 - periodically writing display data to MEMS elements in a portion of said array; and
 - actuating all MEMS elements in said portion of said array prior to each periodic writing of said display data.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said portion of said array comprises a row of MEMS elements of said array.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said portion of said array comprises said entire array.
4. The method of claim 1, comprising releasing all MEMS elements in said portion of said array prior to writing display data to said portion of said array.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the array comprises a plurality of rows of the MEMS display elements and a plurality of columns of the MEMS display elements, and wherein the portion of the array comprises at least a plurality of aligned MEMS elements.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the portion comprises a plurality of MEMS elements in each of a plurality of rows of the array.

7. The method of claim 1, comprising:
 placing substantially all MEMS elements in a row of said array in an actuated state a first time;
 writing a first set of display data to said row of said array with a potential difference of a first polarity;
 placing substantially all MEMS elements in said row of said array in an actuated state a second time; and
 writing a second set of display data to said row of said array with a potential difference of a polarity opposite said first polarity.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said first set of display data and said second set of display data comprise identical data.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein said first set of display data and said second set of display data comprise different data.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein said writing a first set or said writing a second set comprises releasing certain of said MEMS display elements in said row.

11. The method of claim 7, further comprising releasing substantially all MEMS elements in said row of said array, and wherein said writing a first set or said writing a second set comprises actuating certain of said MEMS display elements in said row.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said actuating all MEMS elements in said portion comprises actuating at least some of said MEMS elements in said portion with a potential difference greater than a potential difference used when writing said display data to said at least some MEMS elements.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said actuating at least some of said MEMS elements comprises actuating said at least some of said MEMS elements with a potential difference that is approximately twice the potential difference used when writing said display data.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein said potential difference used when writing said display data is approximately 5 volts, and wherein said actuating at least some of said MEMS elements comprises actuating said at least some of said MEMS elements with a potential difference of approximately 7 volts or approximately 10 volts.

15. A system for writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements, comprising:
 a column driver configured to apply a first voltage to one or more columns of the MEMS display elements; and
 a row driver configured to apply a second voltage to one or more rows of the MEMS display elements so as to create a potential difference between the first voltage and the second voltage across a plurality of MEMS elements, wherein said column and row drivers are configured to periodically apply said first and second voltages so as to write display data to all MEMS elements in said plurality, and
 wherein said column and row drivers are further configured to apply said first and second voltages so as to actuate all MEMS elements in said plurality prior to each said periodic application of said first and second voltages.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein said MEMS elements in said plurality comprise a row of MEMS elements of said array.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein said MEMS elements in said plurality comprise said entire array.

18. The system of claim 15, wherein said column and row drivers are configured to release all MEMS elements in said plurality prior to writing display data to said MEMS elements in said plurality.

19. The system of claim 15, wherein said column and row drives are configured to:
 place substantially all MEMS elements in a row of said array in an actuated state a first time;
 write a first set of display data to said row of said array with a potential difference of a first polarity;
 place substantially all MEMS elements in said row of said array in an actuated state a second time; and
 write a second set of display data to said row of said array with a potential difference of a polarity opposite said first polarity.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein said first set of display data and said second set of display data comprise identical data.

21. The system of claim 15, wherein a potential difference created across at least some of the MEMS elements in said plurality during said actuating all MEMS elements in said plurality is greater than a potential difference created across said at least some MEMS elements when writing said display data to all MEMS elements in said plurality.

22. A method of writing display data to an array of MEMS display elements, comprising:
 setting substantially all MEMS elements in the array to a common state; and
 writing display data to said substantially all elements in the array.

23. The method of claim 22, comprising:
 actuating substantially all elements in the array; and
 releasing substantially all elements in the array after said actuating.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said actuating and releasing is performed between writing frames comprising different display data.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein said actuating and releasing is performed between writing frames comprising display data that is the same.

26. The method of claim 22, comprising:
 releasing substantially all elements in the array; and
 actuating substantially all elements in the array after said releasing.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said releasing and actuating is performed between writing frames of display data.

28. The method of claim 22, wherein said setting comprises:
 applying a first voltage to substantially all columns in the array; and
 scanning substantially all rows in the array simultaneously with a second voltage.

29. The method of claim 22, wherein said array comprises a plurality of rows of the MEMS display elements and a plurality of columns of the MEMS display elements.

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