

concert with one another but untested piezo material properties, specifically the aging effect of reverse-biasing the ceramic material, require further investigation. Half the high voltage, or 100 volts, was applied to the center of the common clip. This center voltage, or bimorph virtual ground, enables the use of standard high voltage drive circuitry and a common clip. The common clip may become viable as advances are made in piezo-ceramic technology.

The serviceability of each novel bimorph is maintained and improved over other designs. If an individual Braille dot does not meet specification, that Braille cell is removed and the bad bimorph removed by reflowing a single solder joint. The replacement bimorph is then inserted into the Braille cell PCB and aligned with the aid of a fixture. This avoids the problem in removing prior art bimorphs where individual bimorph removal is complicated by the attachment of two (2) wires to each bimorph.

FIG. 4A depicts a Braille cell assembly 40 mounted on top wall 44 of a chassis/backplane not depicted in this figure and FIG. 4B depicts a plurality of said Braille cell assemblies mounted on said top wall. Braille cell assembly 40 includes PCB 36 to which is soldered a plurality of novel bimorph clips 30 in vertically spaced relation to one another during standard SMT processing. A bimorph reed 20 is then inserted between biased arms 32, 34 of each clip 30 using an alignment jig. Each center conductor 26 of each bimorph reed 20 is then soldered to PCB 36. This process eliminates the need for sixteen (16) hand-soldered jumper wires. It also eliminates the prior art need for providing plating on bimorph reed 20 to enable said bimorph reed to accept solder.

A plurality of PCB-receiving sockets 42 is mounted on top wall 44 in spaced relation to one another as depicted. A large number of Braille cell assemblies 40 may therefore be mounted to said top wall as suggested by FIG. 4B.

FIG. 5 discloses the pin connections of Braille device interface 50. Interface 50 defines the required connections to drive the display. This embodiment enables left or right side connections and further enables independent scanning of key switches without changing latched display data.

FIGS. 6A and 6B are perspective views of opposite sides of Braille cell assembly 40. The disclosure of these FIGS. 6A and 6B is essentially the same as the disclosure of FIGS. 4A and 4B but FIGS. 6A and 6B make it clearer that clips 30 and bimorph reeds 20 are mounted on both sides of PCB 36. Note that there are four (4) bimorph reeds 20 mounted on each side of PCB 36 so that there are eight (8) bimorph reeds mounted on each PCB 36. Accordingly, it should be understood that each PCB is dedicated to a Braille cell having eight (8) Braille pins and each bimorph reed is dedicated to a Braille pin of said Braille cell.

FIG. 7A is a top perspective view of chassis/backplane 60 and FIG. 7B is a bottom perspective view thereof. Chassis/backplane 60 includes top wall 44 (see FIGS. 4A and 4B) and bottom wall 46. It also includes an angle wall 62 having a plurality of sets 64 of pinholes or bores 66 formed in a horizontal part 62a thereof. Horizontal part 62a of angle wall 62 abuts a leading edge of top wall 44 and is coplanar therewith. Each pinhole or bore 66 is adapted to slideably receive a pin, not depicted in FIGS. 7A and 7B. Note that there are eight (8) pinholes or bores 66 per set 64 of pinholes or bores.

Upstanding flat wall 68 abuts a trailing edge of top wall 44 and a trailing edge of bottom wall 46. A plurality of slots 70 is formed in the lower edge of said flat wall 68. Each slot engages a protuberance 36a formed in the trailing end of its associated PCB. A corresponding plurality of slots 72 is formed in top wall 44 to accommodate the respective leading

ends of the PCBs. Each set of slots 70 and 72 cooperate with one another to provide a mount for each PCB 36.

FIG. 8A depicts chassis/backplane 60 when a PCB 36 is mounted in each slot 70 and 72. It also depicts a Braille pin 80 disposed in each pinhole or bore 66. One (1) bimorph reed 20 is associated with each pin 80, there being one PCB 36 having eight (8) bimorph reeds mounted thereto associated with each set 64 of eight (8) pinholes or bores 66 as aforesaid.

Pins 80 are provided in four differing lengths as indicated in FIG. 8B. The pins may be manufactured individually, or they may be manufactured in connected-together groups of eight (8) that are separated from one another after assembly into the Braille cell, thereby improving manufacturability.

Each pin 80 has a solid or hollow construction and includes four (4) parts that share a common longitudinal axis of symmetry. Each of the four (4) parts may have a transverse cross-section of any predetermined geometrical configuration. A more detailed description of the pins is provided in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/710,808, filed Aug. 4, 2004 by the same inventors. That patent application is hereby incorporated by reference into this disclosure.

The novel cell cap of this invention is depicted in FIGS. 9A and 9B and is denoted as a whole by the reference numeral 90. Twenty (20) sets 92 of pinholes 94 are depicted, each pinhole being adapted to slidingly receive tip 80d of pin 80. This configuration is referred to as a "double decade" and represents one (1) module. Unlike the aforementioned prior art Braille cells that require one individual cap per set of pinholes, cell cap 90 is a monolithic cap for all sets of pinholes, i.e., cell cap 90 enables one cap to cap a plurality of Braille cells. Cell cap 90 significantly reduces the tolerance issues associated with individual caps without compromising access to the individual Braille cells if repair or replacement is required.

Cell cap 90 of the Braille multi-cell module is smooth, lacking the grooves and unevenness between each cell (character) found in all existing Braille displays on the market. This advantageous side-effect of a cost-reduction effort is one of the most significant features of the invention. To users, the tactility of the grooves and cell-to-cell unevenness of prior art Braille displays is equivalent to the aggravation caused sighted people by the noise and flickering of a computer monitor. The paper-like smoothness of the novel Braille display is a first in the electronically refreshable Braille display industry.

Moreover, the monolithic cell cap provides better dimensional control of the Braille electromechanical module when it is assembled in the final product. Prior art cell caps produce a gap between the Braille module and the opening in the Braille display case. Each gap is a result of the accumulation of dimensional tolerances on a per cell basis as distinguished from the novel single dimensional tolerance for a plurality of cells. The invention of the monolithic cell cap supplants the above-mentioned prior art approach that employs an extra frame to correctly space each cell at a centerline. This prior art approach is unsatisfactory because it further accentuates the unevenness of the display and provides additional area for contaminants.

Monolithic cell cap 90 can be constructed with anti-bacterial plastics or other suitable materials to inhibit the spread and growth of germs.

In all embodiments, the Braille pin of the assembly is captive in the mechanical design. It is secured between a top wall of the chassis/backplane 60 and cell providing a negative and a positive stop to the Braille pin's displacement, respectively. There is no dependency on the bimorph actuators hold the Braille pins in place. There is no dependency on the