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(54) **CONNECTION DEVICE FOR COMPUTING DEVICES**

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G06F 1/1683; G06F 1/1637; G06F 1/1616

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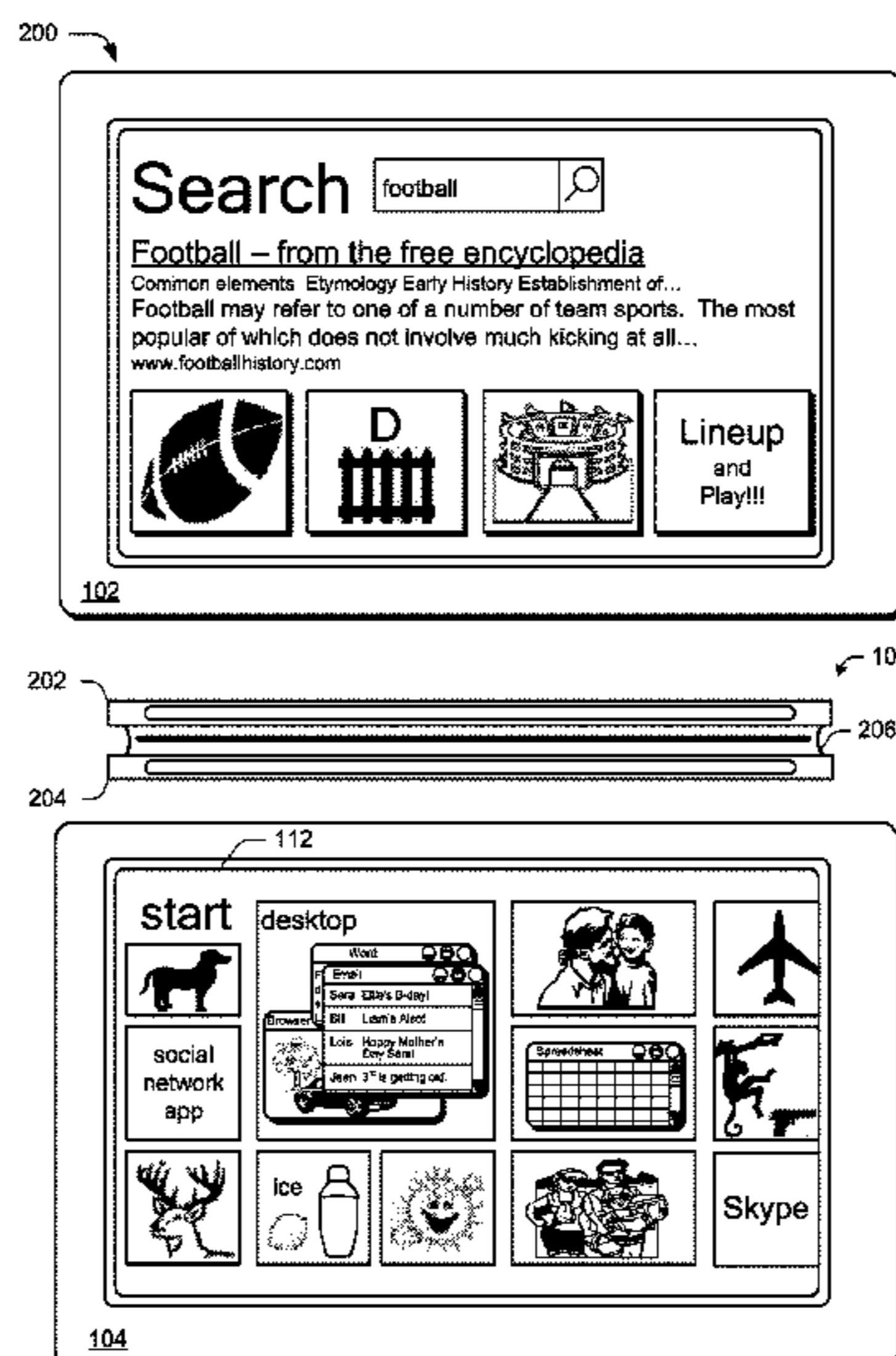
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A connection device for computing devices is described. In one or more implementations, a connection device comprises a plurality of connection portions that are physically and communicatively coupled, one to another. Each of the plurality of connection portions has at least one communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with a respective one of a plurality of computing devices and with at least one other communication contact of another one of the connections portions to support communication between the plurality of computing devices. Each of the plurality of connection portions also includes a magnetic coupling device to form a removable magnetic attachment to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

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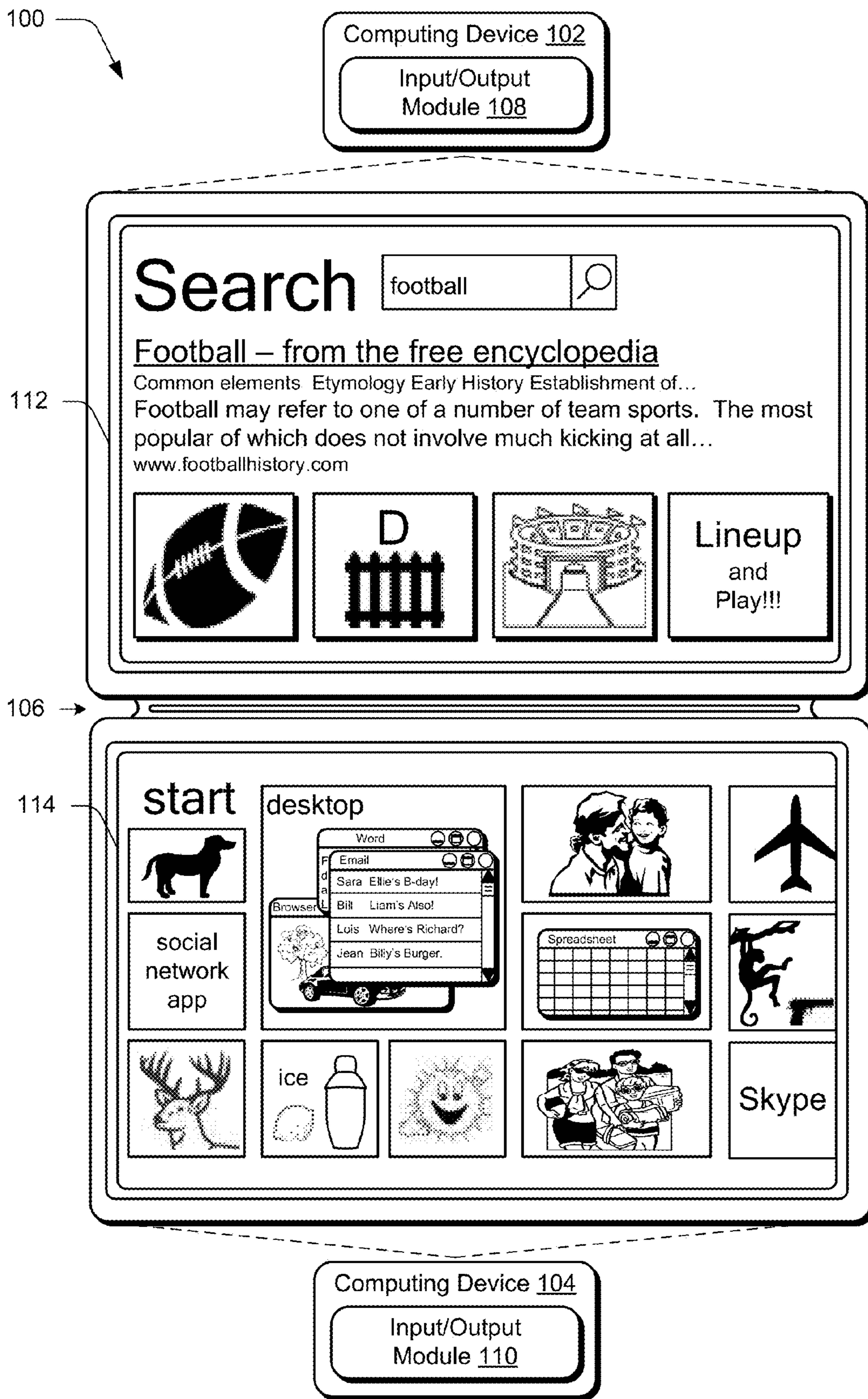
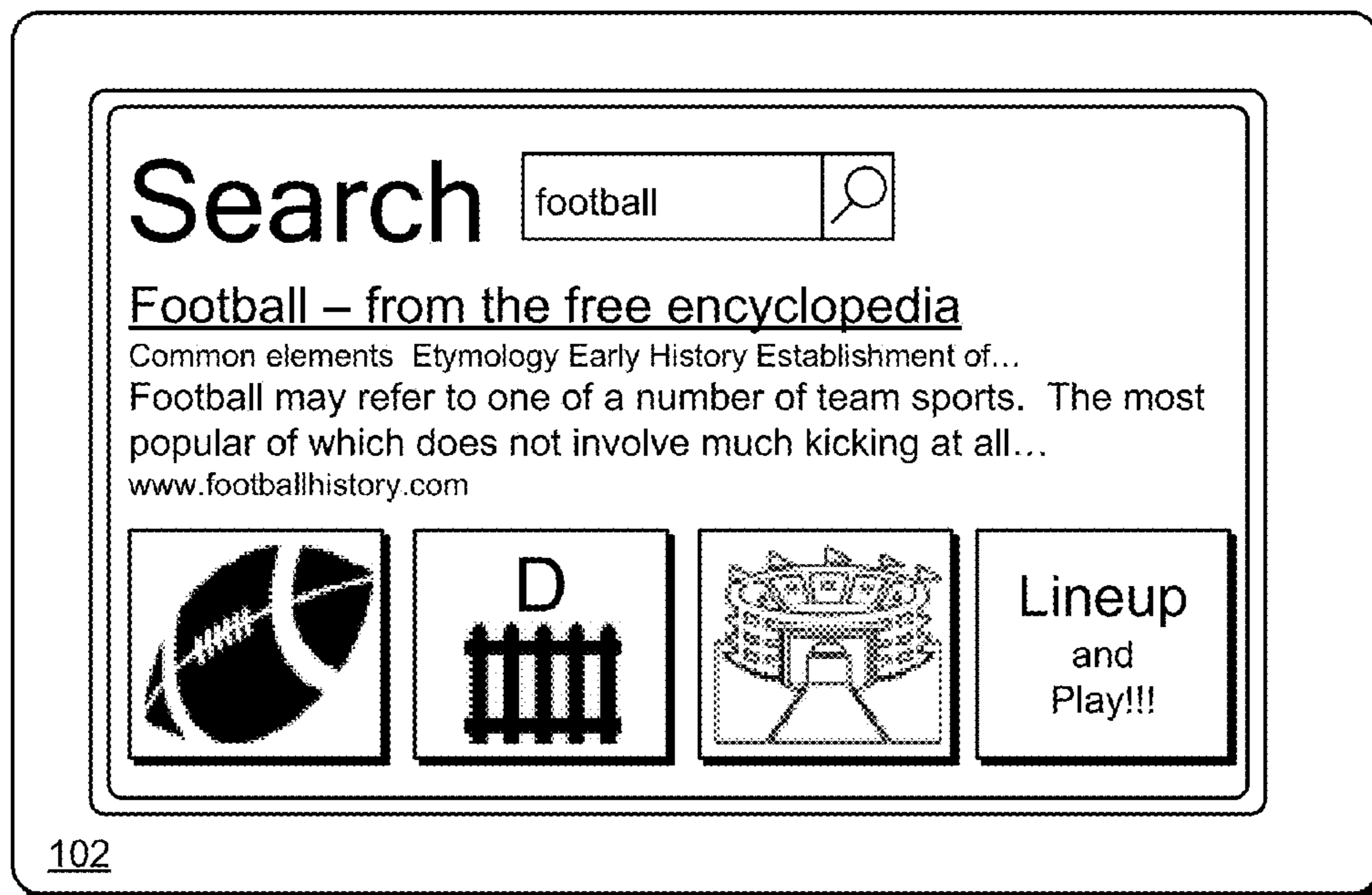


Fig. 1

200



202

204

106

206

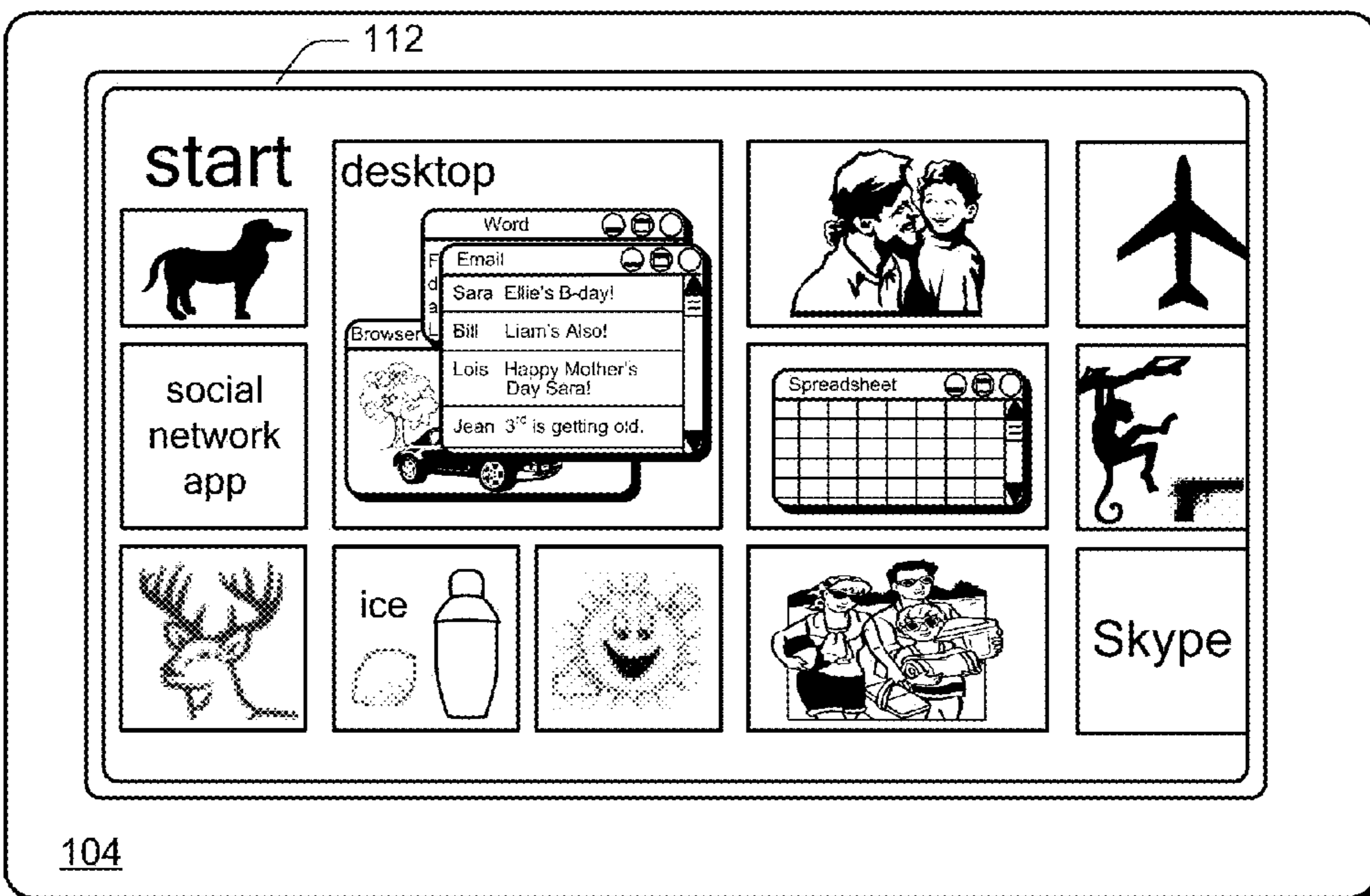
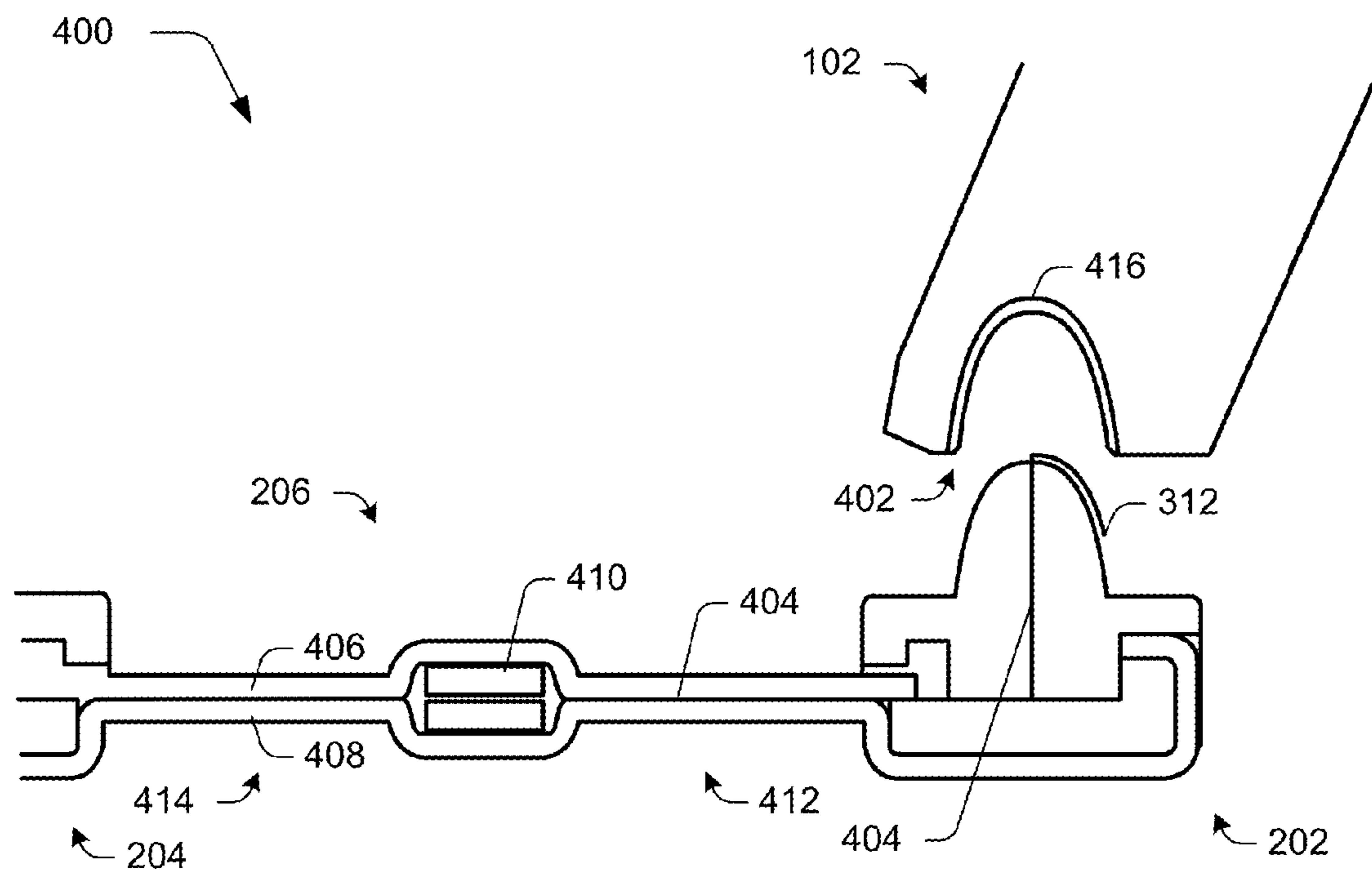
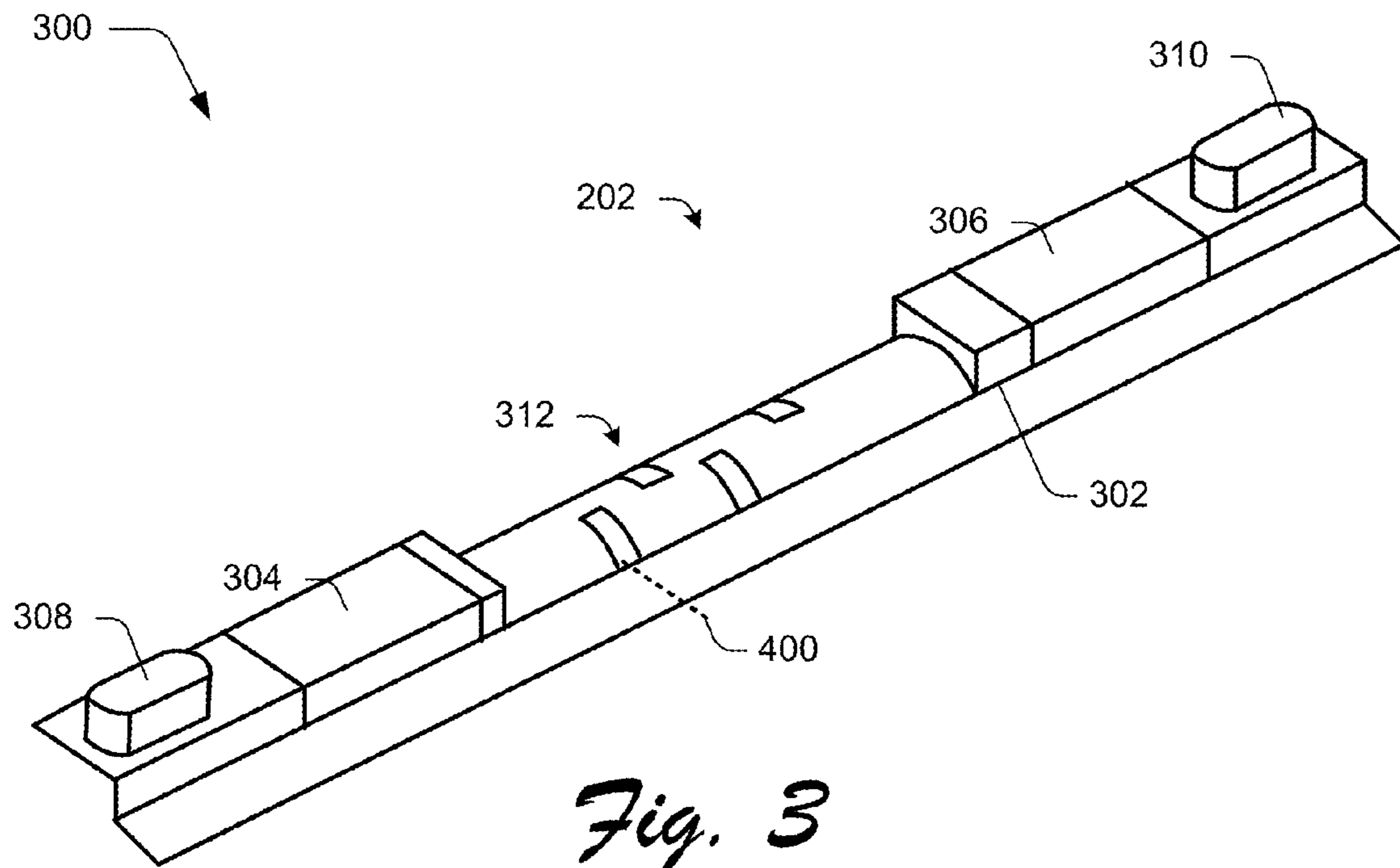


Fig. 2



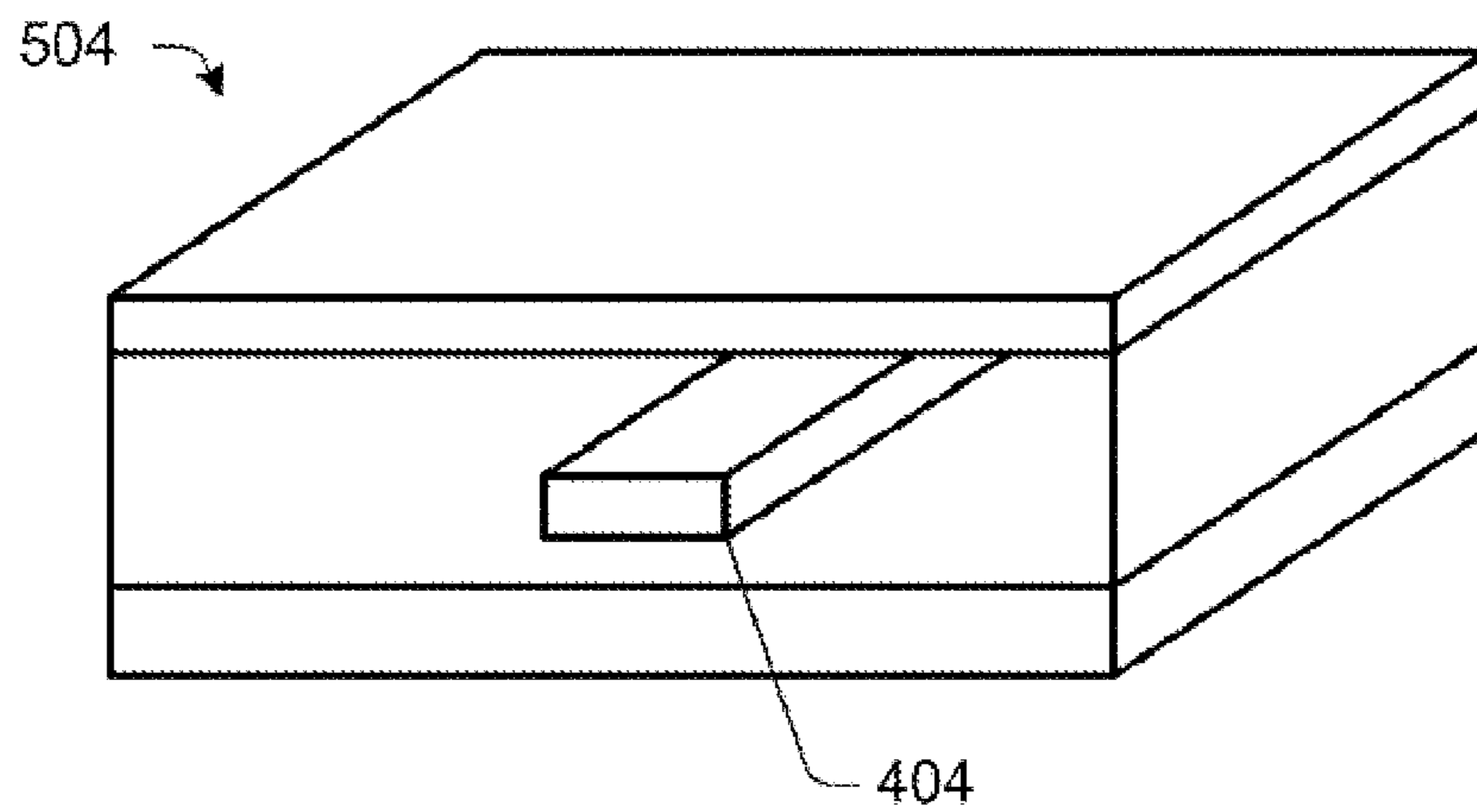
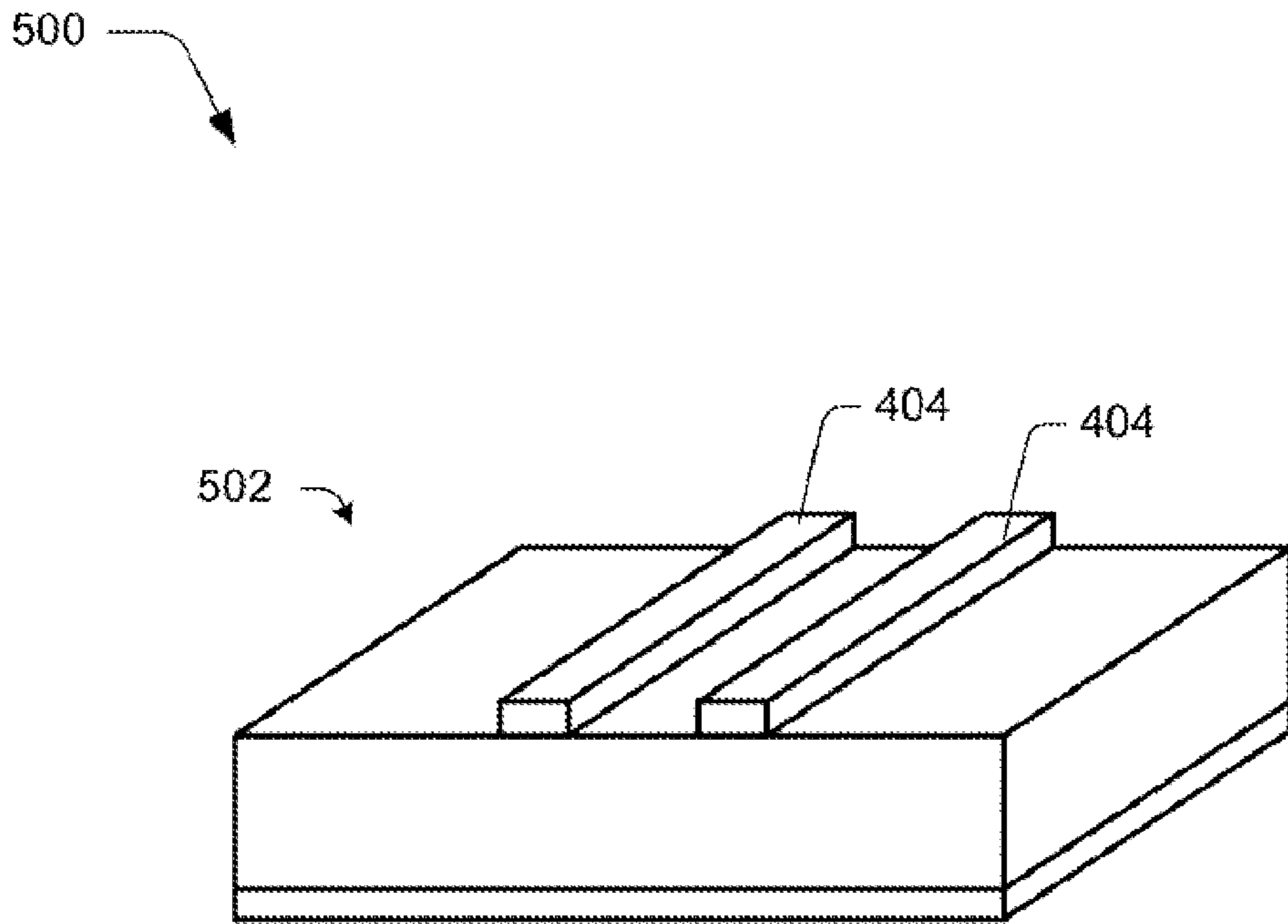


Fig. 5 (Amended)

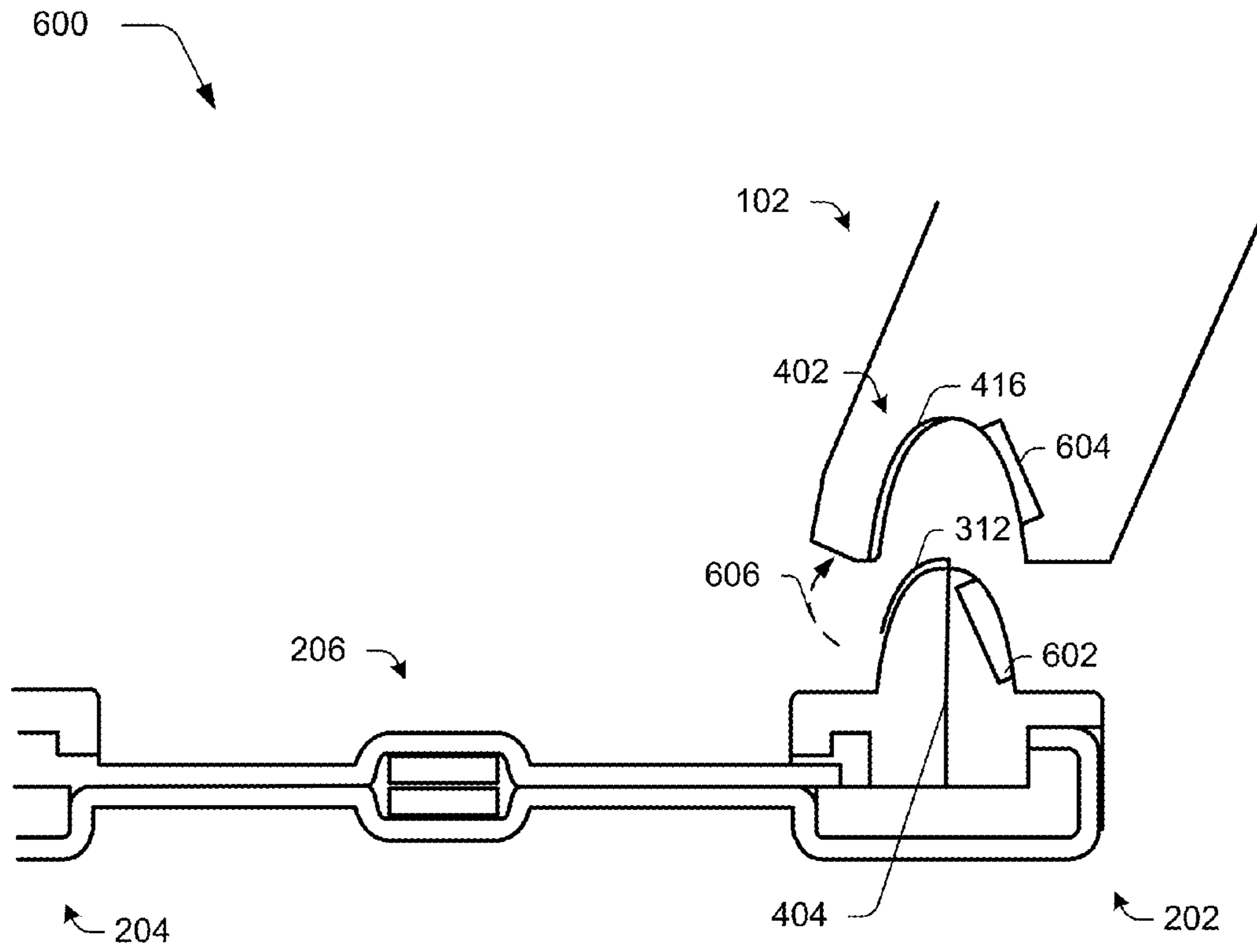


Fig. 6

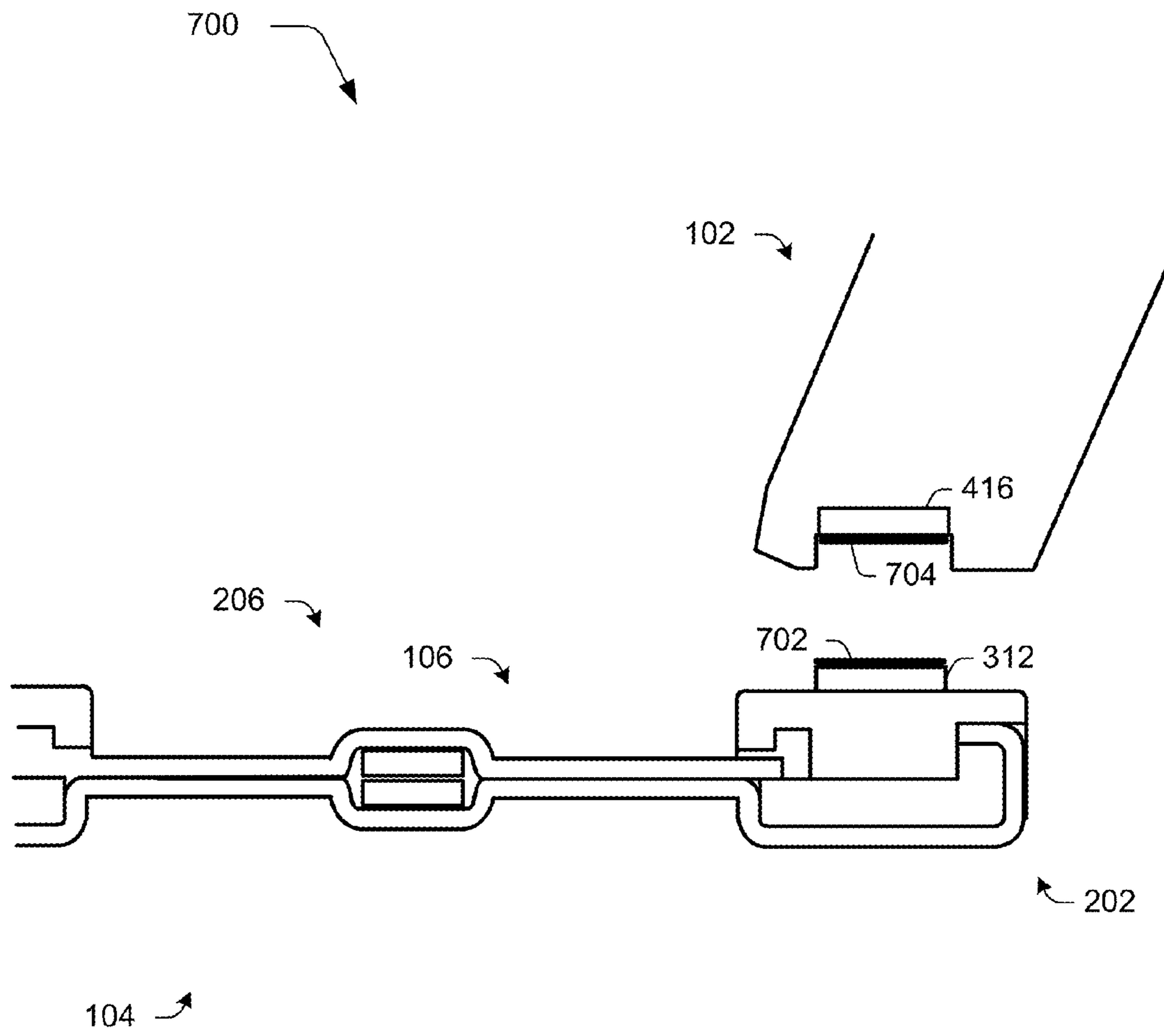


Fig. 7

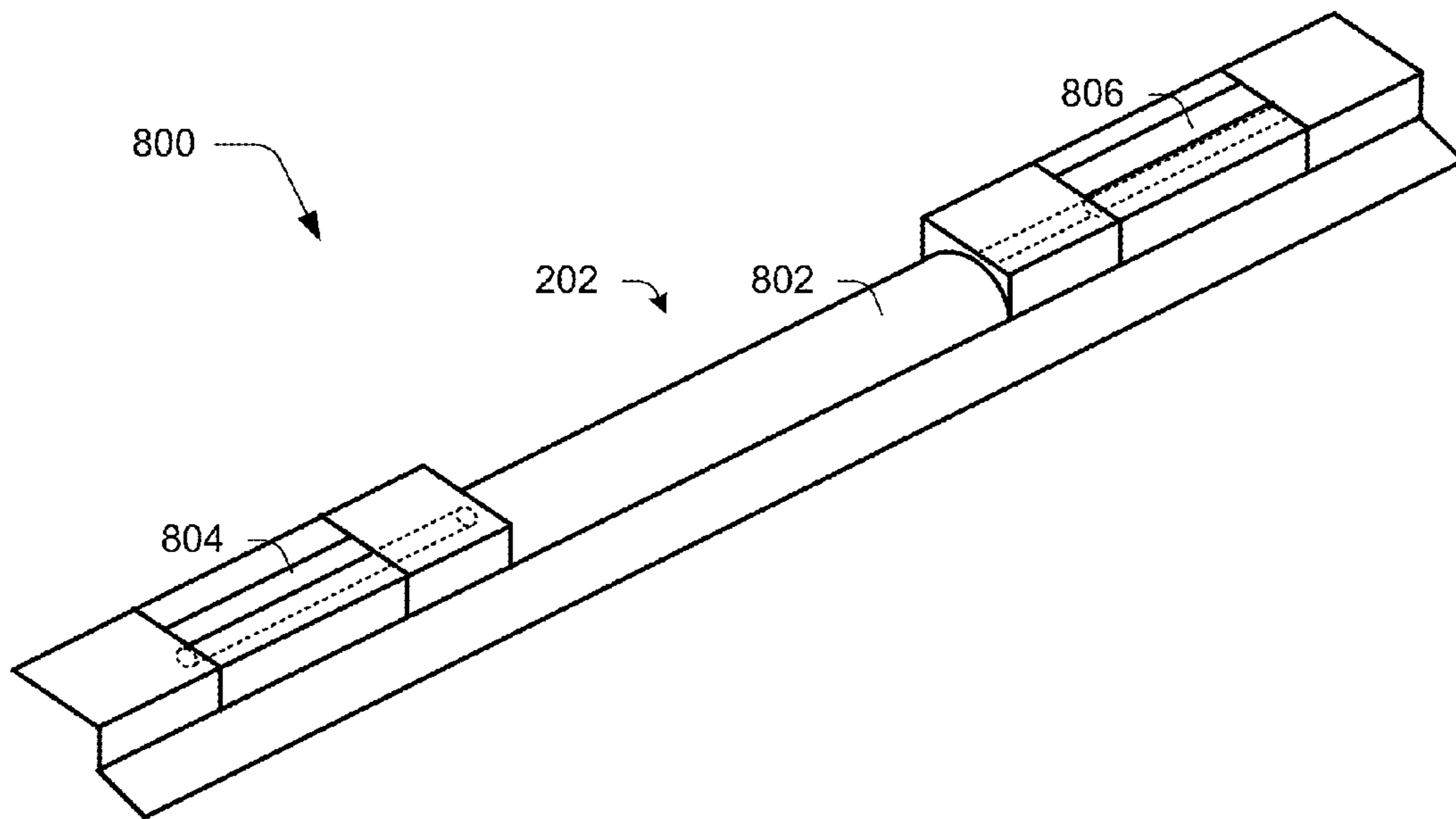


Fig. 8

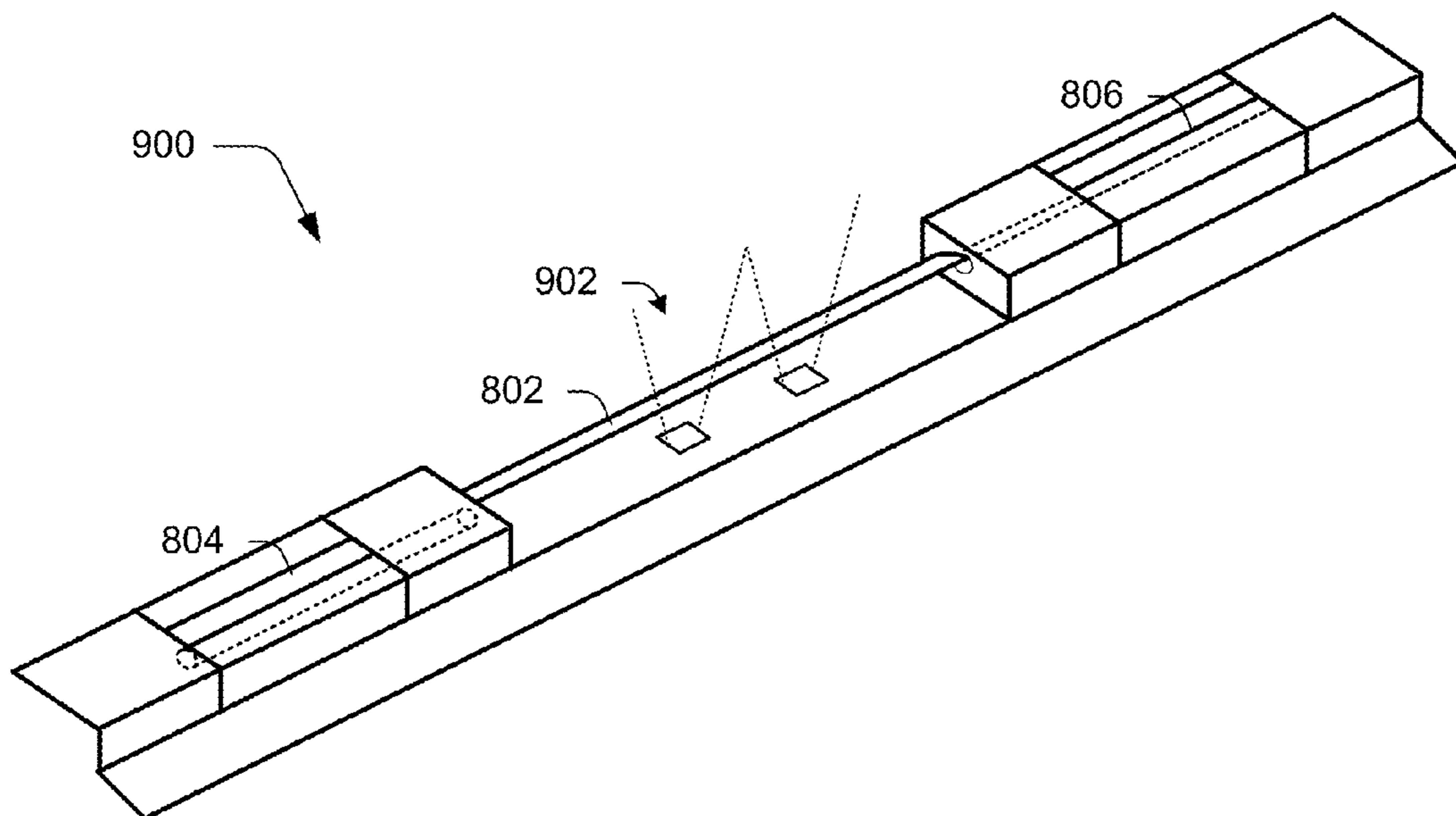


Fig. 9

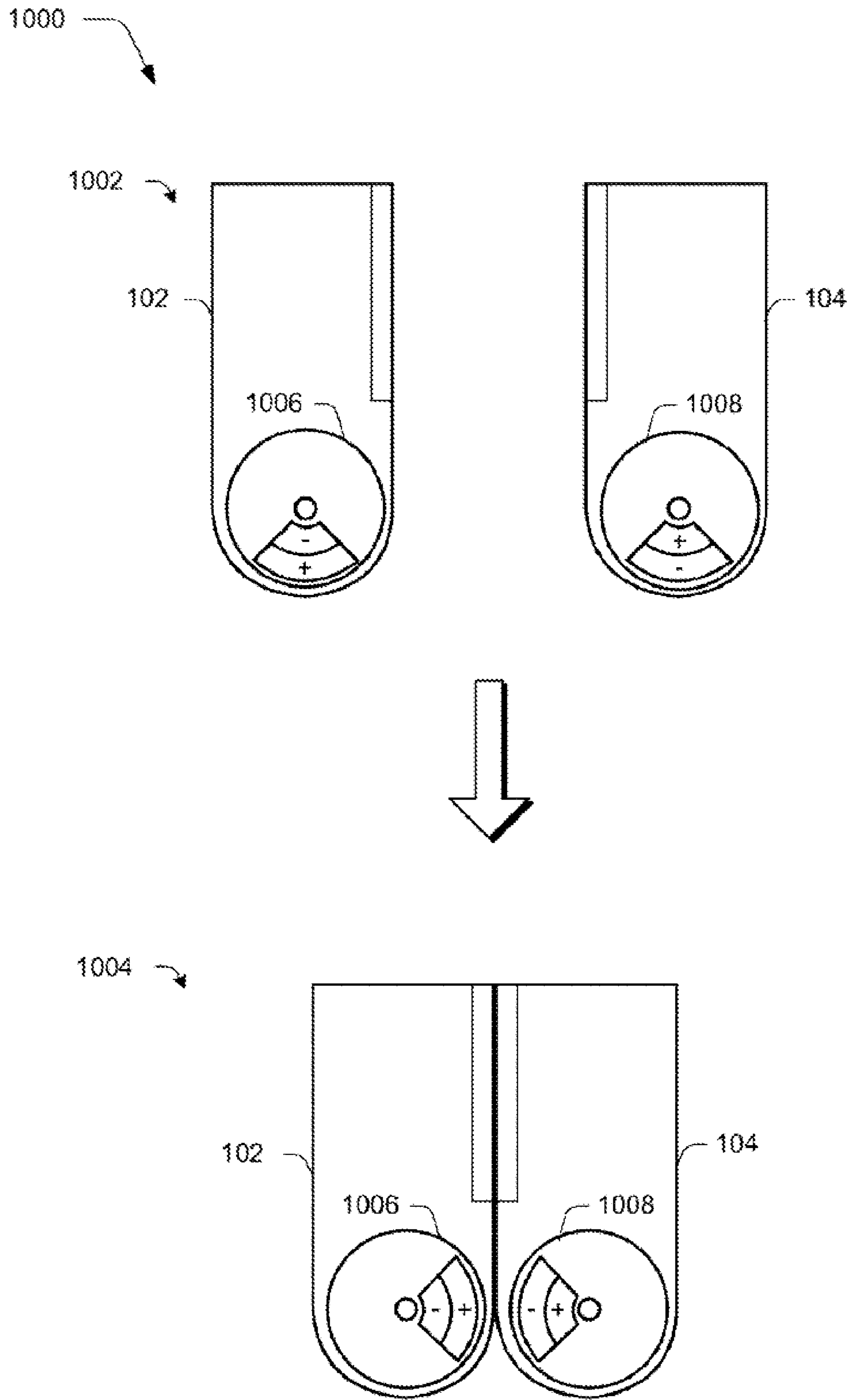


Fig. 10 (Amended)

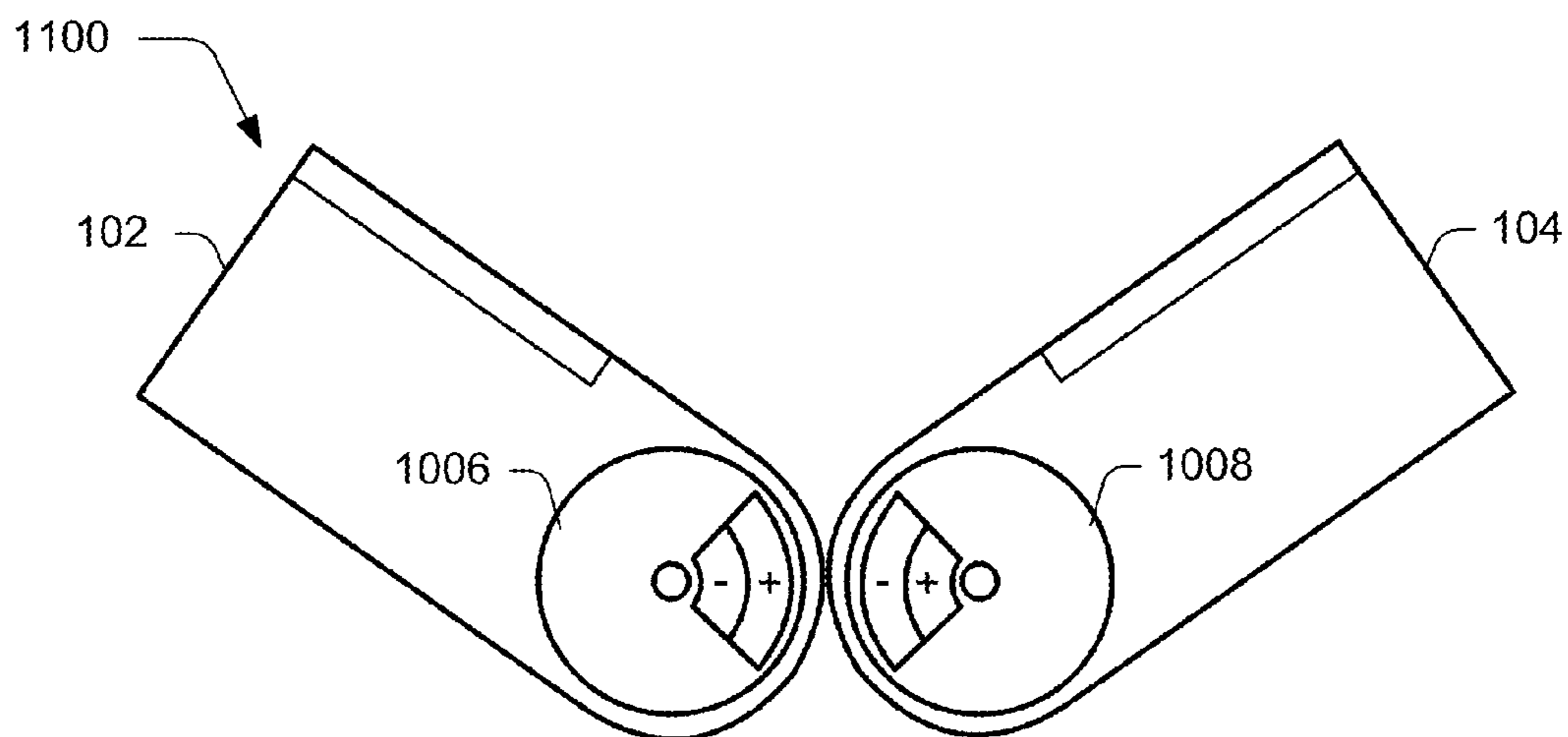


Fig. 11

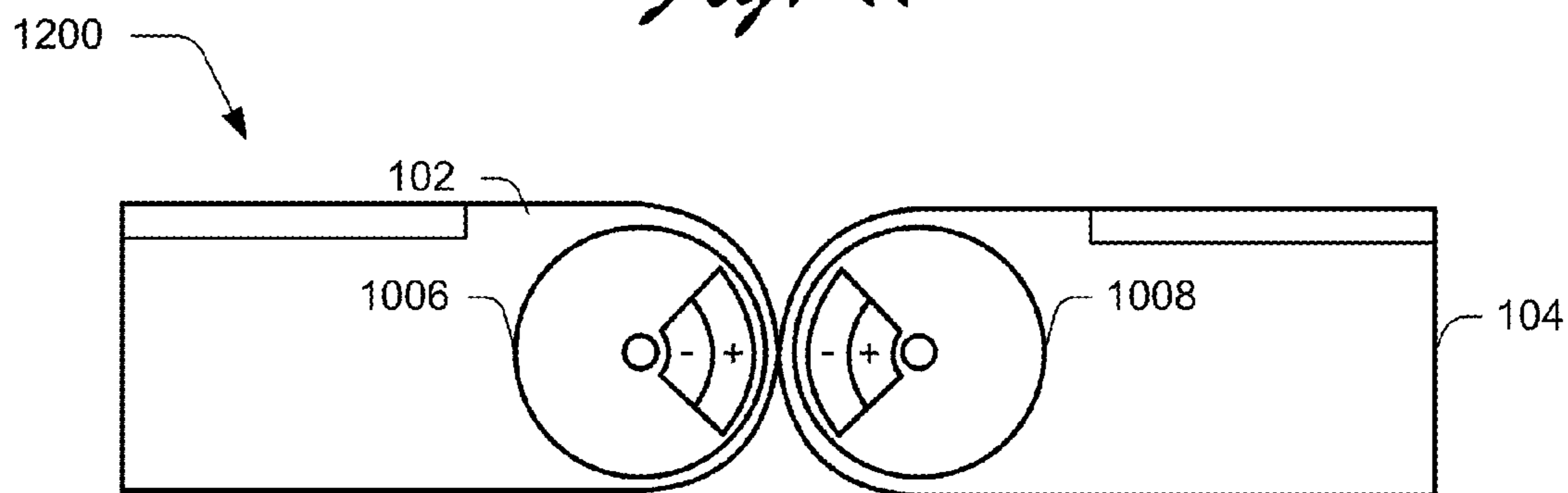


Fig. 12

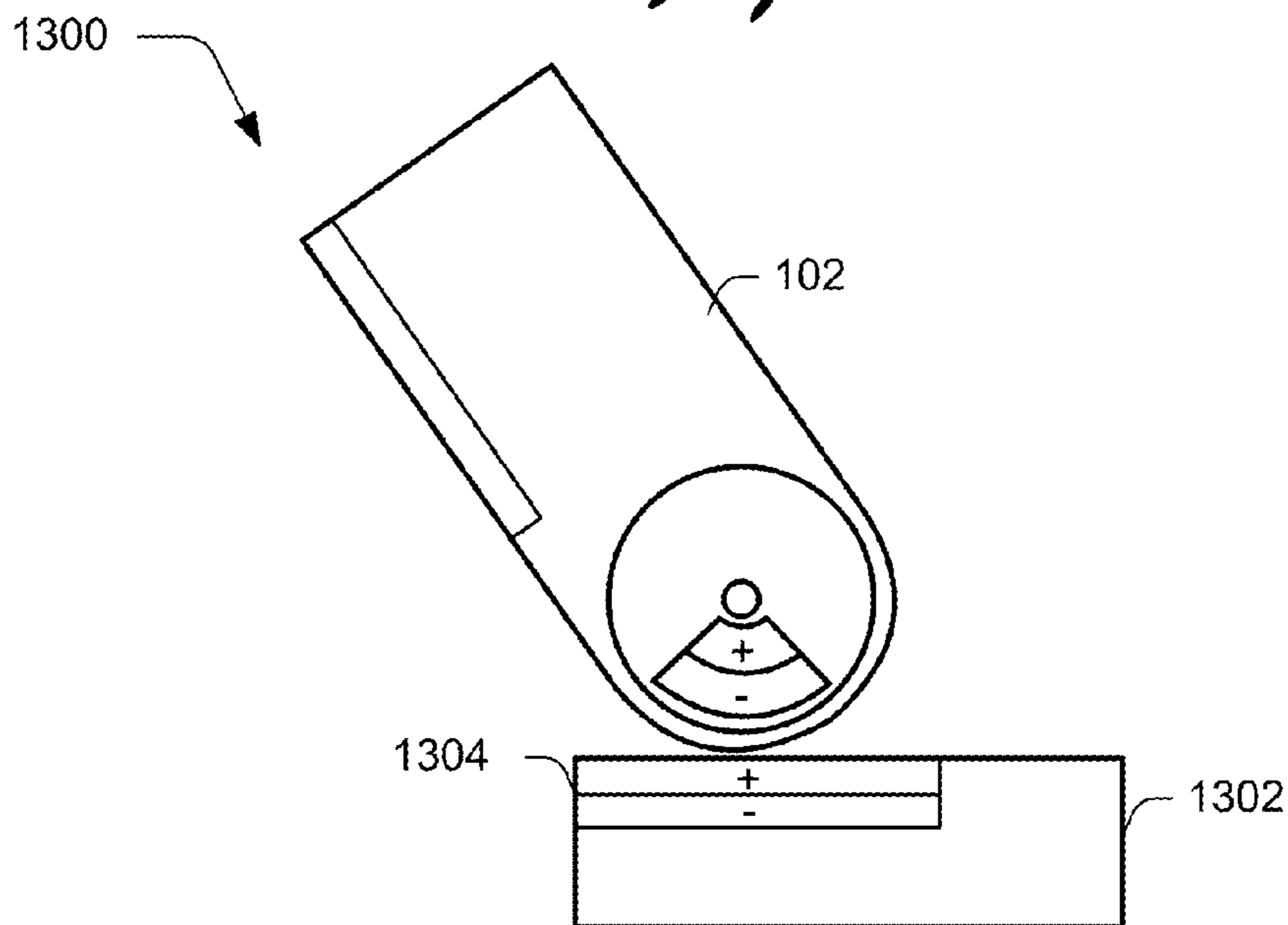


Fig. 13

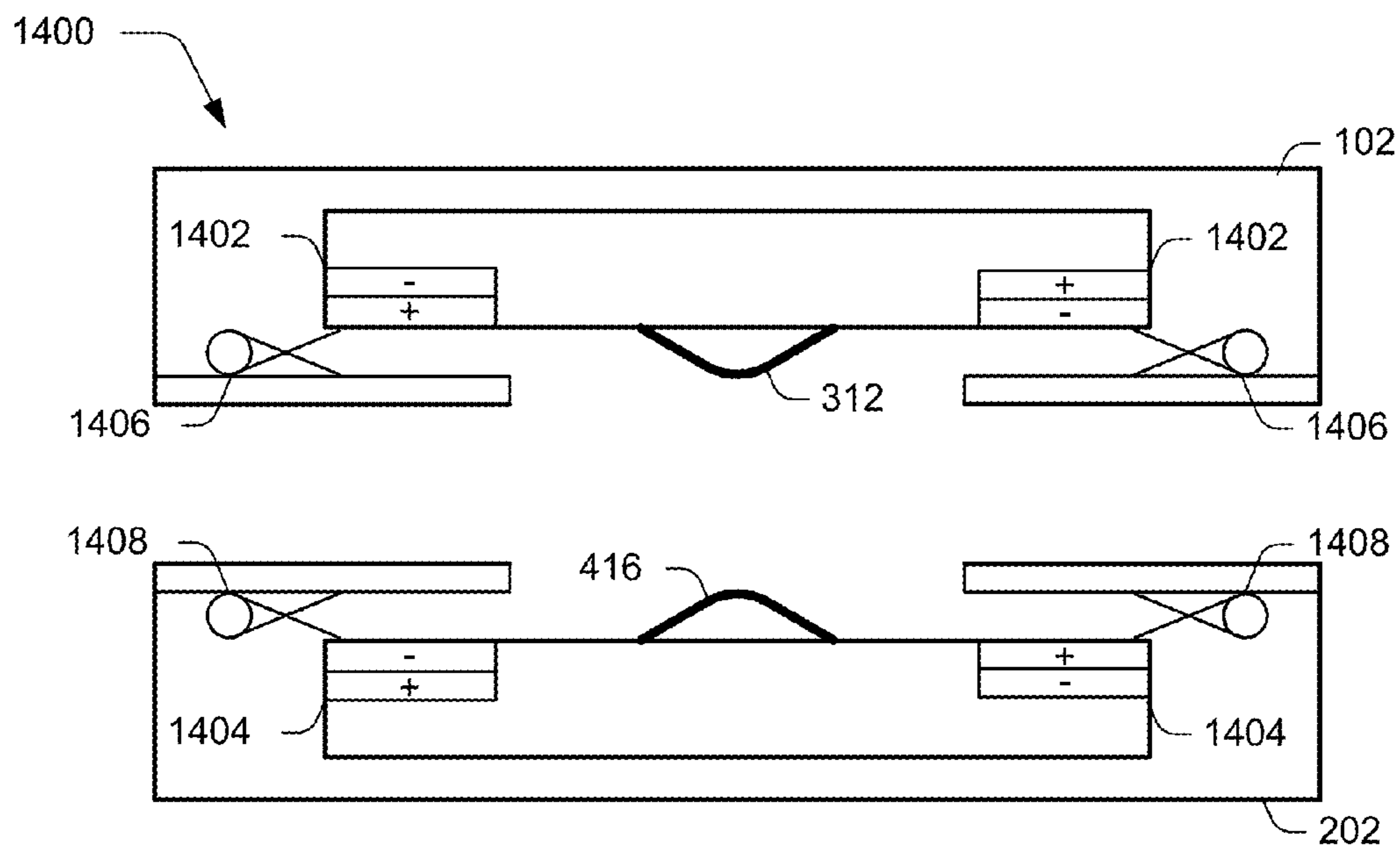


Fig. 14

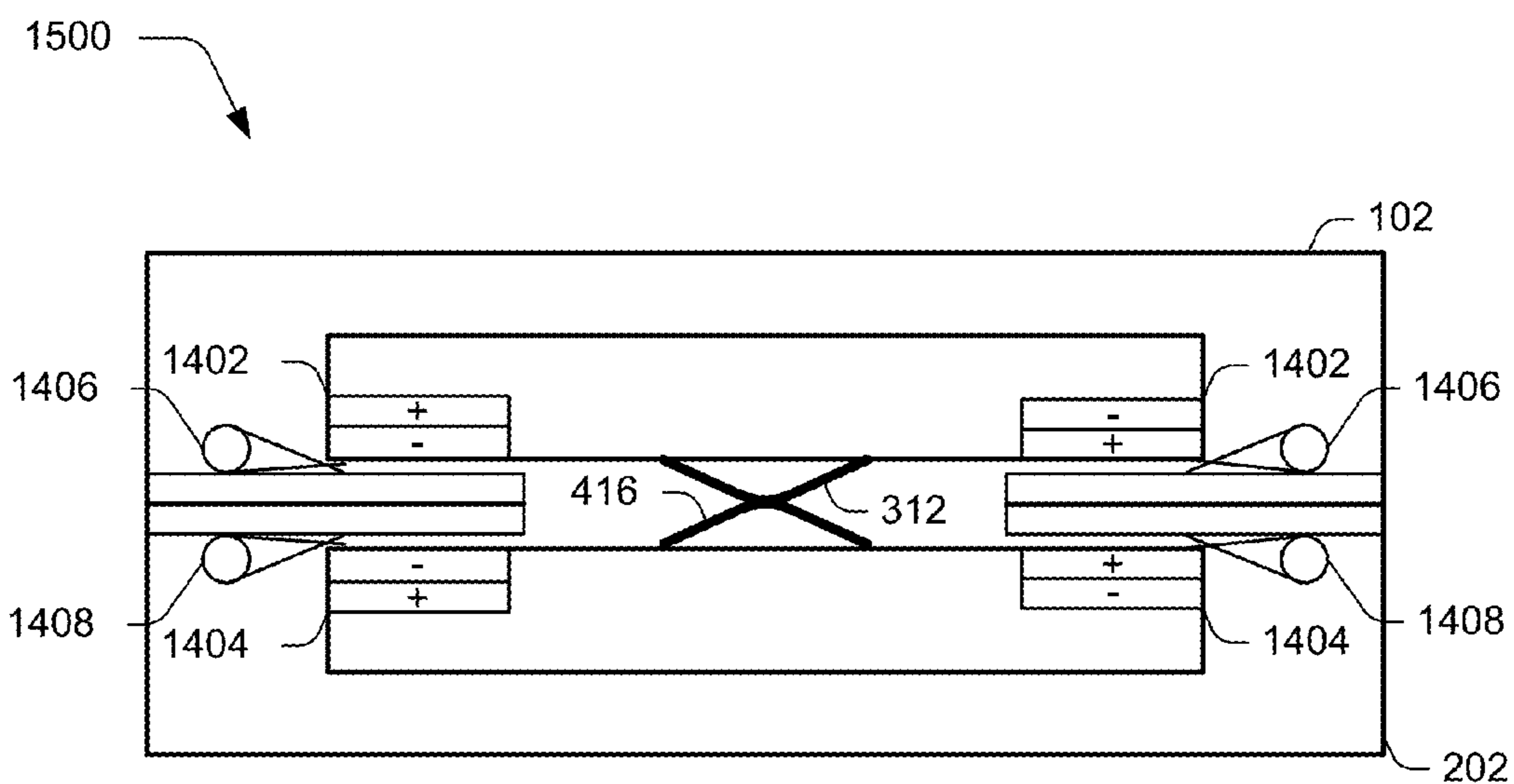


Fig. 15

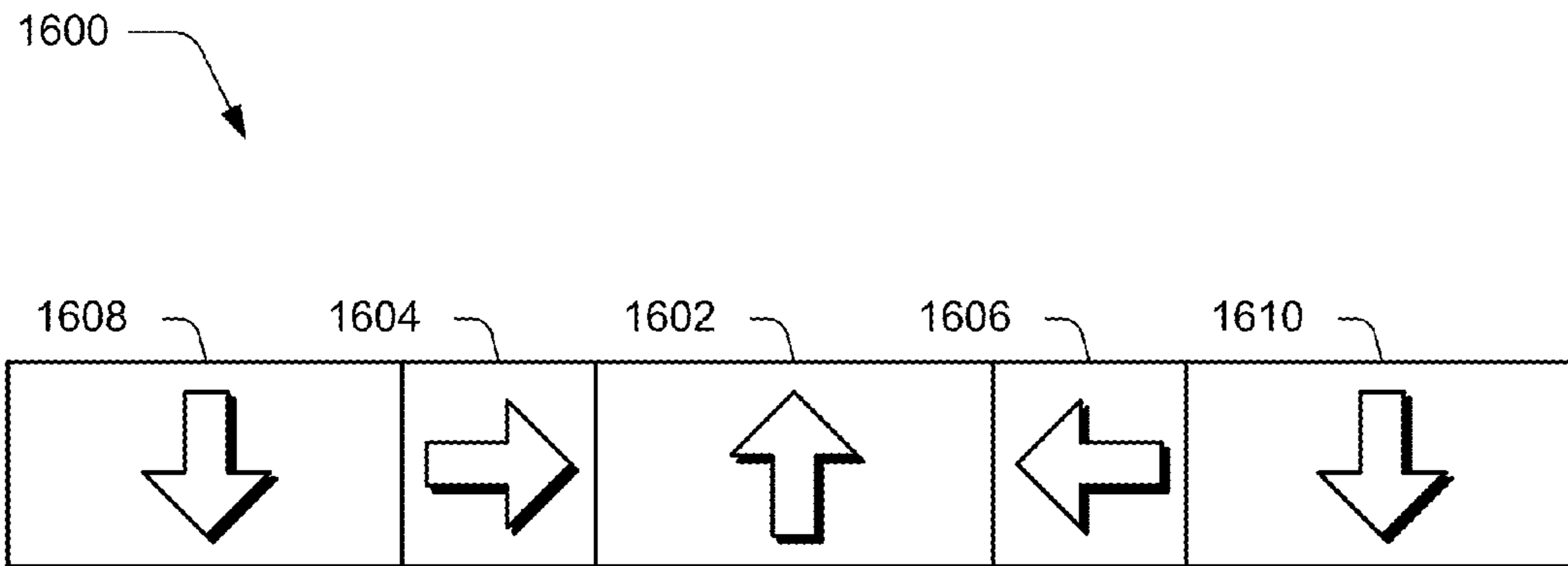


Fig. 16

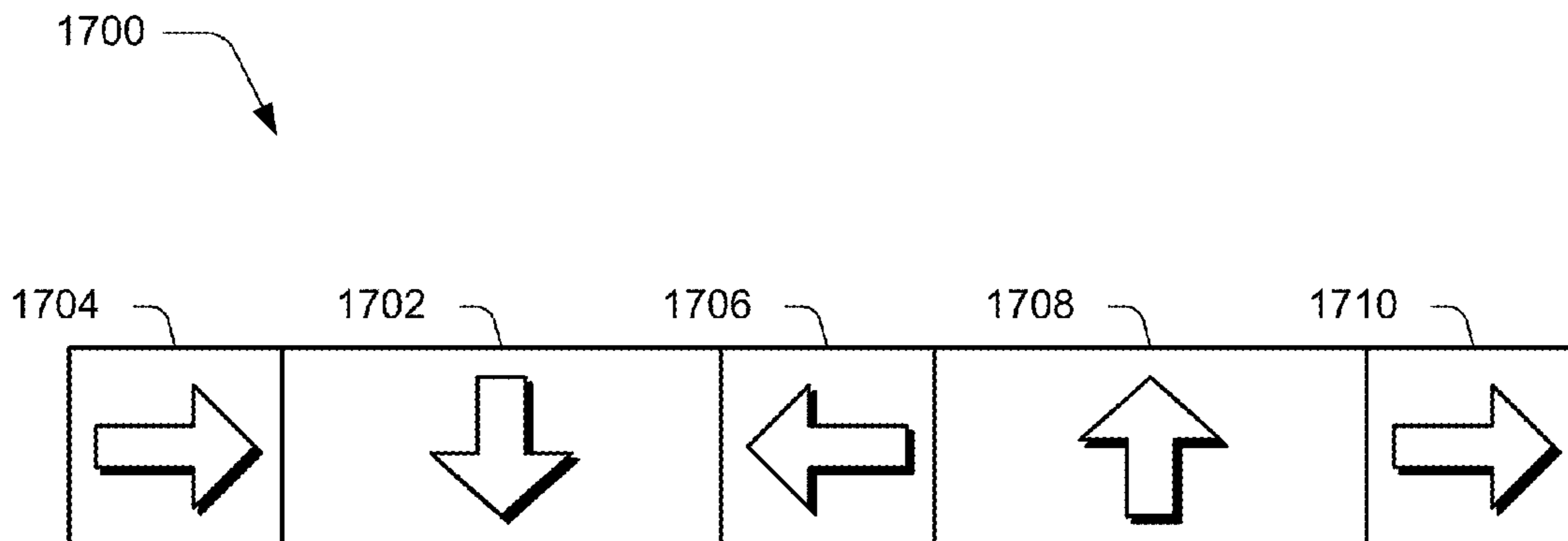


Fig. 17

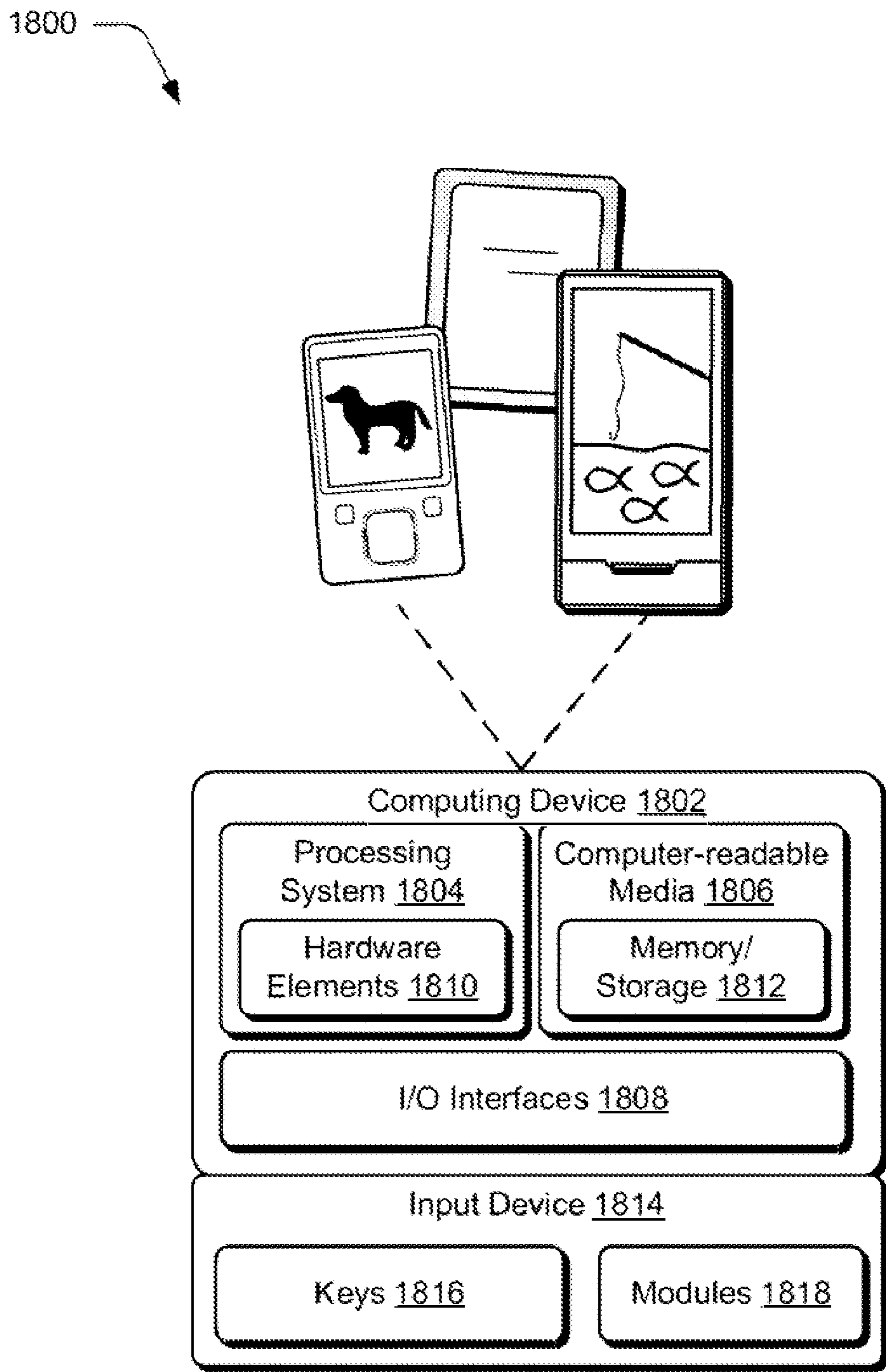


Fig. 18 (Amended)

CONNECTION DEVICE FOR COMPUTING DEVICES

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue; a claim printed with strikethrough indicates that the claim was canceled, disclaimed, or held invalid by a prior post-patent action or proceeding.

This application is a continuation-in-part and claims priority to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/470,633, filed May 14, 2012, entitled "Flexible Hinge and Removable Attachment," which further claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) to the following U.S. Provisional Patent Applications, the entire disclosures of each of these applications being incorporated by reference in their entirety:

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/606,321, filed Mar. 2, 2012, and titled "Screen Edge;"

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/606,301, filed Mar. 2, 2012, and titled "Input Device Functionality;"

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/606,313, filed Mar. 2, 2012, and titled "Functional Hinge;"

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/606,333, filed Mar. 2, 2012, and titled "Usage and Authentication;"

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/613,745, filed Mar. 21, 2012, and titled "Usage and Authentication;"

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/606,336, filed Mar. 2, 2012, and titled "Kickstand and Camera;" and

U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/607,451, filed Mar. 6, 2012, and titled "Spanaway Provisional."

BACKGROUND

Users have access to a wide variety of different computing devices. For example, a user may interact with a mobile phone, tablet computer, or other mobile computing device to check email, surf the web, compose texts, interact with applications, and so on.

However, conventional techniques that were utilized to interact with these devices were often limited to the individual devices, themselves. Consequently, even though a user may have access to a wide range of devices and may have that access at any one time (e.g., a mobile phone and a tablet), interaction with these devices could be disjointed, thereby leading to user frustration.

SUMMARY

A connection device for computing devices is described. In one or more implementations, a connection device comprises a plurality of connection portions that are physically and communicatively coupled, one to another. Each of the plurality of connection portions has at least one communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with a respective one of a plurality of computing devices and with at least one other communication contact of another one of the connections portions to support communication between the plurality of computing devices. Each of the plurality of connection portions also includes a magnetic coupling device to form a removable magnetic attachment to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

In one or more implementations, a system includes a first computing device having a housing that assumes a slate configuration and a second computing device having a

housing that assumes a slate configuration. The second computing device has a removable physical and communicative coupling with the second computing device, the removable physical communicative coupling provided at least in part through use of magnetism.

In one or more implementations, an apparatus comprises a plurality of connection portions that are configured to magnetically and physically communicatively couple a plurality of mobile computing devices having a slate form factor to each other.

This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used as an aid in determining the scope of the claimed subject matter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The detailed description is described with reference to the accompanying figures. In the figures, the left-most digit(s) of a reference number identifies the figure in which the reference number first appears. The use of the same reference numbers in different instances in the description and the figures may indicate similar or identical items. Entities represented in the figures may be indicative of one or more entities and thus reference may be made interchangeably to single or plural forms of the entities in the discussion.

FIG. 1 is an illustration of an environment in an example implementation that is operable to employ the connection techniques described herein.

FIG. 2 depicts a system showing a connection device in greater detail that is usable to communicatively couple computing devices to each other.

FIG. 3 depicts an example implementation of a connection portion of a connection device of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 depicts a cross section taken of the connection portion and a corresponding cavity of a computing device.

FIG. 5 depicts example implementations of the conductors that may be employed by the connection device to communicatively couple the connection portions to each other.

FIG. 6 depicts another example of a cross section taken of the connection portion and a corresponding cavity of the computing device, the connection portion configured to support cam-like movement.

FIG. 7 depicts another example of a cross section taken of the connection portion and a corresponding cavity of the computing device in which communication contacts are configured as capacitive-coupling pads.

FIG. 8 depicts another example in which the connection portion is configured to support an optical connection.

FIG. 9 shows an example in which a cover of FIG. 8 is opened to expose an optical sensor.

FIG. 10 depicts yet another example in which the computing devices include magnetic coupling portions configured as rotating magnetic hinges.

FIGS. 11-12 illustrate examples of rotation of the magnetic coupling portions in relation to each other may support a variety of different computing device orientations.

FIG. 13 depicts an example arrangement that supports a connection between the computing device and an accessory.

FIGS. 14 and 15 depict yet other examples in which the computing devices include magnetic coupling portions configured as rotating magnetic hinges.

FIG. 16 depicts an example of a magnetic coupling portion that may be employed by the computing devices or connection device to implement a flux fountain.

FIG. 17 depicts an example of a magnetic coupling portion that may be employed by the connection device or computing device to implement a flux fountain.

FIG. 18 illustrates an example system including various components of an example device that can be implemented as any type of computing device as described with reference to FIGS. 1-17 to implement embodiments of the techniques described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Overview

Even though users may have access to a wide range of computing devices, conventional techniques to interact with these devices were provided by the computing devices separately. Accordingly, techniques are described herein to support physical and communicative connections between computing devices. For example, mobile computing devices such as tablets and phones may employ a slate form factor. A connection device may be used to provide a physical (e.g., magnetic) and communicative coupling between the devices, thereby permitting the devices to be used in combination, such as to expand an available display area, share processing and memory resources, and so on.

The connection device may be configured in a variety of ways. In one such example, the connection device includes a plurality of connection portions. Each of the connection portions is configured to connect to a respective computing device. This may be performed through a communication contact that is configured to support transmission bandwidths (e.g., hundreds of MHz) between the devices that are sufficient to communicate data for display without distortion, which may include the use of leaf springs, capacitive connections, optical connections, and so on.

A physical coupling may also be provided, at least in part, using magnets. The magnets, for instance, may be used to support a zero to negative insertion force to connect the computing device to the connection portion, e.g., such that the devices “click” together. Thus, a plurality of computing devices may be communicatively and physically coupled to the connection device, which may be used to support a variety of different usage scenarios, further discussion of which may be found in relation to the following sections.

In the following discussion, an example environment is first described that may employ the techniques described herein. Example procedures are then described which may be performed in the example environment as well as other environments. Consequently, performance of the example procedures is not limited to the example environment and the example environment is not limited to performance of the example procedures. Further, although connection of computing devices is described, other devices are also contemplated, such as covers. For example, these techniques are equally applicable to input devices and passive devices, e.g., a cover having one or more materials (e.g., magnets, ferrous material, and so on) that are configured and positioned within the cover to be attracted to magnetic coupling devices of the computing device, use of protrusions and connecting portion, and so on as further described below.

Example Environment

FIG. 1 is an illustration of an environment 100 in an example implementation that is operable to employ the

connection device techniques described herein. The illustrated environment 100 includes examples of computing devices 102, 104 that are physically and communicatively coupled via a connection device 106. The computing devices 102, 104 may be configured in a variety of ways. For example, computing devices 102, 104 may be configured for mobile use and therefore be referred to as mobile computing devices, such as a mobile phone, a tablet computer as illustrated, a portable game device, a portable music device, and so on. Other non-mobile examples are also contemplated, such as laptop computers, desktop computers, servers, and so on. Thus, the computing devices 102, 104 may range from full resource devices with substantial memory and processor resources to a low-resource device with limited memory and/or processing resources. The computing devices 102, 104 may also relate to software that causes the computing devices 102, 104 to perform one or more operations.

The computing devices 102, 104, for instance, are each illustrated as including a respective input/output module 108, 110. The input/output modules 108, 110 are representative of functionality relating to processing of inputs and rendering outputs of the respective computing device 102, 104. A variety of different inputs may be processed by the input/output modules 108, 110 such as inputs relating to functions that correspond to keys of an accessory device, keys of a virtual keyboard displayed by the display devices 112, 114 to identify gestures and cause operations to be performed that correspond to the gestures that may be recognized through touchscreen functionality, and so forth. Thus, the input/output modules 108, 110 may support a variety of different input techniques by recognizing and leveraging a division between types of inputs including key presses, gestures, and so on.

The computing devices 102, 104 are illustrated as being physically and communicatively coupled through use of a connection device 106. The connection device 106 may thus be used to support a variety of different usage scenarios for the computing devices 102, 104. This may include use of the computing devices 102, 104 in a manner that mimics a multi-monitor setup, a parent/child control arrangement, and so on. This may also include sharing resources of the devices, such as processing, memory, network connection, and other resources. In the illustrated example, computing device 104 displays a start screen on the display device 114 that is usable to select applications for execution and display by the display device 112 of computing device 102 as well as on a display device 114 of the computing device 104, itself. The connection device 106 may be configured in a variety of ways to support this connection, an example of which is described as follows and shown in a corresponding figure.

FIG. 2 depicts a system 200 showing a connection device 202 in greater detail that is usable to communicatively couple the computing devices 102, 104 to each other. In this example, the connection device 106 includes a plurality of connection portions 202, 204. Each of the connection portions 202, 204 is configured to be received in a respective cavity of a respective computing device 102, 104. In the illustrated instance, the connection portions 202, 204 may be attached to the respective computing devices 102, 104 in either direction as the shapes of the portions is symmetrical.

The computing devices 102, 104 may be configured to use the cavities to support connections to peripheral devices, such as keyboard, input devices, electronic paper display devices, and so on. Accordingly, in this example the connection device 106 may be configured to leverage this

connection to support a connection between computing devices as further described below.

The plurality of connection portions **202**, **204** are communicatively coupled in this example using a flexible hinge **206**. The flexible hinge **206** is flexible in that rotational movement supported by the hinge is achieved through flexing (e.g., bending) of the material forming the hinge as opposed to mechanical rotation as supported by a pin, although that embodiment is also contemplated. Further, this flexible rotation may be configured to support movement in one or more directions (e.g., vertically in the figure) yet restrict movement in other directions, such as lateral movement of the computing device **104** in relation to the computing device **102**. This may be used to support consistent alignment of the computing devices **102**, **104**.

The flexible hinge **206**, for instance, may be formed using one or more layers of fabric and include conductors formed as flexible traces to communicatively couple the input device **104** to the computing device **102** and vice versa. This communication, for instance, may be used to communicate inputs between the computing devices **102**, **104**, transfer power, perform authentication, and so on. The flexible hinge **206** may be configured in a variety of ways, further discussion of which may be found in relation to the following figure.

FIG. 3 depicts an example implementation **300** of the connection portion **202** of the connection device **106** of FIG. 2. In this example, the connection portion **202** is illustrated as having a protrusion **302** that is configured to be received in a cavity of a corresponding computing device **102** as described above. The protrusion **302** includes magnetic coupling devices **304**, **306**, mechanical coupling protrusions (e.g., “fangs”) **308**, **310**, and a plurality of communication contacts **312**. The magnetic coupling devices **304**, **306** are configured to magnetically couple to complementary magnetic coupling devices of the computing device **102** through use of one or more magnets. In this way, the connection portion **202** may be physically secured to the computing device **102** through use of magnetic attraction.

The connection portion **202** also includes mechanical coupling protrusions **308**, **310** to form a mechanical physical connection between the connection portion **202** and the computing device **102**. The mechanical coupling protrusions **308**, **310** are configured to extend away from a surface of the connection portion **202**, which in this case is perpendicular although other angles are also contemplated.

The mechanical coupling protrusions **308**, **310** are configured to be received within complimentary cavities within a channel of the computing device **102**. When so received, the mechanical coupling protrusions **308**, **310** promote a mechanical binding between the devices when forces are applied that are not aligned with an axis that is defined as correspond to the height of the protrusions and the depth of the cavity. In this way, the connection portion **202** may be separated from the computing device in a motion similar to tearing a page from a book but mechanically binds when confronted with other motions, thereby promoting a secure connection between the devices.

The connection portion **202** is also illustrated as including a plurality of communication contacts **312**. The plurality of communication contacts **312** is configured to contact corresponding communication contacts of the computing device **102** to form a communicative coupling between the devices as shown and discussed in greater detail in relation to the following figure.

FIG. 4 depicts a cross section **400** taken of the connection portion **202** and a corresponding cavity **402** of the comput-

ing device. In this example, the flexible hinge **206** is also shown in greater detail. The flexible hinge **206** in this cross section includes a conductor **404** that is configured to communicatively couple the connection portions **202**, **204** to each other. The conductor **404** may be formed in a variety of ways, such as a copper trace that has an operational flexibility to permit operation as part of the flexible hinge, e.g., to support repeated flexing of the flexible hinge **206**. Flexibility of the conductor **404**, however, may be limited, e.g., may remain operational to conduct signals for flexing that is performed above a minimum bend radius.

Accordingly, the flexible hinge **206** may be configured to support a minimum bend radius based on the operational flexibility of the conductor **404** such that the flexible hinge **206** resists flexing below that radius. A variety of different techniques may be employed. The flexible hinge **206**, for instance, may be configured to include first and second outer layers **406**, **408**, which may be formed from a fabric, microfiber cloth, and so on. Flexibility of material used to form the first and/or second outer layers **406**, **408** may be configured to support flexibility as described above such that the conductor **404** is not broken or otherwise rendered inoperable during movement of the connection portions **202**, **204** in relation to each other.

In another instance, the flexible hinge **206** may include a mid-spine **410** located between the connection portions **202**, **204**. The mid-spine **410**, for example, includes a first flexible portion **412** that flexibly connects the connection portion **202** to the mid-spine **410** and a second flexible portion **414** that flexibly connects the mid-spine **410** to the other connection portion **204**.

In the illustrated example, the first and second outer layers **406**, **408** extend over the first and second flexible portions **412**, **414** of the flexible hinge **206** and are secured to the connection portions **202**, **204**, e.g., via clamping, adhesive, and so on. The conductor **404** is disposed between the first and second outer layers **406**, **408** with the mid-spine **410** configured to provide mechanical stiffness to a particular location of the flexible hinge **206** to support a desired minimum bend radius.

The communication contact **312** is also shown in cross section in this example. The communication contact **312** in this example is configured as a spring pin that support sliding movement as part of engagement with communication contacts **416** in the cavity of the computing device **102**. This sliding motion may support surface cleaning of the communication contact **312**, thereby promoting a robust connection.

The communication contact **312** may be formed in a variety of different ways. This may include use of electrical transmission line principles to avoid distortion of the digital waveforms to provide generally uniform impedance through use of differential pairs of communication contacts **312**. A characteristic impedance may be set through controlled trace widths, trace-to-trace gaps, choice of dielectric material, and separations from a ground plane. Further, the communication contact **312** and/or conductor **404** may be disposed proximal to a dielectric that is adjacent to a ground plane to control impedance. Contact resistance of the communication contact **312** may also be configured. This in conventionally performed using a high insertion force to maintain a well-toleranced contact resistance.

However, in one or more implementations the connection portion **202** may be configured to employ a zero to negative insertion force. This may be performed by leveraging a clamping force provided by the magnetic coupling devices **304**, **306** providing a zero to negative insertion force of the

connection portion **202** to the computing device **102**. In this way, the connection portion **202** and the computing device **102** may “click” together with alignment provided automatically through the magnetic coupling devices **304**, **306**. As shown in FIG. 4, for instance, a sliding and clamping motion may be supported in the same movement to connect the devices, thereby promoting consistent impedance and cleanliness of the communication contacts **312**, **416**.

Once connected, the computing devices may determine an orientation relative to each other, which may be used to configure a user interface that continues across the devices. For example, the orientation of the device may be deduced individually and separately, such as through use of one or more orientation sensors by the device and knowledge of location of where the communication contacts are disposed on the device. In this way, an orientation of the device may be determined as well as a like orientation of a connected device.

In another example, the two [device] devices may communicate with each other, such as to acknowledge a computed orientation, e.g., whether in portrait or landscape mode as well as to the “right” or “left”, “top” or “bottom,” and so on. Thus, this example may have increased robustness. Other examples are also contemplated.

FIG. 5 depicts example implementations **500** of the conductors **404** that may be employed by the connection device **106** to communicatively couple the connection portions **202**, **204** to each other. In a first example **502**, a microstrip transmission line is shown in which conductors **404** have widths, heights, and spacing to provide desired transmission properties.

In one or more implementations, placement of the magnetic coupling portions near the communication contacts **312** and conductors **404** may cause capacitance near these structures to be modified, which may cause impedance disturbance and distortion of signals transmitted by the conductors. Therefore, in the second example **504**, a strip-line transmission line is shown in which the conductor **404** is disposed between two ground planes. In this way, signals transmitted by the conductor **404** may be protected from modified capacitance that may be caused by the magnetic coupling devices **304**, **306**. A variety of other examples are also contemplated.

FIG. 6 depicts another example **600** of a cross section taken of the connection portion **202** and a corresponding cavity **402** of the computing device **102**, the connection portion **202** configured to support cam-like movement. As before, the connection portion **202** is configured as a protrusion that is to be received within a cavity **402** of a computing device **102** such that communication contacts **312**, **416** form a communicative coupling.

In this example, the connection portion includes a magnet **602** that is configured to be attracted to a magnet **604** disposed as part of the cavity **402** of the computing device **102**. Due to the curved surfaces of the connection portion **202** and the cavity **402**, a cam action is caused by the attraction of the magnets **602**, **604** such that the connection portion **202** rotates **606** in relation to the cavity **402**. This rotation **606** causes the communication contact **312** to slide against the communication contact **416** of the computing device **102**, thereby cleaning the surfaces of the contacts and promoting a consistent communicative coupling as previously described. In these examples, the communication contact **312** is configured as a leaf spring, other examples are also contemplated which are described as follows and shown in a corresponding figure.

FIG. 7 depicts another example **700** of a cross section taken of the connection portion **202** and a corresponding cavity **402** of the computing device in which communication contacts **312**, **416** are configured as capacitive-coupling pads. As before, the connection portion **202** is configured as a protrusion that is to be received within a cavity **402** of a computing device **102** such that communication contacts **312**, **416** form a communicative coupling.

In this example, however, each of the communication contacts **312**, **416** includes a dielectric **702**, **704** disposed proximal to (e.g., covering) conductors of the communication contacts **312**, **416**. In this way, the communication contacts **312**, **416** form AC-coupling capacitors, thereby avoiding issues such as a firm and clean physical contact between the communication contacts **312**, **416**.

FIG. 8 depicts another example **800** in which the connection portion **202** is configured to support an optical connection. In this example, the connection portion **202** includes a cover **802** and two cover rotation mechanisms **804**, **806** that are coupled to the cover **802** using axles that are illustrated in phantom in the figure.

The two cover rotation mechanisms **804**, **806** are configured to bias the cover **802** in the closed position as shown in FIG. 8, such as through use of one or more return springs. The cover rotation mechanisms **804**, **806** include diametrically magnetized magnets that are configured to rotate the axles, which may be configured such that the magnets have magnetic field lines that are aligned at a right angle to a surface of the connection portion **202**.

Therefore, the cover rotation mechanisms **804**, **806** may be configured to rotate the cover **802** in the presence of a magnetic field having a corresponding alignment, e.g., from magnets of the computing device **102**. A cylindrical magnet of the cover rotation mechanisms **804**, **806**, for instance, may rotate against a return force of a biasing mechanism (e.g., a spring) to align with the field lines of the adjacent magnet of the computing device **102**, thereby opening the cover **802** as shown in the example implementation **900** of FIG. 9. Once the two devices are brought out of proximity, the biasing mechanism may cause the cover **802** to return to a closed position as shown in FIG. 8.

Once the cover **802** is opened as shown in FIG. 9, optical sensors **902** may be exposed on the connection portion **202** for communication with corresponding optical sensors of the computing device **102**. In this way, the optical sensors **902** may be protected from contaminants and support a high bandwidth connection between the computing devices **102**, **104**.

FIG. 10 depicts yet another example **1000** in which the computing devices **102**, **104** include magnetic coupling portions configured as rotating magnetic hinges. This example is shown through first and second stages **1002**, **1004**. At the first stage **1002**, the magnetic coupling portions **1006**, **1008** are integrated as part of the respective computing devices **102**, **104**. The magnetic coupling portions **1006**, **1008** are configured to support hinge-able attachment of the devices to each other. Connections for data and power between the two computing devices **102**, **104** may be connected to the same axle as the magnets so that the connections of the respective computing devices **102**, **104** face each other when brought together.

The magnetic coupling portions **1006**, **1008**, for instance, may employ spring-loaded rotating magnets. The magnet polarity is S-symmetric around the center of the edge being joined so that an identical pair of computing devices **102**, **104** may be connected by rotating one of the magnetic coupling portions **1006**, **1008** at 180 degrees compared to

the other, as shown in the second stage **1004**. Thus, when the computing devices **102**, **104** are brought together, the magnets rotate around their axis and pull the “hinge” together. Matching/interlocking dimples or ridges may also be employed for fine-grain alignment of the computing devices **102**, **104** to each other. Thus, the magnets may rotate around an axis but are lightly spring-loaded to return to a neutral state as shown in the first stage. For sake of clarity in the figure, near-end magnet orientation is shown.

Rotation of the magnetic coupling portions **1006**, **1008** in relation to each other may support a variety of different computing device **102**, **104** orientations, examples **1100**, **1200** are shown in FIGS. **11-12**. In the example **1300** shown in FIG. **13**, this arrangement may also be leveraged to support a connection between the computing device **102** and an accessory device **1302**, such as a keyboard or other input device. The accessory device **1302** may also include a complementary arrangement of magnets **1304** to support a similar physical and communicative coupling. Although the magnets shown in the previous examples are cylindrical, the face configured to support the physical connection may also be configured as substantially flat, which may increase the strength of the magnetic connection.

FIGS. **14** and **15** depict yet other examples **1400**, **1500** in which the computing devices **102**, **104** include magnetic coupling portions configured as rotating magnetic hinges. Communication contacts are generally kept relatively small for cost, real-estate, and impedance reasons and may be spring-loaded to maintain a consistent connection. Connecting surfaces of the communication contacts may be coated with a non-reactive, highly conductive metal such as gold, which may help maintain this functionality. However, this may leave a thin coating of metal over a small area that may be exposed to abrasion or snagging when the connector is not engaged. Further, in the case of connecting two identical computing devices directly, traditional socket/plug which could afford opportunities to recess the contacting surfaces may not “line up” for use in connection the devices directly.

Accordingly, the computing device **102** and connection portion **202** and/or another computing device **104** may employ retracting communication contacts **312**, **416**. The connection portion **202** and the computing device **102**, for instance, may include magnetic coupling devices **1402**, **1404** that are configured to be attracted to each other. The magnetic coupling devices **1402**, **1404** and respective communication contacts **312**, **416** may be disposed on a surface that is biased to a retracted state through one or more springs **1406**, **1408** as shown in FIG. **14**.

As the computing device **102** and connection portion **202** are brought together, however, attraction of the magnetic coupling devices **1402**, **1404** to each other may cause the springs **1406**, **1408** to compress and cause the communication contacts **312** to emerge and eventually touch as shown in the example **1500** of FIG. **15**. In this way, the communication contacts **312**, **416** may be protected from abrasion and contaminants yet still support a consistent connection between the devices. Once influence of the magnets is removed, the communication contacts **312**, **416** may return to a retracted state as shown in FIG. **14**. A variety of different configurations of magnets may be used as part of the magnetic coupling devices described in this example as well as the previous examples of FIGS. **1-13**, further examples of which are described as follows and shown in a corresponding figure.

FIG. **16** depicts an example **1600** of a magnetic coupling portion that may be employed by the connection device **106** or computing device **102** to implement a flux fountain. In

this example, alignment of a magnet field is indicted for each of a plurality of magnets using arrows.

A first magnet **1602** is disposed in the magnetic coupling device having a magnetic field aligned along an axis. Second and third magnets **1604**, **1606** are disposed on opposing sides of the first magnet **1602**. The alignment of the respective magnetic fields of the second and third magnets **1604**, **1606** is substantially perpendicular to the axis of the first magnet **1602** and generally opposed each other.

In this case, the magnetic fields of the second and third magnets are aimed towards the first magnet **1602**. This causes the magnetic field of the first magnet **1602** to extend further along the indicated axis, thereby increasing a range of the magnetic field of the first magnet **1602**.

The effect may be further extended using fourth and fifth magnets **1608**, **1610**. In this example, the fourth and fifth magnets **1608**, **1610** have magnetic fields that are aligned as substantially opposite to the magnetic field of the first magnet **1602**. Further, the second magnet **1604** is disposed between the fourth magnet **1608** and the first magnet **1602**. The third magnet **1606** is disposed between the first magnet **1602** and the fifth magnet **1610**. Thus, the magnetic fields of the fourth and fifth magnets **1608**, **1610** may also be caused to extend further along their respective axes which may further increase the strength of these magnets as well as other magnets in the collection. This arrangement of five magnets is suitable to form a flux fountain. Although five magnets were described, any odd number of magnets of five and greater may repeat this relationship to form flux fountains of even greater strength.

To magnetically attach to another magnetic coupling device, a similar arrangement of magnets may be disposed “on top” or “below” of the illustrated arrangement, e.g., so the magnetic fields of the first, fourth and fifth magnets **1602**, **1608**, **1610** are aligned with corresponding magnets above or below those magnets. Further, in the illustrated example, the strength of the first, fourth, and fifth magnets **1602**, **1608**, **1610** is stronger than the second and third magnets **1604**, **1606**, although other implementations are also contemplated. Another example of a flux fountain is described in relation to the following discussion of the figure.

FIG. **17** depicts an example **1700** of a magnetic coupling portion that may be employed by the connection device **106** or computing device **102** to implement a flux fountain. In this example, alignment of a magnet field is also indicted for each of a plurality of magnets using arrows.

Like the example **1600** of FIG. **16**, a first magnet **1702** is disposed in the magnetic coupling device having a magnetic field aligned along an axis. Second and third magnets **1704**, **1706** are disposed on opposing sides of the first magnet **1702**. The alignment of the magnetic fields of the second and third magnets **1704**, **1706** are substantially perpendicular the axis of the first magnet **1702** and generally opposed each other like the example **1600** of FIG. **16**.

In this case, the magnetic fields of the second and third magnets are aimed towards the first magnet **1702**. This causes the magnetic field of the first magnet **1702** to extend further along the indicated axis, thereby increasing a range of the magnetic field of the first magnet **1702**.

This effect may be further extended using fourth and fifth magnets **1708**, **1710**. In this example, the fourth magnet **1708** has a magnetic field that is aligned as substantially opposite to the magnetic field of the first magnet **1702**. The fifth magnet **1710** has a magnetic field that is aligned as substantially corresponding to the magnet field of the second magnet **1704** and is substantially opposite to the magnetic

field of the third magnet **1706**. The fourth magnet **1708** is disposed between the third and fifth magnets **1706**, **1710** in the magnetic coupling device.

This arrangement of five magnets is suitable to form a flux fountain. Although five magnets are described, any odd number of magnets of five and greater may repeat this relationship to form flux fountains of even greater strength. Thus, the magnetic fields of the first **1702** and fourth magnet **1708** may also be caused to extend further along its axis which may further increase the strength of this magnet.

To magnetically attach to another magnetic coupling device, a similar arrangement of magnets may be disposed “on top” or “below” of the illustrated arrangement, e.g., so the magnetic fields of the first and fourth magnets **1702**, **1708** are aligned with corresponding magnets above or below those magnets. Further, in the illustrated example, the strength of the first and fourth magnets **1702**, **1708** (individually) is stronger than a strength of the second, third and fifth magnets **1704**, **1706**, **1710**, although other implementations are also contemplated.

Further, the example **1600** of FIG. **16**, using similar sizes of magnets, may have increased magnetic coupling as opposed to the example **1700** of FIG. **17**. For instance, the example **1600** of FIG. **16** uses three magnets (e.g. the first, fourth, and fifth magnets **1602**, **1608**, **1610**) to primarily provide the magnetic coupling, with two magnets used to “steer” the magnetic fields of those magnets, e.g., the second and third magnets **1604**, **1606**. However, the example **1700** of FIG. **17** uses two magnets (e.g., the first and fourth magnets **1702**, **1708**) to primarily provide the magnetic coupling, with three magnets used to “steer” the magnetic fields of those magnets, e.g., the second, third, and fifth magnets **1704**, **1706**, **1708**.

Accordingly, though, the example **1700** of FIG. **17**, using similar sizes of magnets, may have increased magnetic alignment capabilities as opposed to the example **1600** of FIG. **16**. For instance, the example **1700** of FIG. **17** uses three magnets (e.g. the second, third, and fifth magnets **1704**, **1706**, **1710**) to “steer” the magnetic fields of the first and fourth magnets **1702**, **1708**, which are used to provide primary magnetic coupling. Therefore, the alignment of the fields of the magnets in the example **1700** of FIG. **17** may be closer than the alignment of the example **1600** of FIG. **16**.

Regardless of the technique employed, it should be readily apparent that the “steering” or “aiming” of the magnetic fields described may be used to increase an effective range of the magnets, e.g., in comparison with the use of the magnets having similar strengths by themselves in a conventional aligned state. In one or more implementations, this causes an increase from a few millimeters using an amount of magnetic material to a few centimeters using the same amount of magnetic material.

Example System and Device

FIG. **18** illustrates an example system generally at **1800** that includes an example computing device **1802** that is representative of one or more computing systems and/or devices that may implement the various techniques described herein. The computing device **1802** may be, for example, be configured to assume a mobile configuration through use of a housing formed and size to be grasped and carried by one or more hands of a user, illustrated examples of which include a mobile phone, mobile game and music device, and tablet computer although other examples are also contemplated.

The example computing device **1802** as illustrated includes a processing system **1804**, one or more computer-readable media **1806**, and one or more I/O interface **1808** that are communicatively coupled, one to another. Although not shown, the computing device **1802** may further include a system bus or other data and command transfer system that couples the various components, one to another. A system bus can include any one or combination of different bus structures, such as a memory bus or memory controller, a peripheral bus, a universal serial bus, and/or a processor or local bus that utilizes any of a variety of bus architectures. A variety of other examples are also contemplated, such as control and data lines.

The processing system **1804** is representative of functionality to perform one or more operations using hardware. Accordingly, the processing system **1804** is illustrated as including hardware element **1810** that may be configured as processors, functional blocks, and so forth. This may include implementation in hardware as an application specific integrated circuit or other logic device formed using one or more semiconductors. The hardware elements **1810** are not limited by the materials from which they are formed or the processing mechanisms employed therein. For example, processors may be comprised of semiconductor(s) and/or transistors (e.g., electronic integrated circuits (ICs)). In such a context, processor-executable instructions may be electronically-executable instructions.

The computer-readable storage media **1806** is illustrated as including memory/storage **1812**. The memory/storage **1812** represents memory/storage capacity associated with one or more computer-readable media. The memory/storage component **1812** may include volatile media (such as random access memory (RAM)) and/or nonvolatile media (such as read only memory (ROM), Flash memory, optical disks, magnetic disks, and so forth). The memory/storage component **1812** may include fixed media (e.g., RAM, ROM, a fixed hard drive, and so on) as well as removable media (e.g., Flash memory, a removable hard drive, an optical disc, and so forth). The computer-readable media **1806** may be configured in a variety of other ways as further described below.

Input/output interface(s) **1808** are representative of functionality to allow a user to enter commands and information to computing device **1802**, and also allow information to be presented to the user and/or other components or devices using various input/output devices. Examples of input devices include a keyboard, a cursor control device (e.g., a mouse), a microphone, a scanner, touch functionality (e.g., capacitive or other sensors that are configured to detect physical touch), a camera (e.g., which may employ visible or non-visible wavelengths such as infrared frequencies to recognize movement as gestures that do not involve touch), and so forth. Examples of output devices include a display device (e.g., a monitor or projector), speakers, a printer, a network card, tactile-response device, and so forth. Thus, the computing device **1802** may be configured in a variety of ways to support user interaction.

The computing device **1802** is further illustrated as being communicatively and physically coupled to an input device **1814** that is physically and communicatively removable from the computing device **1802**. In this way, a variety of different input devices may be coupled to the computing device **1802** having a wide variety of configurations to support a wide variety of functionality. In this example, the input device **1814** includes one or more keys **1816**, which may be configured as pressure sensitive keys, mechanically switched keys, and so forth.

The input device **1814** is further illustrated as include one or more modules **1818** that may be configured to support a variety of functionality. The one or more modules **1818**, for instance, may be configured to process analog and/or digital signals received from the keys **1816** to determine whether a keystroke was intended, determine whether an input is indicative of resting pressure, support authentication of the input device **1814** for operation with the computing device **1802**, and so on.

Various techniques may be described herein in the general context of software, hardware elements, or program modules. Generally, such modules include routines, programs, objects, elements, components, data structures, and so forth that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. The terms “module,” “functionality,” and “component” as used herein generally represent software, firmware, hardware, or a combination thereof. The features of the techniques described herein are platform-independent, meaning that the techniques may be implemented on a variety of commercial computing platforms having a variety of processors.

An implementation of the described modules and techniques may be stored on or transmitted across some form of computer-readable media. The computer-readable media may include a variety of media that may be accessed by the computing device **1802**. By way of example, and not limitation, computer-readable media may include “computer-readable storage media” and “computer-readable signal media.”

“Computer-readable storage media” may refer to media and/or devices that enable persistent and/or non-transitory storage of information in contrast to mere signal transmission, carrier waves, or signals per se. Thus, computer-readable storage media refers to non-signal bearing media. The computer-readable storage media includes hardware such as volatile and non-volatile, removable and non-removable media and/or storage devices implemented in a method or technology suitable for storage of information such as computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules, logic elements/circuits, or other data. Examples of computer-readable storage media may include, but are not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, hard disks, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or other storage device, tangible media, or article of manufacture suitable to store the desired information and which may be accessed by a computer.

“Computer-readable signal media” may refer to a signal-bearing medium that is configured to transmit instructions to the hardware of the computing device **1802**, such as via a network. Signal media typically may embody computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules, or other data in a modulated data signal, such as carrier waves, data signals, or other transport mechanism. Signal media also include any information delivery media. The term “modulated data signal” means a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. By way of example, and not limitation, communication media include wired media such as a wired network or direct-wired connection, and wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared, and other wireless media.

As previously described, hardware elements **1810** and computer-readable media **1806** are representative of modules, programmable device logic and/or fixed device logic

implemented in a hardware form that may be employed in some embodiments to implement at least some aspects of the techniques described herein, such as to perform one or more instructions. Hardware may include components of an integrated circuit or on-chip system, an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field-programmable gate array (FPGA), a complex programmable logic device (CPLD), and other implementations in silicon or other hardware. In this context, hardware may operate as a processing device that performs program tasks defined by instructions and/or logic embodied by the hardware as well as a hardware utilized to store instructions for execution, e.g., the computer-readable storage media described previously.

Combinations of the foregoing may also be employed to implement various techniques described herein. Accordingly, software, hardware, or executable modules may be implemented as one or more instructions and/or logic embodied on some form of computer-readable storage media and/or by one or more hardware elements **1810**. The computing device **1802** may be configured to implement particular instructions and/or functions corresponding to the software and/or hardware modules. Accordingly, implementation of a module that is executable by the computing device **1802** as software may be achieved at least partially in hardware, e.g., through use of computer-readable storage media and/or hardware elements **1810** of the processing system **1804**. The instructions and/or functions may be executable/operable by one or more articles of manufacture (for example, one or more computing devices **1802** and/or processing systems **1804**) to implement techniques, modules, and examples described herein.

CONCLUSION

Although the example implementations have been described in language specific to structural features and/or methodological acts, it is to be understood that the implementations defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific features or acts described. Rather, the specific features and acts are disclosed as example forms of implementing the claimed features.

What is claimed is:

1. A connection device comprising:

a plurality of connection portions that are physically and communicatively coupled, one to another, [the plurality of connection portions connected using a flexible hinge,] each of the plurality of connection portions having:

at least one communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with a respective one of a plurality of computing devices and with at least one other communication contact of another one of the connections portions to support communication between the plurality of computing devices[, the flexible hinge having one or more conductors configured to communicatively couple the at least one communication contact with the at least one other communication contact]; [and]

a magnetic coupling device to form a removable magnetic attachment to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices;

a flexible hinge connecting the plurality of connection portions, the flexible hinge including:

a first connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

a second connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

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a first outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a second outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a mid-spine between the first connection portion and the second connection portion, the mid-spine being located between the first outer layer and the second outer layer, the mid-spine being made from a stiffer material than the first outer layer and the second outer layer;

a first flexible portion between the first connection portion and the mid-spine;

a second flexible portion between the mid-spine and the second connection portion; and

one or more conductors disposed between the first outer layer and the second outer layer, the one or more conductors being configured to communicatively couple the at least one communication contact with the at least one other communication contact.

2. A connection device described in claim 1, wherein the flexible hinge is configured not to exceed a minimum bend radius that is defined at least in part based on flexibility of the one or more conductors.

3. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of connection portions is configured as a projection that is configured to be received within a channel of a housing of the respective one of the plurality of computing devices, the projection including the at least one communication contact and the magnetic coupling device.

4. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the plurality of computing devices include housings that support a slate configuration.

5. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact is configured to support sliding motion as part of a physical coupling of the communication contact to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices, the sliding motion configured to at least partially clean a surface of the at least one communication contact.

6. A connection device as described in claim 5, wherein the sliding motion is configured to be assisted at least in part using magnetic attraction of the magnetic coupling device to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

7. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact is configured to include a spring.

8. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of connection portions is formed such that the magnetic coupling device causes the respective connection portion to employ a cam action to support rotational movement as part of engagement of the at least one communication contact with the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

9. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact includes a dielectric coating in an amount sufficient to form a capacitive connection with a corresponding contact of the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

10. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact is configured to support an optical connection.

11. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of connection portions includes a rotating cover on an axle that is biased in a closed position

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and is configured to assume an open position in which the at least one communication contact is exposed responsive to a magnetic field.

12. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact and the at least one other communication contact are connected using one or more conductors configured as strip lines.

[13. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the magnetic coupling device has one or more rotatable magnets that have a symmetric magnetic polarity.]

14. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the at least one communication contact is configured to be moveable with respect to the respective connection portion between a retracted position and an exposed position responsive to magnetic interaction.

15. A connection device as described in claim 1, wherein the magnetic coupling device is configured as a flux fountain.

16. A system comprising:

a first computing device having a housing that assumes a slate configuration; and

a second computing device having a housing that assumes a slate configuration, the second computing device having:

a removable physical and communicative coupling with the first computing device, the removable physical communicative coupling provided at least in part through [use of]:

a flexible hinge physically and communicatively coupling a plurality of connection portions, one to another, each of the plurality of connection portions having at least one communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with the first computing device and at least one other communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with the second computing device, the flexible hinge having:

a first connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

a second connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

a first outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a second outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a mid-spine between the first connection portion and the second connection portion, the mid-spine being located between the first outer layer and the second outer layer, the mid-spine being made from a stiffer material than the first outer layer and the second outer layer;

a first flexible portion between the first connection portion and the mid-spine;

a second flexible portion between the mid-spine and the second connection portion; and

one or more conductors between the first outer layer and the second outer layer, the one or more conductors being configured to communicatively couple the at least one communication contact with the at least one other communication contact.

[17. A system as described in claim 16, wherein the flexible hinge has one or more rotatable magnets that have a symmetric magnetic polarity.]

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18. A system as described in claim 16, wherein the flexible hinge is configured not to exceed a minimum bend radius that is defined at least in part based on flexibility of the one or more conductors.

19. An apparatus comprising:

a plurality of connection portions that are configured to magnetically and physically communicatively couple a plurality of mobile computing devices having a slate form factor to each other, the plurality of connection portions connected using:

a flexible hinge having:

a first connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

a second connection portion of the plurality of connection portions;

a first outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a second outer layer extending between and secured to the first connection portion and the second connection portion;

a mid-spine between the first connection portion and the second connection portion, the mid-spine being located between the first outer layer and the

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second outer layer, the mid-spine being made from a stiffer material than the first outer layer and the second outer layer;

a first flexible portion between the first connection portion and the mid-spine;

a second flexible portion between the mid-spine and the second connection portion; and

one or more conductors *located between the first outer layer and the second outer layer and configured to communicatively couple at least one communication contact configured to form a communicative coupling with a respective one of the plurality of mobile computing devices with at least one other communication contact of another one of the connections portions.*

20. An apparatus as described in claim 19, wherein the magnetic coupling is provided by a magnetic coupling device configured to form a removable magnetic attachment to the respective one of the plurality of mobile computing devices, the removable magnetic attachment configured to provide a zero or negative insertion force of the connection portion to the respective one of the plurality of computing devices.

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