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Eriksson et al.

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(54) **LIGHT-BASED PROXIMITY DETECTION SYSTEM AND USER INTERFACE**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06F 3/042 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **345/175**; 345/173; 715/786

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 345/156-179; 715/786
See application file for complete search history.

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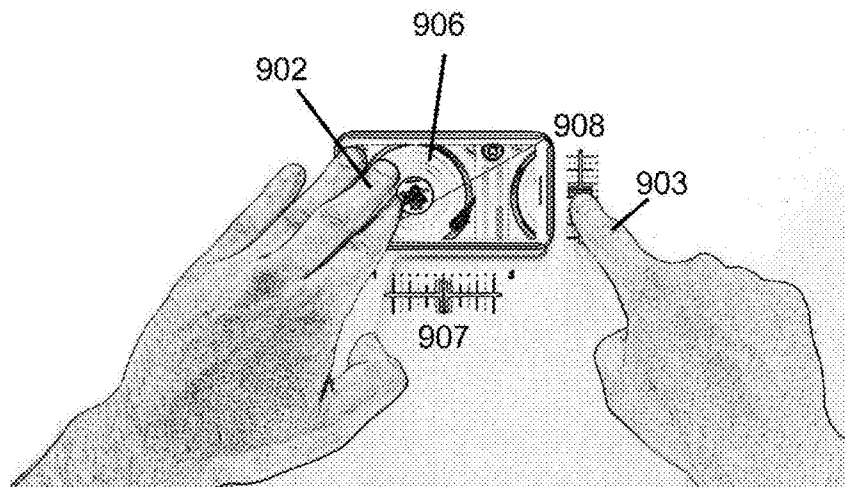
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Assistant Examiner — Premal Patel
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An electronic device, including a housing, a display mounted in the housing, a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in the housing near the edges of the display and directed outward from the display, for detecting presence of an object outside the display and near the edges of the display, and a processor mounted in the housing and coupled with the display and with the proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to user activation of elements of a graphical user interface (GUI), the GUI including a displayed portion that is rendered by the processor on the display, and a virtual non-displayed portion that extends beyond the edges of the display, wherein the processor operates the device responsive to user activation of elements of the virtual portion of the GUI, based on the proximity sensors detecting presence of an object in the non-displayed portion of the GUI.

16 Claims, 32 Drawing Sheets



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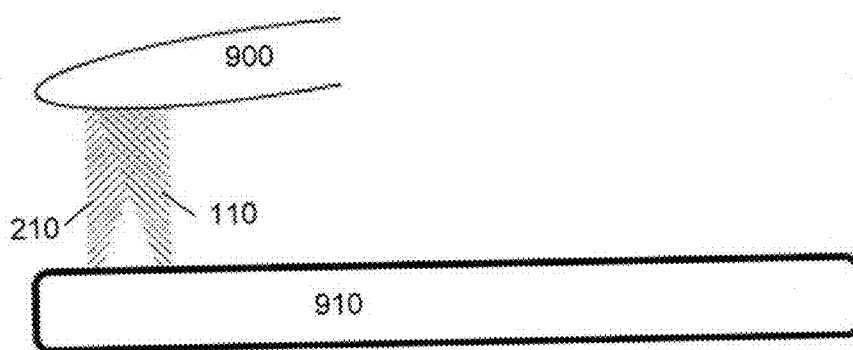
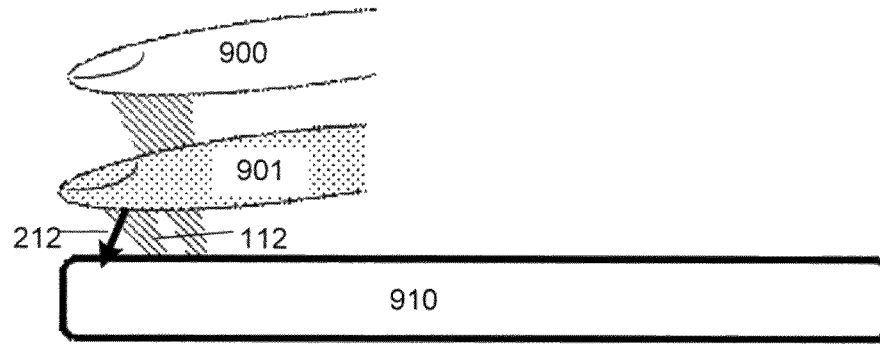
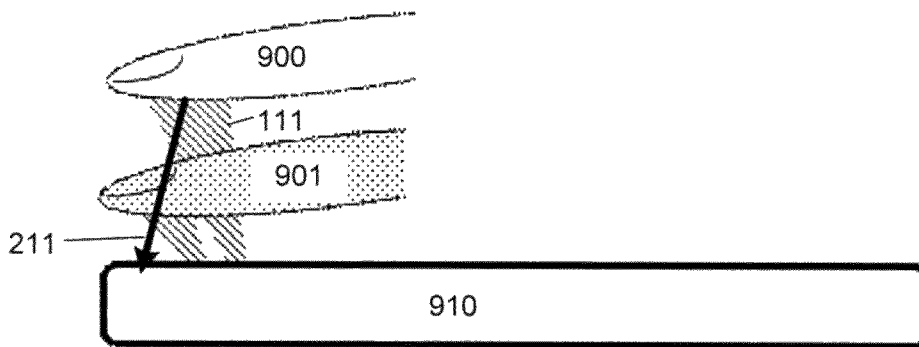


FIG. 1



(A)



(B)

FIG. 2

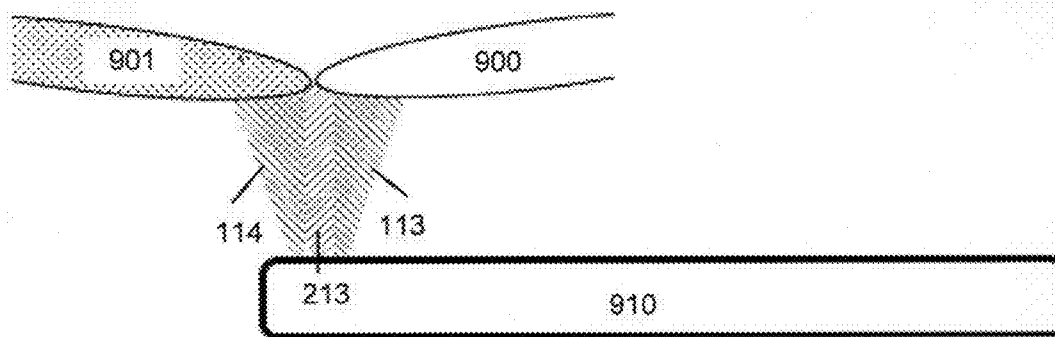


FIG. 3

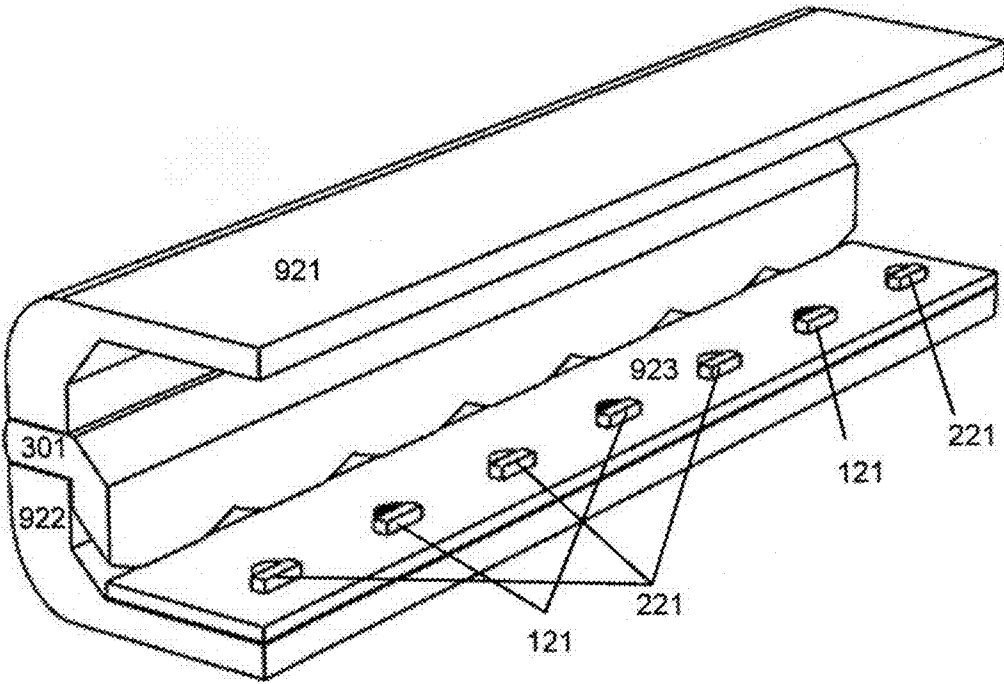


FIG. 4

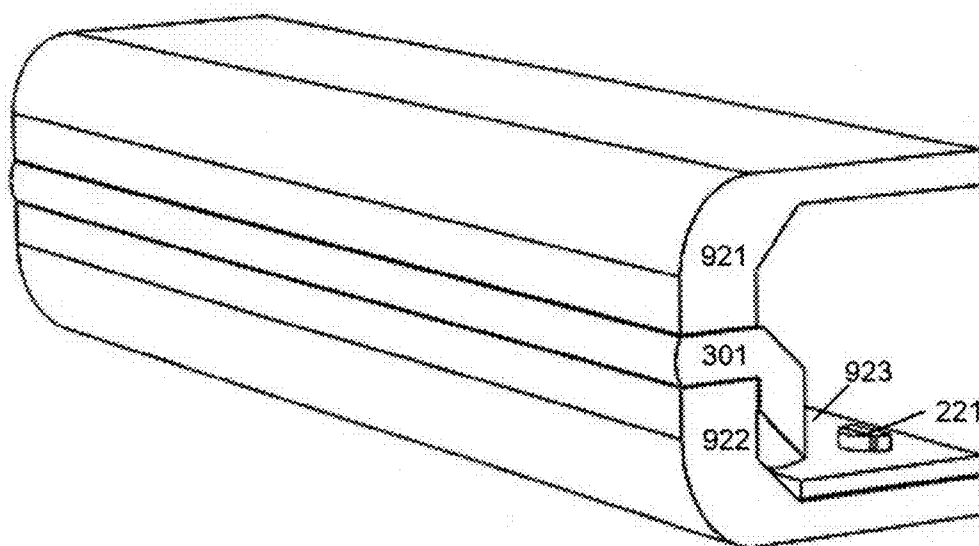


FIG. 5

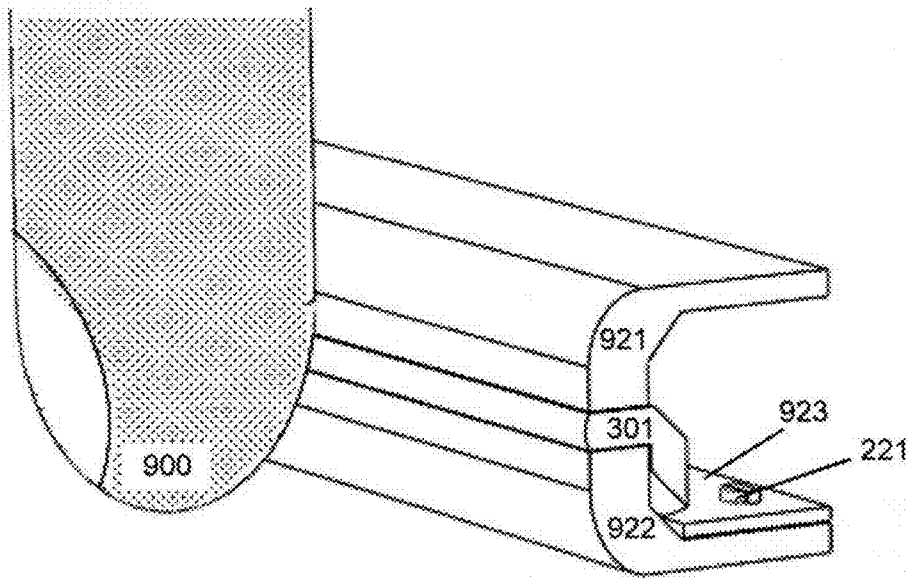


FIG. 6

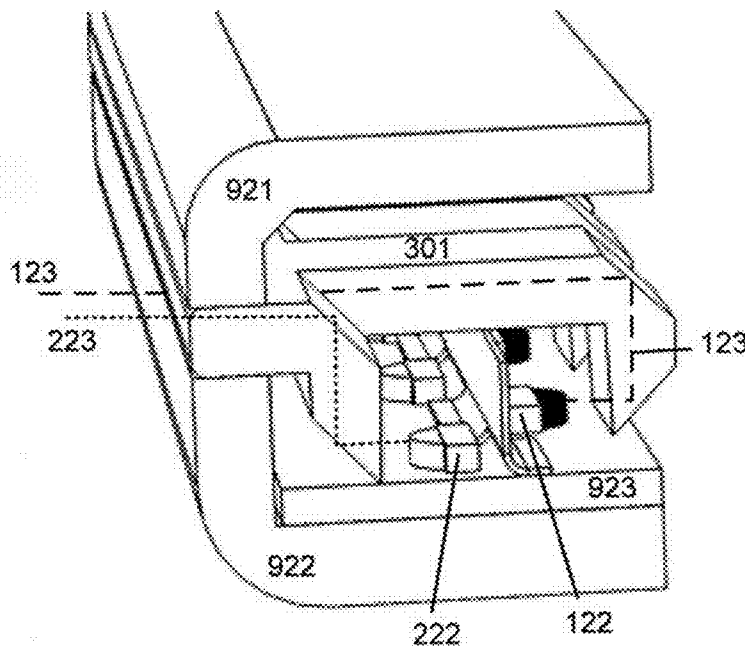


FIG. 7

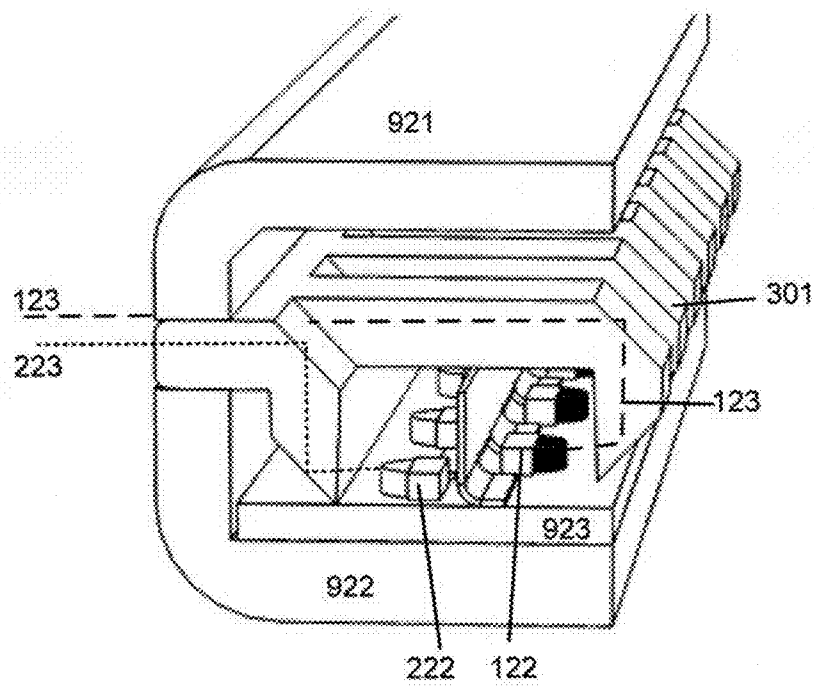


FIG. 8

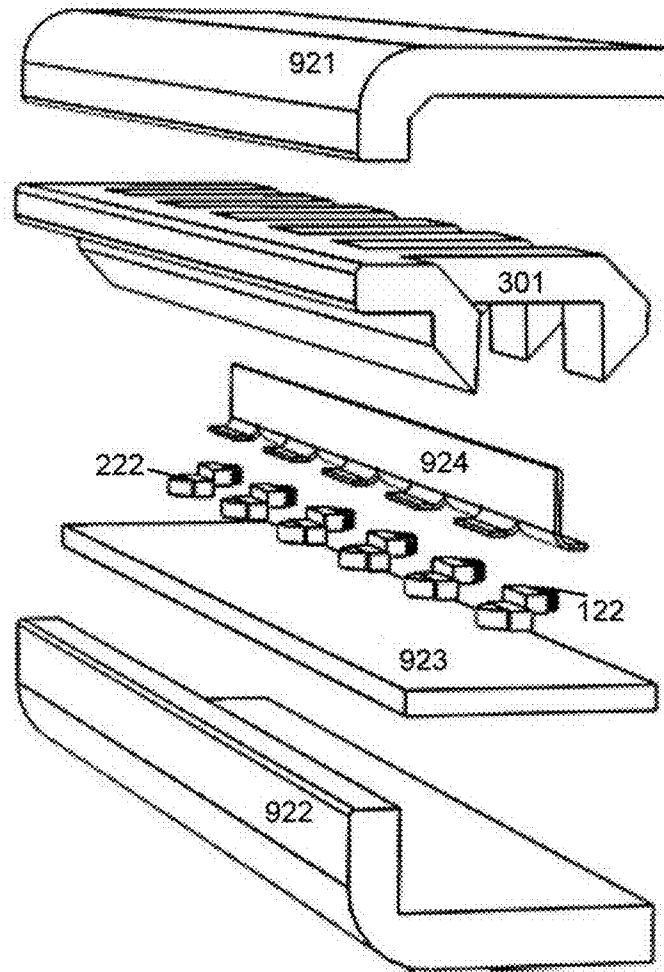


FIG. 9

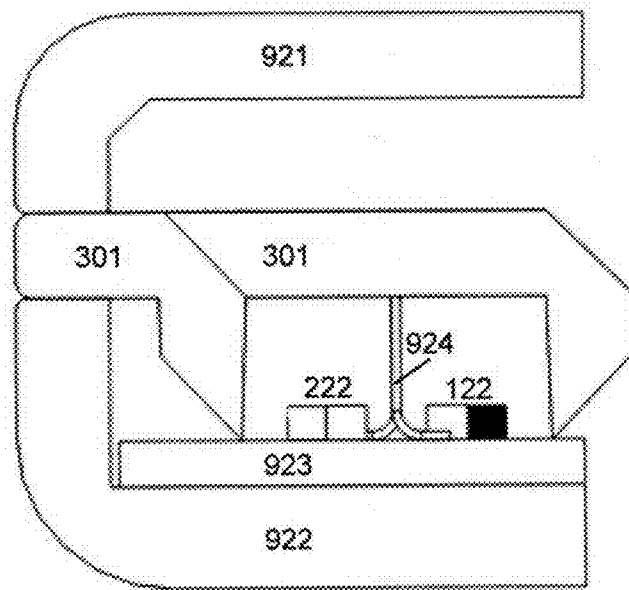


FIG. 10

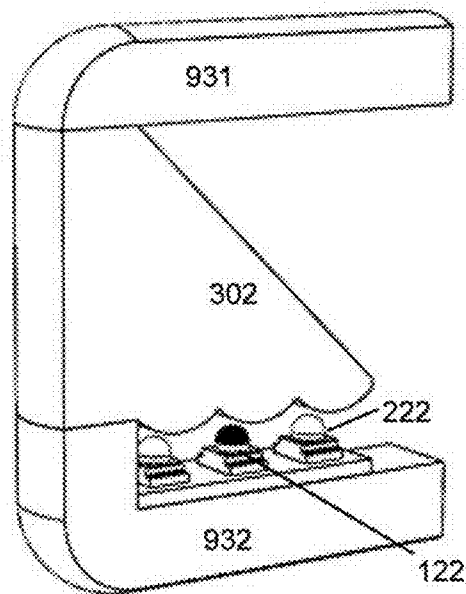


FIG. 11

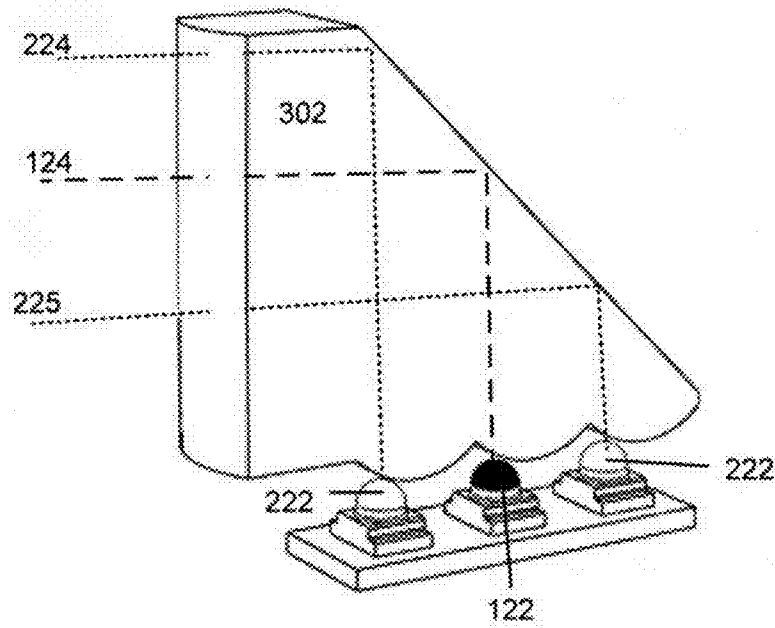


FIG. 12

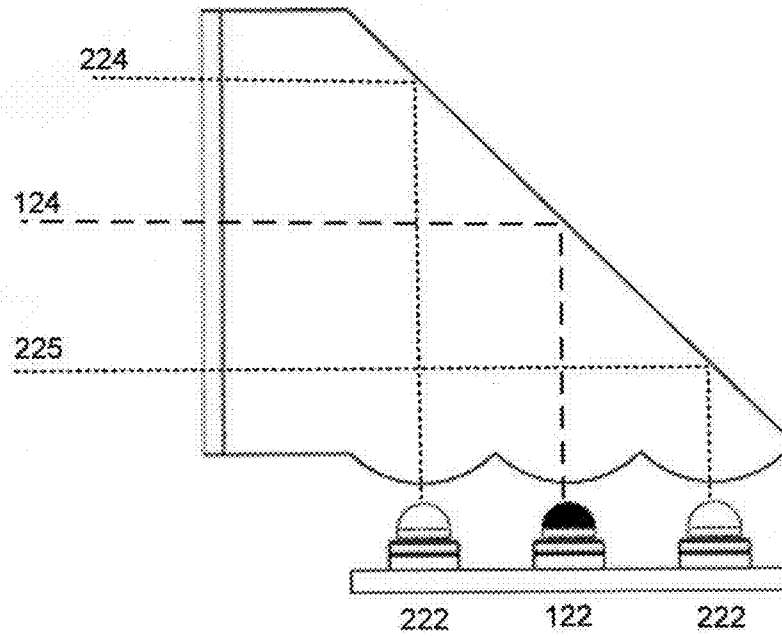


FIG. 13

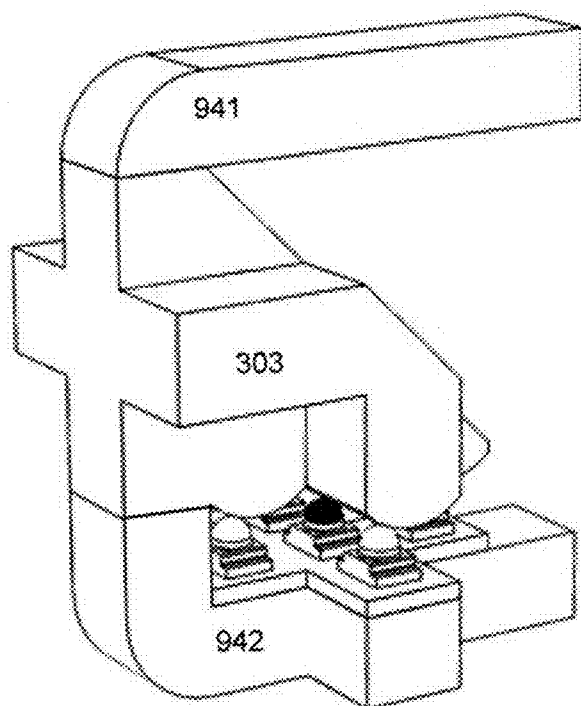


FIG. 14

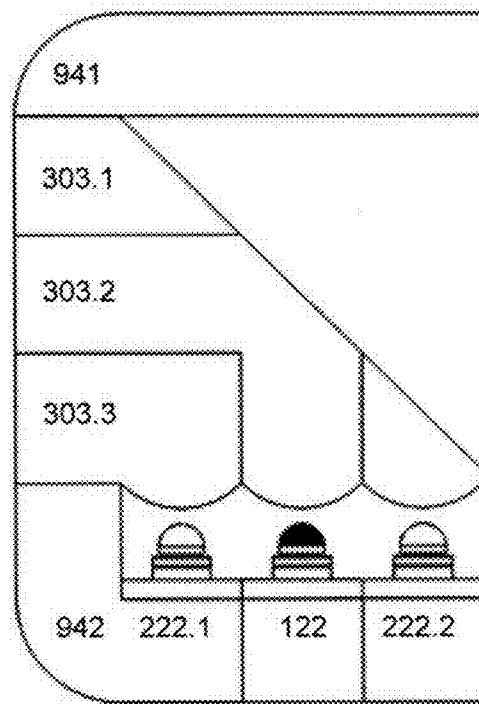


FIG. 15

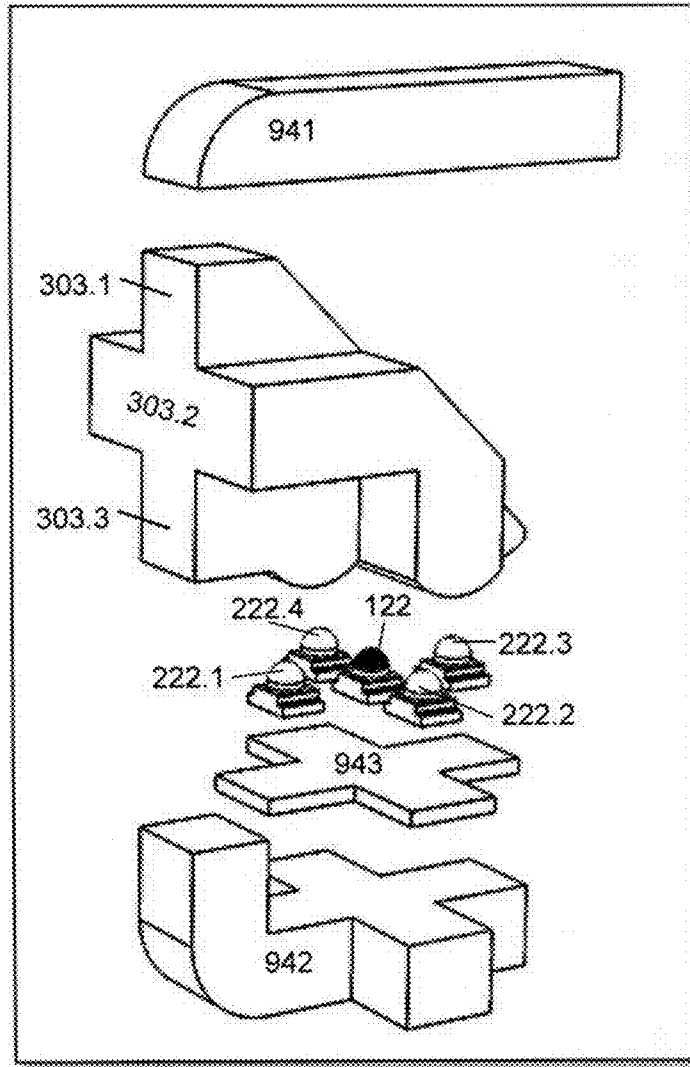


FIG. 16

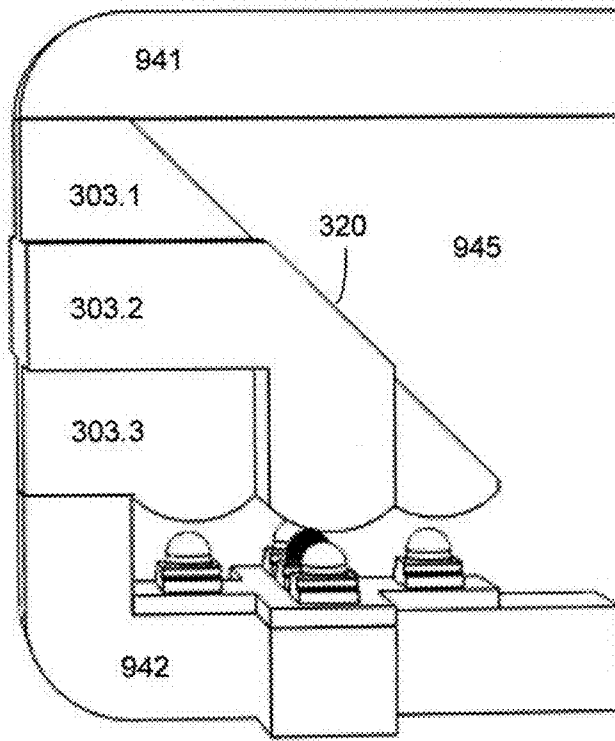


FIG. 17

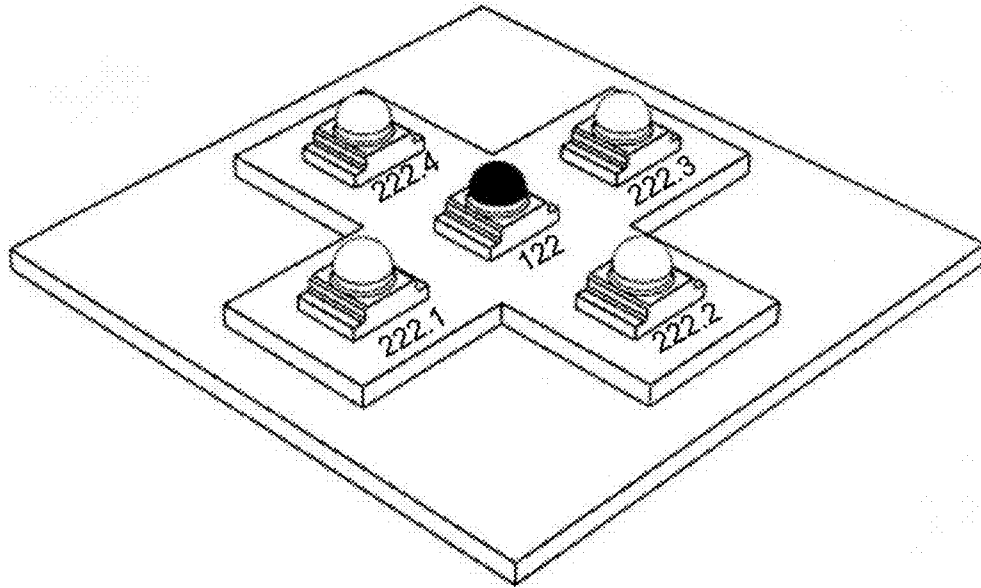


FIG. 18

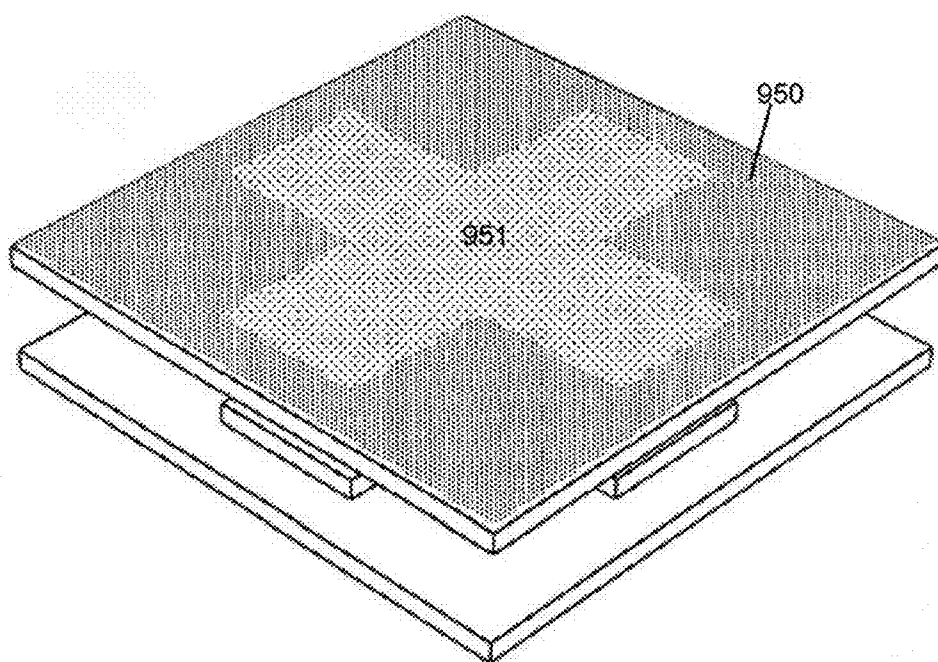
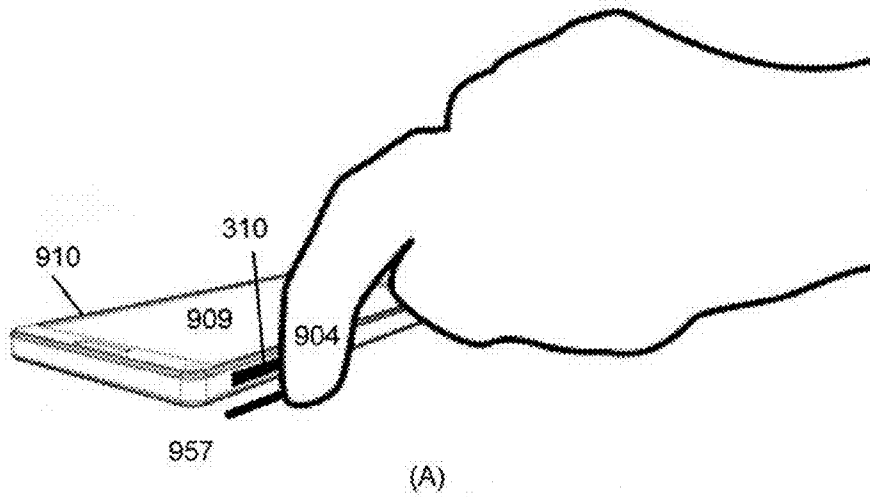
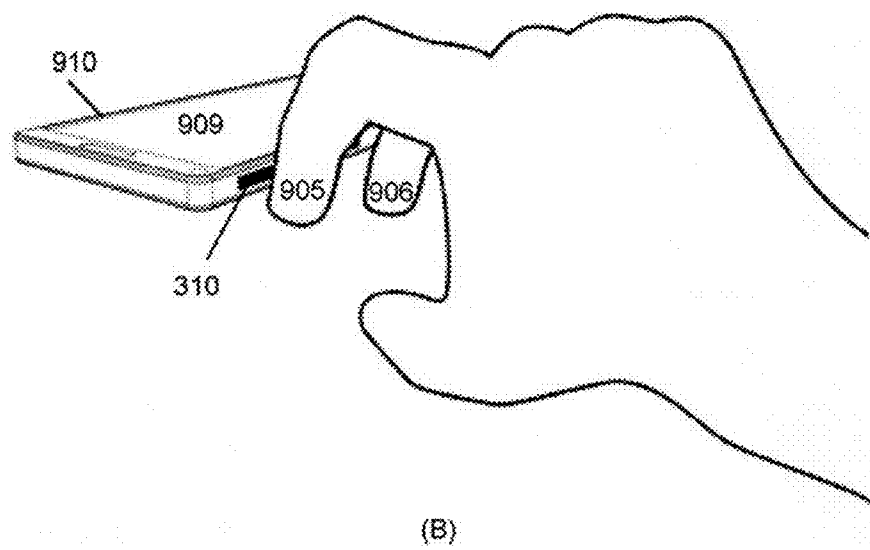


FIG. 19



(A)



(B)

FIG. 20

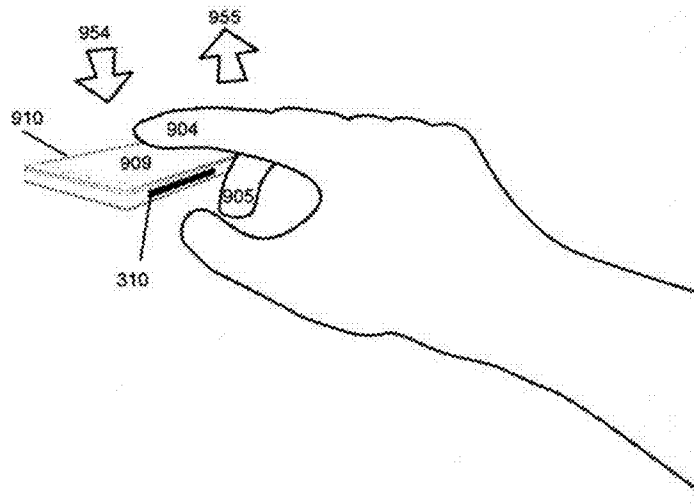


FIG. 21

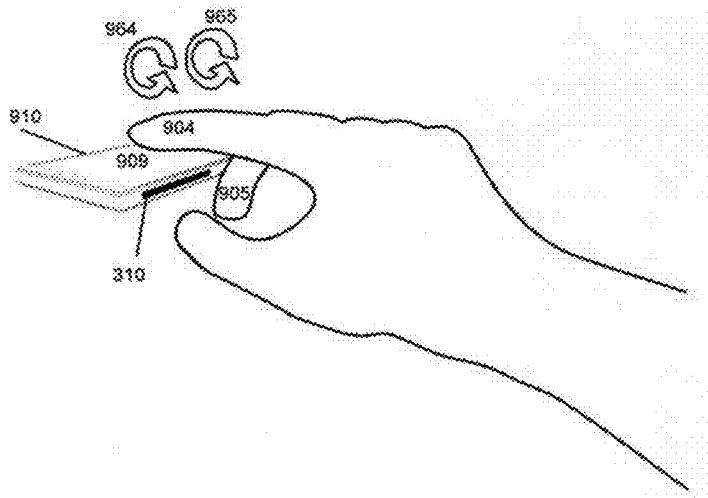


FIG. 22

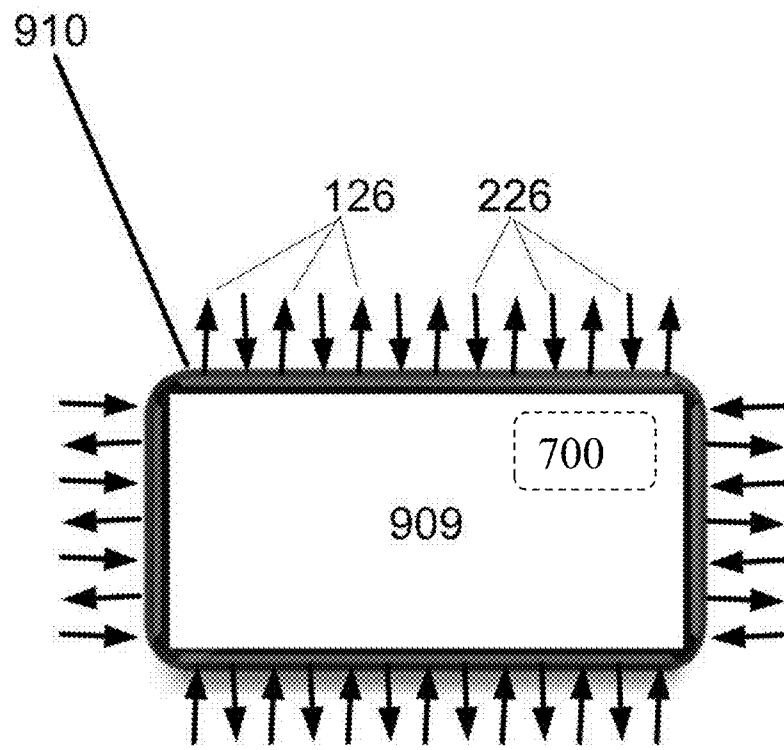


FIG. 23

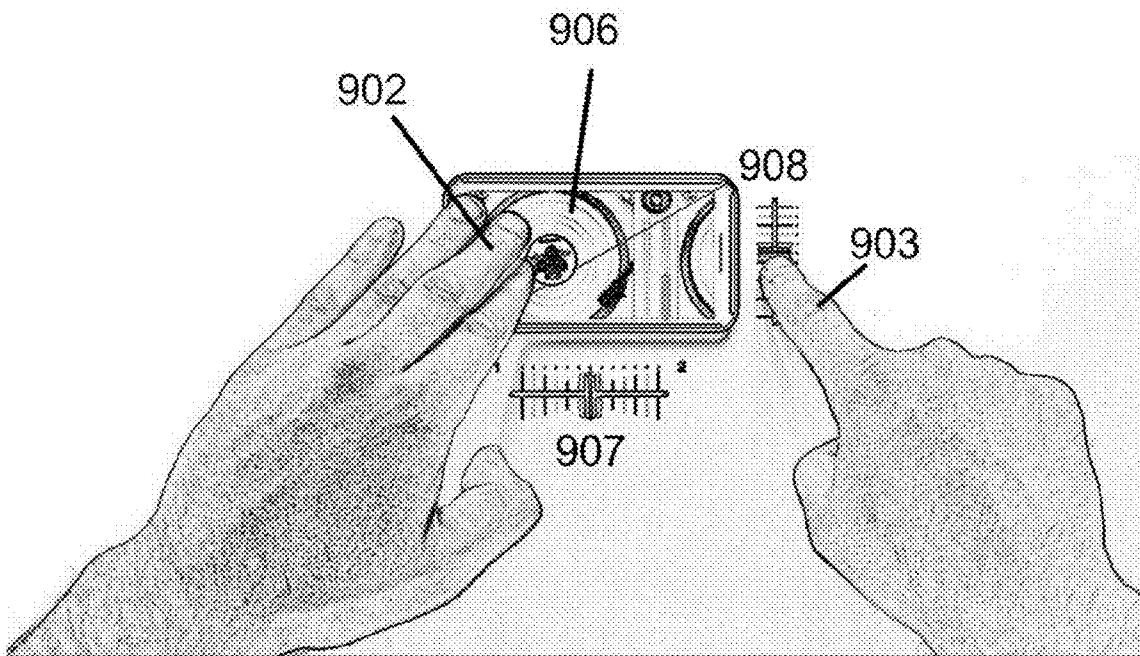


FIG. 24

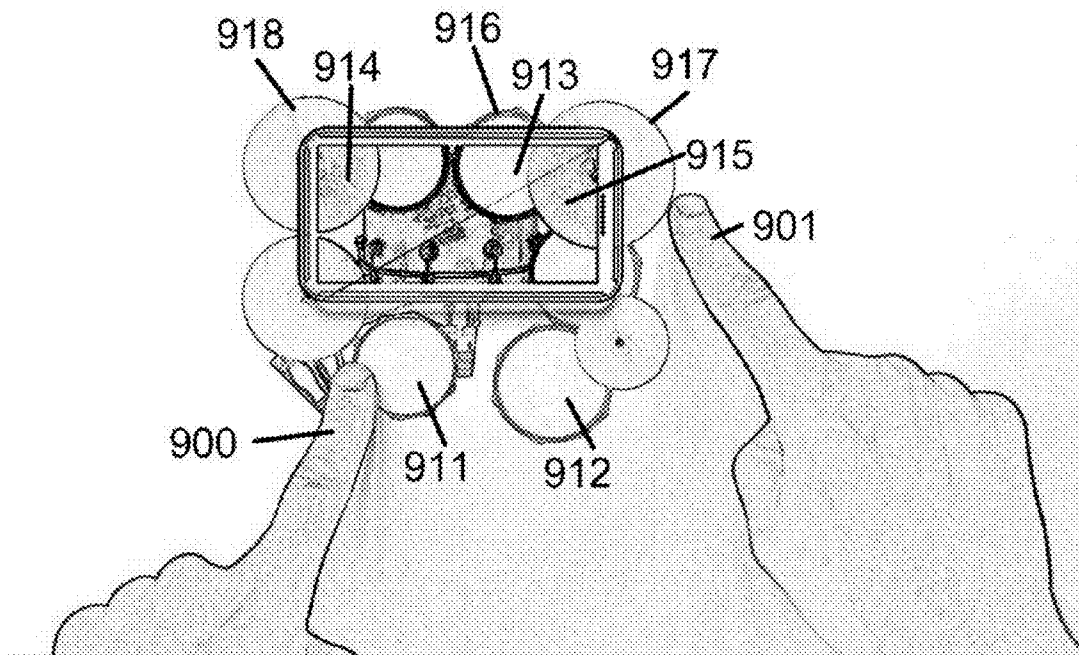


FIG. 25

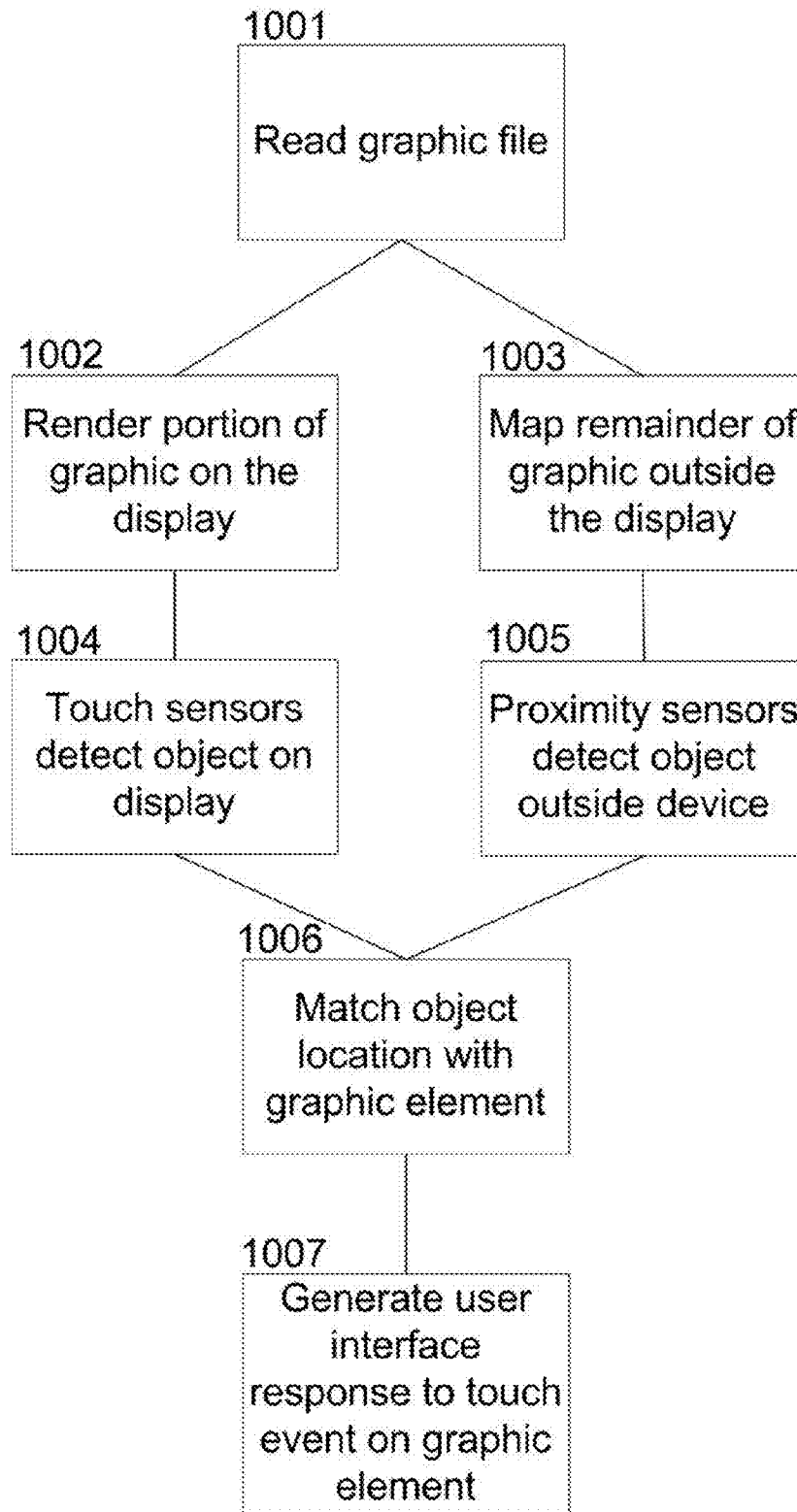


FIG. 26

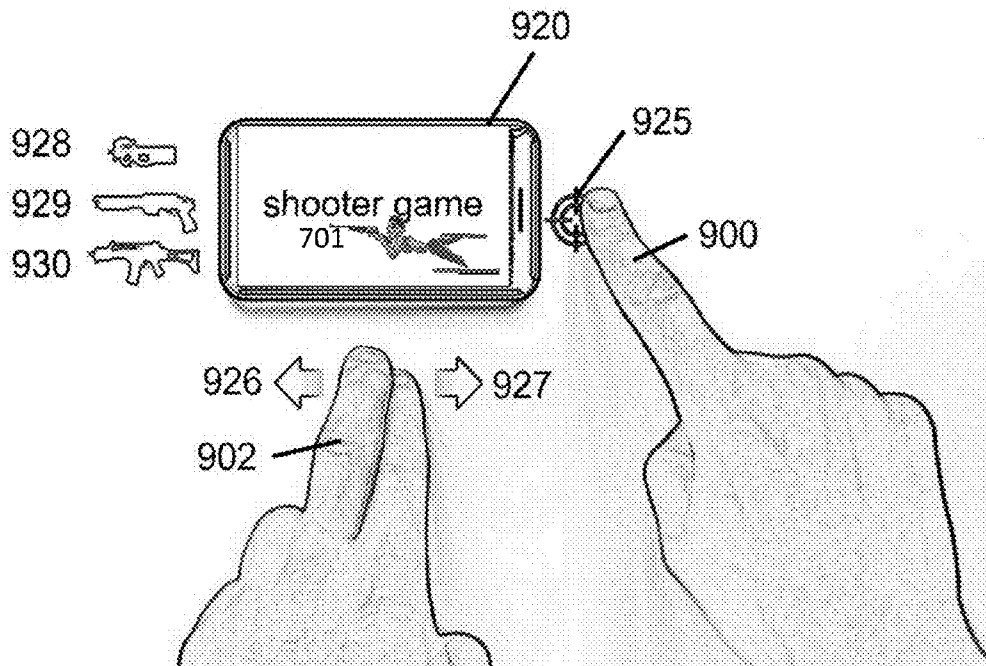


FIG. 27

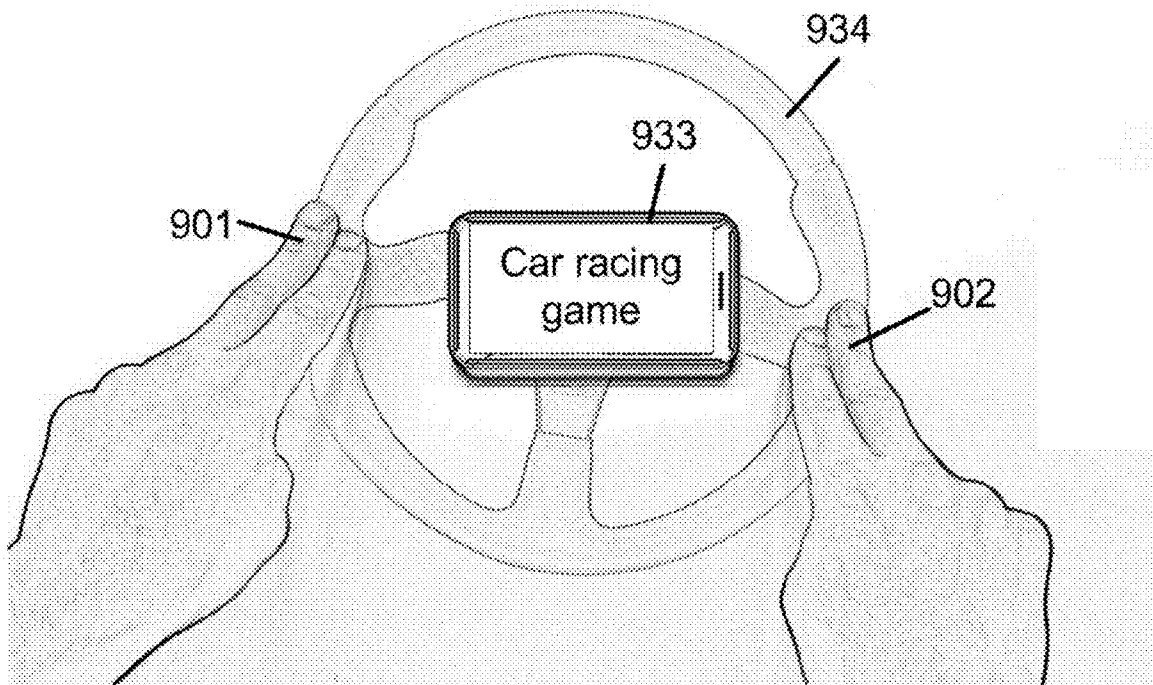


FIG. 28

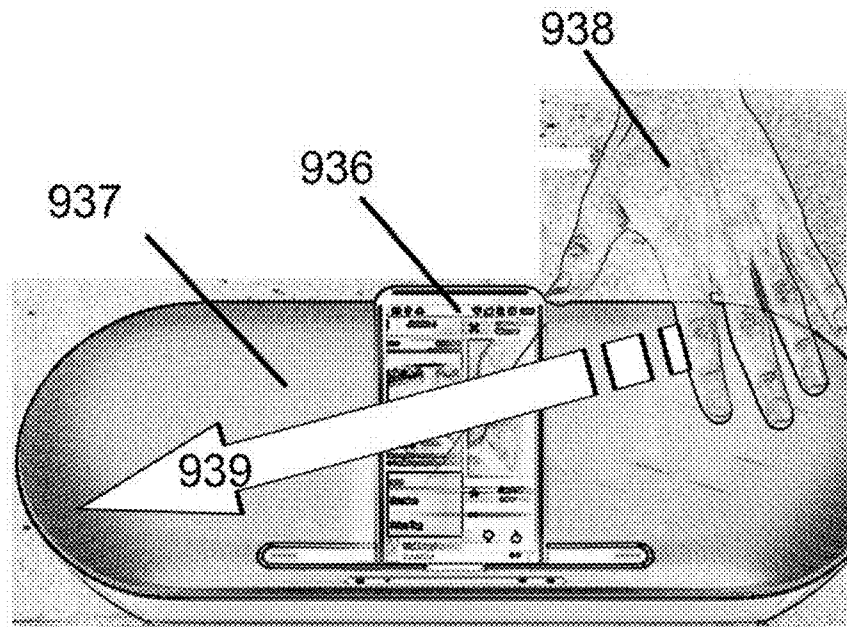


FIG. 29

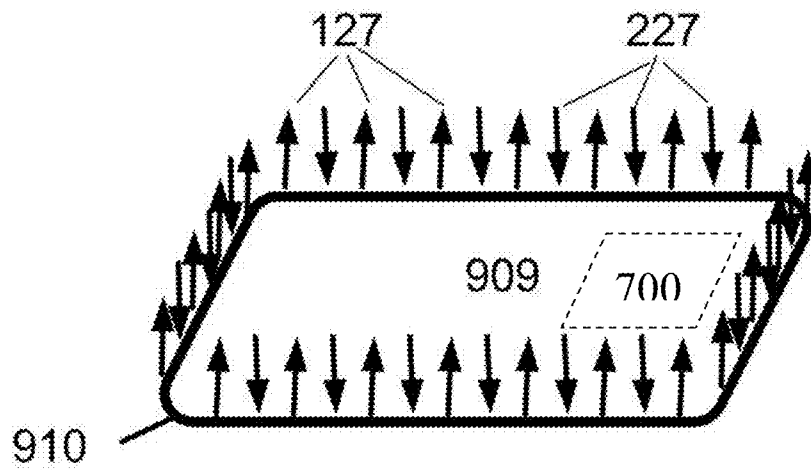


FIG. 30

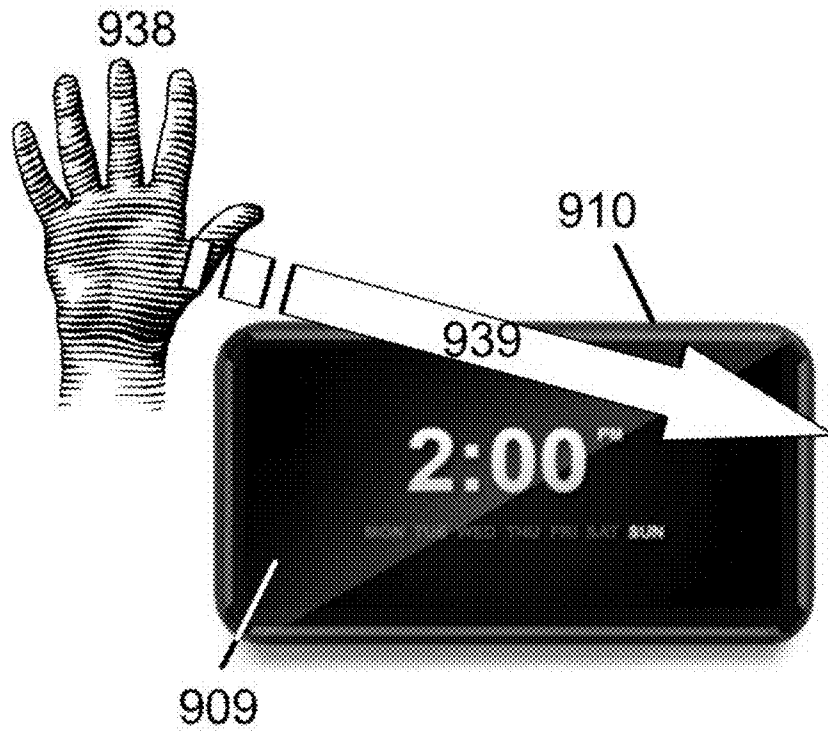


FIG. 31

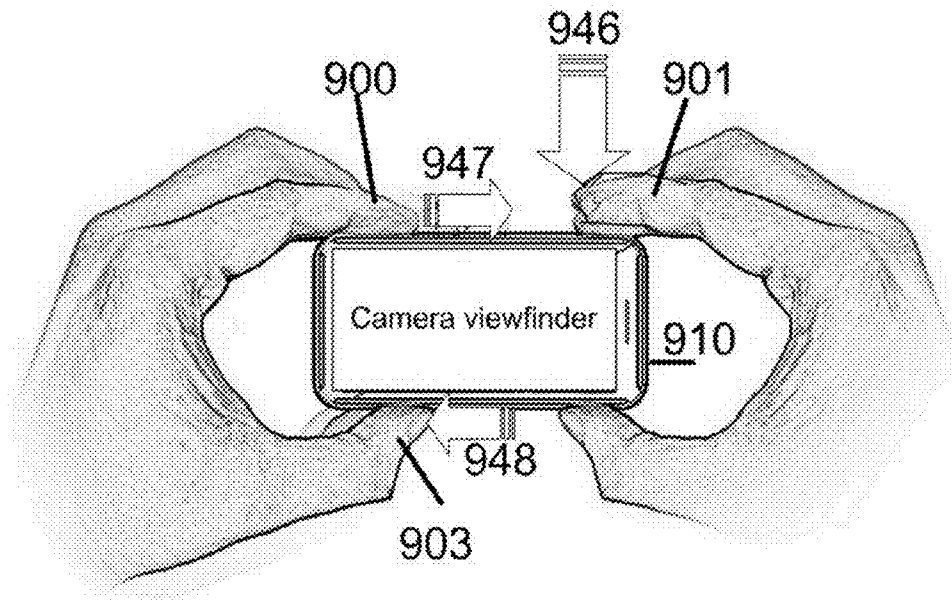


FIG. 32

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LIGHT-BASED PROXIMITY DETECTION SYSTEM AND USER INTERFACE**CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application claims priority benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/713,546, entitled LIGHT-BASED PROXIMITY DETECTION SYSTEM AND USER INTERFACE, filed on Oct. 14, 2012 by inventor Stefan Holmgren, the contents of which are hereby incorporated herein in their entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The field of the present invention is light-based proximity sensors and graphical user interfaces.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Conventional touch sensitive virtual buttons, i.e., buttons painted on a stationary flat surface and actuated by touch, are capacitance-based or resistance-based. Certain touch sensitive user input systems detect hovering objects as well. Examples include U.S. Publication No. 2008/0012835 A1 for HOVER AND TOUCH DETECTION FOR DIGITIZER and U.S. Publication No. 2006/0244733 A1 for TOUCH SENSITIVE DEVICE AND METHOD USING PRE-TOUCH INFORMATION.

Prior art hover detection systems based on reflected light determine a height of an object above a surface based on an amount of reflected light: the nearer the object—the more light is reflected onto the detector situated beneath the touch surface. Therefore, prior art systems are able to detect a hovering object over time and determine whether the object is moving closer or farther away based on relative amounts of detected light. I.e., diminishing light detection over time indicates an object moving away from the surface, and increasing light detection over time indicates an object moving toward the surface. In other words, the determined height is relative to other heights in a series of detections, but the actual height remains unknown. Indeed, different materials reflect different amounts of light, e.g., a white glove reflects more light than a black glove, and the reflective properties of a hovering object are not known by the system. Therefore, the system cannot determine the height at which the object is situated above the surface based on the amount of reflected light detected. In addition, because prior art proximity detectors require a series of detections of the object at different heights in order to rank the heights in relation to each other, a single proximity detection or a series of detections of a stationary hovering object will provide little information about the height of the object.

Graphical user interfaces (GUIs) enable interaction with visual elements displayed on a screen. When the extent of a GUI exceeds that of the screen, a user is restricted to interacting with only the portion of the GUI that is displayed on the screen. In order to activate a visual element virtually located outside of the displayed portion of the GUI, the user must pan the GUI, moving a portion of the GUI from outside of the display into the display, while displacing a currently displayed portion of the GUI out of the display. It would thus be of advantage to enable user interactions with GUI elements that are virtually located beyond the display area of the screen, without panning the GUI.

SUMMARY

Aspects of the present invention relate to touch sensitive surfaces used to implement switches or slider controls for

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handheld devices such as mobile phones, office equipment such as printers and multi-function peripheral devices, and household appliances such as washing machines and microwave ovens. Additional user interfaces and devices are disclosed hereinbelow.

Aspects of the present invention also relate to GUIs and, in particular, to user interaction with GUI elements that are virtually located beyond the extent of the display screen.

Aspects of the present invention also relate to GUIs for applications running on a device, which respond to tap and slide gestures along outside edges of the device, and to hand wave gestures above the device.

There is thus provided in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention an electronic device, including a housing, a display mounted in the housing, a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in the housing near the edges of the display and directed outward from the display, for detecting presence of an object outside the display and near the edges of the display, and a processor mounted in the housing and coupled with the display and with the proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to user activation of elements of a graphical user interface (GUI), the GUI including a displayed portion that is rendered by the processor on the display, and a virtual non-displayed portion that extends beyond the edges of the display, wherein the processor operates the device responsive to user activation of elements of the virtual portion of the GUI, based on the proximity sensors detecting presence of an object in the non-displayed portion of the GUI.

There is additionally provided in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention a camera, including a housing, a viewfinder mounted in the housing, a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in the housing near the edges of the viewfinder and directed outward from the viewfinder, for detecting presence of a finger outside the viewfinder and near the edges of the viewfinder, and a processor mounted in the housing and coupled with the viewfinder and with the proximity sensors, wherein the processor causes the camera to capture a current frame in the viewfinder in response to a user tap at a first location on the outside of the edges of the viewfinder, based on the proximity sensors detecting presence of a finger.

There is further provided in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention an electronic device, including a housing, a display mounted in the housing, a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in the housing near the edges of the display and directed outward from the display, for detecting presence of an object outside the display and near the edges of the display, and a processor mounted in the housing and coupled with the display and with the proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to user activation of a virtual control located along the outside of an edge of the device, wherein the processor operates the device responsive to user activation of the virtual control, based on the proximity sensors detecting presence of an object at the outside edge of the device.

There is yet further provided in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention an electronic device, including a housing, a display mounted in the housing, a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in the housing near the edges of the display and directed upwards from the display, for detecting presence of an object above the display, and a processor mounted in the housing and coupled with the display and to said proximity sensors, wherein the processor operates the device responsive to a user wave gesture above the display, based on the proximity sensors detecting presence of an object above the display.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will be more fully understood and appreciated from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a simplified illustration of a proximity sensor having one emitter-detector channel, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a simplified illustration of a first configuration of a proximity sensor having two emitter-detector channels, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a simplified illustration of a second configuration of a proximity sensor having two emitter-detector channels, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 4 and 5 are simplified diagrams of a touch sensitive slider window featuring multiple emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the length of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a simplified illustration of a finger placed along the touch sensitive slider window of FIGS. 4 and 5, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 7-10 are simplified diagrams showing different views of a touch sensitive slider window featuring multiple emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the length of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 11-13 are simplified diagrams of a touch sensitive slider window featuring two emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the height of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 14-17 are simplified diagrams of a configuration of a touch sensitive window featuring four emitter-detector channels operative to detect a glide movement in both horizontal and vertical directions, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 18-19 are simplified illustrations of top-shooting diodes in a configuration of a touch sensitive window featuring four emitter-detector channels operative to detect a glide movement in both horizontal and vertical directions, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 20-22 are simplified diagrams of hovering gestures using the touch sensitive window of FIGS. 4 and 5, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 23 is a simplified diagram of an electronic device with proximity sensors along all four device edges, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 24 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a music application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 25 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a drum application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 26 is a flow chart of a method for providing a graphical user interface (GUI), in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 27 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a shooter game, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 28 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a car racing game, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 29 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a music player application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 30 is a simplified diagram of an electronic device with proximity sensors along all four device edges, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 31 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for an alarm clock application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 32 is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a camera application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

In this specification and in the figures, the following numbering scheme is used. Light emitting elements and emitted light beams are numbered in the range of 100-199. Light receiving elements such as PDs, and reflected light beams are numbered in the range of 200-299. Lens components, reflective and refractive elements are numbered in the range of 300-399. Fingers, styli, electronic devices and their housings are numbered in the range of 900-999.

The following tables catalog the numbered elements and list the figures in which each numbered element appears.

Emitters and Emitter Beams		
Element	FIGS.	Description
110	1	emitter beam
111, 112	2	emitter beam
113, 114	3	emitter beam
121	4	emitter
122	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18	emitter
123	7, 8	emitter beam
124	12	emitter beam
126	23	emitter beams
127	30	emitter beams

Receivers and Receiver Beams		
Element	FIGS.	Description
210	1	receiver beam
211, 212	2	receiver beam
213	3	receiver beam
221	4, 5, 6	receiver
221.1, 221.2	15, 16, 18	receiver
221.3, 221.4	16, 18	receiver
222	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	receiver
223	7, 8	receiver beam
224, 225	12, 13	receiver beam
226	23	receiver beams
227	30	receiver beams

Lenses		
Element	FIGS.	Description
301	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	lens
302	11, 12	lens
303	14	lens
303.1-303.3	15, 16, 17	lens section
310	20, 21, 22	control window
320	17	diagonal face

Miscellaneous Elements		
Element	FIGS.	Description
900	1, 2, 3, 6, 25, 27, 32	finger
901	2, 25, 32	finger
902	24, 27	fingers
903	20, 24, 32	finger
904, 905	20, 21, 22	finger
906	24	turntable
907, 908	24	slider
909	20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31	screen
910	1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31, 32	device
911-913	25	drum
914, 915	25	cymbal
916	25	extension of drum
917, 918	25	extension of cymbal
920	27	shooter game
921, 922	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	upper casing part
923	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	PCB
924	9, 10	isolating barrier
925	27	gun sight
926	27	left arrow
927	27	right arrow
928-930	27	gun
931	11	upper casing part
932	11	lower casing part
933	28	car racing game
934	28	steering wheel
936	29	MP3 player
937	29	Stereo dock
938	29, 31	hand
939	29, 31	arrow
941	14, 15, 16, 17	upper casing part
942	14, 15, 16, 17	lower casing part
943	16	PCB
945	17	air gap
946-948	32	arrow
950	19	light transmissive cover
951	19	cross shape
954, 955	21	arrow
957	20	arrow
964, 965	22	arrow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Aspects of the present invention relate to light-based touch controls such as virtual buttons, sliders and touch pads. Aspects of the present invention also relate to proximity sensors for hover gestures. According to embodiments of the present invention, a light-based touch control and proximity sensor includes infra-red light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and photodiodes (PDs) situated inside a housing for an electronic device, beneath an infra-red-transmissive section of the housing. The LEDs project light substantially incident to the housing surface, through the transmissive section. When an object touches or approaches the transmissive section, it reflects the light back into the housing where it is detected by the PDs. Each detection of reflected light represents a detection channel.

A proximity sensor having only one LED and one PD has a single detection channel that provides one signal. In principle this signal provides binary (yes/no) information as to whether or not an object is present above the sensor. In addition, this signal provides information as to a direction of movement of the object along the proximity axis, i.e., whether the object is moving toward the sensor or away from the sensor. Thus, if the signal increases over time, the object is moving toward the sensor, whereas if the signal decreases over time, the object is moving away from the sensor.

Reference is made to FIG. 1, which is a simplified illustration of a proximity sensor having one emitter-detector chan-

nel, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 1 illustrates an embodiment whereby one LED and one PD are situated together beneath a control surface embedded in the housing. In this embodiment one detection channel is provided.

FIG. 1 shows a portable electronic device 910 in profile view. An emitter beam 110 is projected above the device and is reflected back into the device by a finger 900 placed above the device. Thus, the light channel 110-210 is provided to detect a proximal finger 900.

As explained hereinabove, one example of the limitations of a single channel is that it is impossible to determine a distance of the object from the sensor based on the strength of the detection signal since different objects can be used that have different reflective properties. For example, a black glove near the sensor and a white glove further away from the sensor provide substantially similar levels of detection. More channels generate more information. However, an extra channel does not necessitate adding an additional LED and an additional PD. Rather, several PDs can share the light from one LED to provide multiple detection channels. Similarly, one PD can provide multiple detection channels when it is able to receive reflected light from several LEDs.

Reference is made to FIG. 2, which is a simplified illustration of a first configuration of a proximity sensor having two emitter-detector channels, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 2 illustrates two LEDs and one PD situated in a row beneath a control surface embedded in the housing. This row of two LEDs and one PD has one of the LEDs placed between the other LED and the PD. In this embodiment two detection channels are provided. With two channels positional information along one dimension can be generated by interpolation.

FIG. 2 shows a portable electronic device 910 in profile view and two emitter-detector light channels. Thus, FIG. 2(A) demonstrates a first light channel 112-212 that detects a near finger 901; and FIG. 2(B) demonstrates a second light channel 111-211 that detects a more distal finger 900. The emitter beams 111 and 112 issue forth from the upper surface of device 910 at an angle in order that their respective reflected beams arrive at the location of the detector. The proximity detector of FIG. 2 provides an indication of the height of the object based on which channel is detected. An interpolation of signals from the two channels will indicate a position of the object within the range of heights detected by both channels.

By contrast, prior art proximity detectors determine proximity based on a relative intensity of a reflected signal and require a series of detections in order to rank the different signals, as explained hereinabove. Thus, the system of FIG. 2 addresses two shortcomings of the prior art: 1. it provides an indication of the absolute height of the object above the screen, as opposed to a relative height; and, 2. it provides this indication based on detections of a stationary object and does not require a series of detections over time.

Two similar detection channels are provided by two detectors and one emitter, for example by replacing the emitters of the FIG. 2 system with detectors, and replacing the detector of the FIG. 2 system with an emitter. In this case, beams 211 and 212 are one and the same emitter beam issued by the one emitter, and the reflected beam 111 or 112 arrives at one of the two detectors depending on the height of the finger 900 or 901 above the device 910.

Reference is made to FIG. 3, which is a simplified illustration of a second configuration of a proximity sensor having two emitter-detector channels, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 3 shows a portable device 910 with two detection channels, but in this case the detector

is situated between the two emitters and the two channels provide lateral position information. A first emitter beam **113** is projected above the device to the right of the detector, and a second emitter beam **114** is projected above the device to the left of the detector. When a finger hovers above the space between the first emitter and the detector, as illustrated by finger **900** in FIG. **3**, it creates a first detection channel **113-213**. When a finger hovers above the space between the second emitter and the detector, as illustrated by finger **901** in FIG. **3**, it creates a second detection channel **114-213**. An interpolation of signals from the two channels indicates a position of the object between the outermost components. As explained hereinabove, the emitters and detectors may be swapped and still provide two similar detection channels.

Aspects of the invention relate to providing a thin window spanning the height or thickness of a device, such as a mobile phone. The user interacts with the phone by performing finger gestures against this window, and the proximity sensor detects the position or gesture of the finger. One application is to replace physical buttons. In the most basic case light from an LED is sent out of the device and reflected by the finger. The reflected light is detected by two PDs situated on either side of the LED and the position of the finger is interpolated from the signals. For instance such an arrangement may replace the volume buttons on a mobile phone. In principle such an arrangement may have limited proximity functionality. This conceptual model can be extended with additional components.

Reference is made to FIGS. **4** and **5**, which are simplified diagrams of a touch sensitive slider window featuring multiple emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the length of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Reference is also made to FIG. **6**, which is a simplified illustration of a finger placed along the touch sensitive slider window of FIGS. **4** and **5**, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. **4** and **5** show front and back views of a touch sensitive slider window featuring multiple emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the length of the window. FIGS. **4** and **5** show a sidewall of a device housing formed by an upper casing part **921** and a lower casing part **922**. A lens **301** is wedged between casing parts **921** and **922**. FIGS. **4** and **5**, and in particular FIG. **4**, show a PCB **923** placed inside the device housing. Light emitters **121** and light detectors **221** are mounted in an alternating row on PCB **923**. Every emitter-detector pair of neighboring elements provides a detection channel for detecting an object touching the outer side edge of the housing along the length of lens **301**, as illustrated by finger **900** in FIG. **6**.

When the emitters and detectors are placed together inside the housing, light scatters inside the housing when an emitter is activated and a portion of the scattered light arrives at the detectors without being reflected by an object outside lens **301**. In order to minimize the amount of scattered light that reaches the detectors, the emitters and detectors are mounted on PCB **923** facing opposite directions.

Reference is made to FIGS. **7-10**, which are simplified diagrams showing different views of a touch sensitive slider window featuring multiple emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the length of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. **7-10**, showing inward-facing emitters **122** and outward-facing detectors **222**. In addition, an isolating barrier **924** is placed between the emitters and the detectors to further shield the detectors from scattered light. FIG. **9** is an exploded view of this configuration. FIG. **10** is a cross-section view of the same configuration.

Lens **301** in FIGS. **7-10** is more complex than lens **301** in FIGS. **4** and **5**. In FIGS. **7-10**, in order to direct light from the inward-facing emitters out through lens **301** and back onto the outward-facing detectors, lens **301** extends over and around the emitters **122** but not the detectors **222**. Two light paths are shown in FIGS. **7** and **8**. Emitter beam **123** is reflected twice inside lens **301** before it travels over emitter **122** and out of the device. Incoming beam **223** enters lens **301** and is reflected twice inside the lens before arriving at detector **222**.

Reference is made to FIGS. **11-13**, which are simplified diagrams of a touch sensitive slider window featuring two emitter-detector channels that detect a location of a finger along the height of the window, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. **11-13** illustrate another configuration of a two-channel control. In this case, the control detects objects along the height of the device rather than along the length of the device as in FIGS. **3-10**. FIGS. **11-13** show upper and lower casing parts **931** and **932**. One emitter **122** and two receivers **222** are connected to lower casing part **932**. The detection channels are made possible by a reflecting lens **302** inserted between casing parts **931** and **932**. The light path from emitter **122** through lens **302** is illustrated in FIG. **12** as outgoing emitter beam **124**. The light paths of the two incoming beams **224** and **225** that are directed at the two detectors **222** are also illustrated in FIG. **12**. FIG. **13** is a cross-section view of lens **302** and the light beam paths **124**, **224** and **225** of FIG. **12**.

With three channels, position information in two dimensions is obtained. One application is an optical joystick. A second application is a two-dimensional navigation pad. A third application is a mouse touchpad. For example, arranging three emitters at three corners of an equilateral triangle and placing a detector at the triangle's center of gravity provides three detection signals. By interpolating the signals, a two-dimensional location of the object is obtained. As a second example, begin with the two channels of FIG. **2** to provide height information, and add one channel to provide lateral information as in FIG. **3**.

Reference is made to FIGS. **14-17**, which are simplified diagrams of a configuration of a touch sensitive window featuring four emitter-detector channels operative to detect a glide movement in both horizontal and vertical directions, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. **14-17** illustrate a cross-bar control for detecting up-down and right-left movements of a finger or other object. The illustrated control has four detection channels created by one central emitter **122** surrounded by four detectors **222.1-222.4**. An alternative configuration has one central detector surrounded by four emitters and is similar in operation to the system of FIGS. **14-17**. FIG. **14** shows a lens **303** situated between upper and lower casing parts **941** and **942** and the five components (emitters and receivers) mounted inside the device on a PCB (**943** in FIG. **16**) connected to the lower casing part. An outer cross-shaped surface of lens **303** is flush with the outer casing.

FIG. **15** is a cross-sectional view of the system shown in FIG. **14**. Lens **303** is shown divided into sections to illustrate how each section is used by a different component. Detector **222.1** receives light beams that enter the lens through section **303.1**; emitter **122** uses section **303.2** to reflect light out of the lens; detector **222.2** receives light beams that enter the lens through section **303.3**.

FIG. **16** is an exploded view of the system shown in FIG. **15**. FIG. **16** shows detectors **222.1-222.4** and emitter **122**; PCB **943**; upper and lower casing parts **941** and **942**; and lens **303** divided into upper section **303.1**, middle section **303.2** and lower section **303.3**.

FIG. 17 is a slightly rotated side view of the system of FIG. 16. FIG. 17 illustrates how middle section 303.2 of the lens is used by detectors 222.2 and 222.4 in addition to emitter 122. An air gap 945 behind lens 303 is also shown. The purpose of air gap 945 is to make the diagonal face 320 of lens 303 internally reflective.

Reference is made to FIGS. 18 and 19, which are simplified illustrations of top-shooting diodes in a configuration of a touch sensitive window featuring four emitter-detector channels operative to detect a glide movement in both horizontal and vertical directions, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. 18 and 19 illustrate a mouse pad or other two-dimensional control. This configuration places the emitters and detectors directly beneath the control surface. FIG. 18 shows four receivers 222.1-222.4 surrounding an emitter 122 to provide four channels, substantially similar to those described hereinabove with reference to FIGS. 14-17. In FIG. 19 an infrared light transmissive cover 950 with a cross shape 951 etched thereon is placed above the emitters and receivers. The cross shape indicates navigational paths to the user.

A system with four channels also provides information in three dimensions regarding a proximal object. For example, begin with the two channels of FIG. 2 to provide height information. Add one channel to provide lateral information as in FIG. 3. Add one more channel to provide information in a second lateral dimension, also as in FIG. 3.

Applications

Aspects of the invention are related to providing a thin window spanning the height or thickness of a device, such as a mobile phone. A user interacts with the phone by performing finger gestures against this window and the proximity sensor detects the position or gesture of the finger. One usage is to replace physical buttons. In a basic case light from an LED is sent out of the device and reflected by the finger. The reflected light is detected by two PDs situated on either side of the LED and the position of the finger is interpolated from the signals. For instance such an arrangement could replace the volume buttons on a mobile phone. In principle such an arrangement may have limited proximity functionality. This conceptual model may be extended with more components.

Reference is made to FIGS. 20-22, which are simplified diagrams of hovering gestures using the touch sensitive window of FIGS. 4 and 5, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 20 shows a user interacting with a control as taught by the present invention. FIG. 20A shows a mobile phone or other electronic device 910 having a screen 909 and a control window 310. A finger 903 interacts with this control by sliding along the control or by tapping the control. A gesture of sliding finger 903 along window 310 is indicated by arrow 957.

FIG. 20B shows the same mobile phone or other electronic device 910 having a screen 909 and a control window 310. Two fingers 904 and 905 interact with this control. As an example, the fingers may alternately approach window 310 and move away from window 310. Thus, in a first position of the gesture, finger 904 is placed opposite and near window 310 and finger 905 is placed opposite and distal from window 310. Next, finger 904 is moved opposite and near window 310 and finger 905 is placed opposite and distal from window 310. This example gesture can be seen as two fingers "walking" towards the control. This gesture uses the proximity detection described hereinabove to detect the finger movement toward and away from the control window. Another two-finger gesture is a pinch gesture whereby two fingers are brought together along the length of the control window. A spread

gesture or "un-pinch" gesture moves two fingers away from each other along the length of the control window.

FIG. 21 illustrates another two-finger gesture on electronic device 910 having a screen 909 and a control window 310. Two fingers 904 and 905 interact with this control according to arrows 954 and 955. The gesture begins with lowered finger 905 opposite a portion of window 310 and finger 904 raised above the window. Finger 904 is lowered as per arrow 954 while finger 905 is raised as per arrow 955.

FIG. 22 illustrates another two-finger gesture on electronic device 910 having a screen 909 and a control window 310. Two fingers 904 and 905 interact with this control according to arrows 964 and 965. The gesture begins with lowered finger 905 opposite a portion of window 310 and finger 904 raised above the window. Fingers 904 and 905 perform circular motions at different phases to mimic "running in place" as per arrows 964 and 965.

Expanding the User Interface

This section describes an expanded user interface whereby the user performs gestures beyond the bounds of an electronic device. The device includes one or more arrays of proximity sensors along the outer edges of the device housing. This detector array detects user gestures performed outside the perimeter of the device.

Reference is made to FIG. 23, which is a simplified diagram of an electronic device with proximity sensors along all four device edges, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 23 shows an electronic device 910 with a screen 909 and a processor 700 mounted underneath screen 909. Along all four outer edges of device 910 are outgoing arrows indicating emitter light beams 126, and incoming arrows indicating receiver light beams 226, associated with arrays of proximity sensors along the edges of device 910 as described hereinabove. Processor 700 is coupled with screen 909 and with the arrays of proximity sensors.

Reference is made to FIG. 24, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a music application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 24 shows a music mixer or DJ application. Screen 909 is a touch screen displaying an interactive graphic of a record turntable 906 that is spun by a user rubbing his fingers 902 on the graphic. The device is placed on a table or other flat surface. The user manipulates parameters of the music application, such as volume, tempo, bass, treble, by manipulating slider controls 907 and 908. In order to move the slider bar within the control the user performs a sliding gesture parallel to an edge of the device. This is illustrated by finger 903 touching the slider bar in control 908. Although slider controls 907 and 908 are illustrated the figure, in certain embodiments of the invention these controls are not presented to the user outside the device. Rather, the user interface responds to sliding one or more fingers parallel to an edge as if an actual or virtual slider control were being manipulated. Each edge controls a different music application parameter.

Reference is made to FIG. 25, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a drum application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. Screen 909 presents a drum set as seen from above, including various drums and cymbals 911-915. The drum set graphic is larger than the screen such that only a portion of certain drums and cymbals are shown on the screen. However, by extending the circle of a partially viewable drum or cymbal, the user can imagine where it would extend outside the screen. When the user touches or taps a location outside the screen at which the extension of a drum or cymbal would be located, such as locations 916-918, the device generates an appropriate drum

or cymbal sound in response. In FIG. 25, finger 901 is about to touch an extension 917 of cymbal 915. In certain embodiments the extension is not presented to the user outside the device. Rather, the user interface responds to finger taps at locations around the device that correspond to where a drum or cymbal would logically be placed according to the drum set graphic.

Thus the drum set is arranged in a layout that is larger than the display, wherein at any given time a subset of the drum set graphic is presented on the display. In certain embodiments, the drum set graphic pans, relative to the display, to bring a subset of the drum set graphic into the display, and to move another subset of the drum set graphic out of the display. The logical locations outside the display of the various drums and cymbals moved out of the display are meaningful to the user interface: when the user touches or taps one of these locations the device generates a corresponding drum or cymbal sound in response. The user pans the drum set graphic to understand where various drums are logically located outside the screen. In certain embodiments, the user may also zoom the drum set graphic to understand where certain drums are located outside the displayed portion of the graphic. In this case, when the drum set graphic is zoomed out the entire graphic fits on the display. As the graphic is zoomed in, it increases in size to the point that portions of the graphic do not fit on the screen. However, during the zoom operation the user sees where these off screen portions are logically located so that he can touch those locations to illicit drum sounds from the device. In FIG. 25, finger 900 is touching the logical location of drum 911 which is completely outside the display.

Reference is made to FIG. 26, which is a flow chart of a method for providing a graphical user interface (GUI), in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The GUI is described with reference to steps 1001-1007. At step 1001 a graphic file is read. The graphic file is either one graphic or a composite graphic made up of various graphic elements from one or more files, e.g., graphics of various drums that together form a drum set. At step 1002 a portion of the graphic is rendered on the screen, while the remainder of the graphic is mapped outside the screen. This may be because the graphic is too large to fit on the screen, or because it is situated near an edge of the screen. Alternatively some of the graphic elements are dynamic, and move and drift off the screen. Therefore, there are portions of the graphic elements that are not displayed, and these portions are mapped to locations outside the device at step 1003. At step 1004 touch sensors on the screen detect a touch. At step 1005 proximity sensors around the device edges detect an object outside the device. Both detections are used by the user interface. In some instances only one detection occurs. In other instances multiple detections occur concurrently, e.g., multi-touch gestures are detected on the screen or multiple objects are detected at various locations around the device. The user interface maps each detected location or gesture to a corresponding graphic element at step 1006. And at step 1007 the device generates user interface outputs that correspond to the detected touch or proximity locations or gestures.

Reference is made to FIG. 27, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a shooter game where the player is represented by avatar 701, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. A user interface for controlling a shooter game 920 involves finger gestures along different sides of the device. A player moves within the game's virtual world by finger movements along the bottom edge of the device. FIG. 27 shows left and right arrows indicating sweep gestures by fingers 902 that move the player within the game's virtual world. The user aims his gun by performing

gestures near the right edge of the device as indicated by sight 925. The proximity sensors detect the movement of finger 901 in two or three dimensions enabling two-dimensional or three-dimensional manipulation of the gun. The user selects a different weapon by tapping at locations along the device's left edge. FIG. 27 shows guns 928-930 along this edge. A tap at each location selects the corresponding weapon.

Reference is made to FIG. 28, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a car racing game, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 28 shows a car racing game 933 in which a player steers a car through a race course. The player steers the car by gliding his fingers 901 and 902 along a circular path surrounding the device. The circular path has the shape of an imaginary steering wheel surrounding the device, as illustrated by steering wheel 934. Gliding fingers clockwise along this circular path steers the car to the right, and gliding fingers counterclockwise along this path steers the car to the left—as if the gliding fingers are rotating a steering wheel.

Reference is made to FIG. 29, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a music player application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 29 shows an MP3 player 936 in a stereo dock 937 being controlled by user interface gestures in the form of a hand 938 waving above and across the front of the device as indicated by arrow 939. In this case, in order that the proximity sensor arrays around the edges of the device detect a hand above the device, the proximity sensor light beams are directed upward, perpendicular to the front of the device.

In this regard, reference is made to FIG. 30, which is a simplified diagram of an electronic device with proximity sensors along all four device edges, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 30 shows device 910 with screen 909 and emitter light beams 127 directed upward along the edges of the device and a processor 700 mounted underneath screen 909. Hover detection occurs when an object reflects these upward beams back onto the proximity sensor receivers. Thus, downward receiver beams 227 are emitter beams 127 after being reflected by a hovering object. Processor 700 is coupled with screen 909 and with the proximity sensor receivers.

Reference is made to FIG. 31, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for an alarm clock application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 31 shows an alarm clock application on a mobile phone device 910. The user waves a hand 938 above and across the screen as illustrated by arrow 939 to turn off the alarm. In this case, too, the proximity sensors along the edges of the device are configured to project beams upward, perpendicular to screen 909.

Reference is made to FIG. 32, which is a simplified illustration of a user interface for a camera application, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 32 shows a camera application on a mobile phone device 910 that is controlled by tap gestures and slide gestures along the outer edges of the phone. To take a picture, a user taps finger 901 at the upper right corner of the device as indicated by arrow 946. Other parameters are configured or set by slide gestures along the top and bottom edges of device 910, e.g., sliding finger 900 as indicated by arrow 947, and sliding finger 903 as indicated by arrow 948.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments thereof. It will, however, be evident that various modifications and changes may be made to the specific exemplary embodiments without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

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Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

What is claimed is:

1. An electronic device, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a display mounted in said housing;
 - a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in said housing near the edges of said display and directed outward from said display, for detecting presence of an object in an open space outside said display and near the edges of said display; and
 - a processor mounted in said housing and coupled with said display and with said proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to user activation of elements of a graphical user interface (GUI), each GUI element being associated with an operation performed by the processor, the GUI comprising a layout of the GUI elements that is larger than said display, each GUI element corresponding to a location within the layout, the layout comprising:
 - a displayed portion that is rendered by the processor on said display; and
 - a virtual non-displayed portion in the open space that extends beyond the edges of said display,
 wherein said processor pans said layout to move some of said GUI elements into the displayed portion and to move others of said GUI elements into the virtual non-displayed portion, and wherein, responsive to said proximity sensors detecting location of the object in the open space outside of said display, said processor maps a location within the virtual non-displayed portion of said layout to the detected location, and performs the operation associated with the GUI element corresponding to the mapped location.
2. The electronic device of claim 1 wherein said displayed portion of said layout comprises a portion of one of said GUI elements, and the virtual non-displayed portion of said layout comprises the remainder of the GUI element, and wherein said processor performs the operation associated with such GUI element when said processor maps the location of the remainder of the GUI element within said layout to the location of the object in the open space outside of said display that is detected by said proximity sensors.
3. The electronic device of claim 1 wherein said virtual non-displayed portion of said layout comprises an entire GUI element.
4. The electronic device of claim 1 wherein said display comprises a touch screen, and wherein said processor performs the operation associated with one of said GUI elements in said displayed portion of said layout responsive to said touch screen detecting the object touching the location corresponding to such GUI element in said displayed portion of said layout.
5. The electronic device of claim 4 wherein said processor pans said layout responsive to user input from said touch screen.
6. The electronic device of claim 4, wherein said processor performs a specific operation responsive to (i) said proximity sensors detecting presence of the object at a location corresponding to a first GUI element in said virtual non-displayed portion of said layout, and (ii) said touch screen simultaneously detecting a second object touching a second GUI element in said displayed portion of said layout.
7. The electronic device of claim 1 wherein the device comprises a music player, wherein said GUI elements comprise musical elements that are associated with operations that produce different sounds.

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8. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein said processor zooms said layout to move some of said GUI elements from the display portion into the virtual non-displayed portion.

9. An electronic device that simulates a racing car game, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a display mounted in said housing;
 - a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in said housing and directed outward from said housing, for detecting presence of an object in an open space outside said housing and near the edges of said housing; and
 - a processor mounted in said housing and coupled with said proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to said proximity sensors detecting a movement of the object, conforming to an arc-shaped gesture partially circumscribing the housing, in the open space, wherein the device simulates a racing car game on said display, wherein the arc-shaped gesture conforms to steering of a virtual steering wheel located on a circle in the open space surrounding said housing, and wherein said processor simulates steering a racing car responsive to the movement of the object.
10. The electronic device of claim 9 wherein the arc-shaped gesture partially circumscribes at least two adjacent edges of said housing.
11. The electronic device of claim 9, wherein, responsive to said proximity sensors detecting three-dimensional movement of the object opposite a first edge of said housing, said processor manipulates an application control rendered on said display in a three-dimensional virtual space mapped to the application.
12. The electronic device of claim 9, wherein said processor simulates the steering responsive to said proximity sensors detecting two concurrent ones of the movement, conforming to steering of the virtual steering wheel with two hands.
13. An electronic device that simulates a shooting game, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a display mounted in said housing;
 - a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in said housing and directed outward from said housing, for detecting presence of an object in an open space outside said housing and near the edges of said housing; and
 - a processor mounted in said housing and coupled with said proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to said proximity sensors detecting a movement of the object, conforming to an arc-shaped gesture partially circumscribing the housing, in the open space, wherein, responsive to said proximity sensors detecting three-dimensional movement of the object opposite a first edge of said housing, said processor manipulates a weapon rendered on said display in a three-dimensional virtual space mapped to the shooting game.
14. The electronic device of claim 13, wherein, responsive to said proximity sensors detecting three-dimensional movement of the object opposite a second edge of said housing, different than the first edge, said processor moves a shooting avatar within the three-dimensional virtual space.
15. The electronic device of claim 14, wherein different locations opposite a third edge of said housing, different than the first and second edges, correspond to different weapons, and wherein, responsive to said proximity sensors detecting the object at a location opposite the third edge, said processor maps a weapon to the detected location, and replaces the current weapon with the mapped weapon.

16. A music player, comprising:
a housing;
a display comprising a touch screen mounted in said housing;
a plurality of proximity sensors mounted in said housing 5
and directed outward from said housing, for detecting
presence of an object in an open space outside said
housing and near the edges of said housing; and
a processor mounted in said housing and coupled with said 10
proximity sensors, for operating the device responsive to
said proximity sensors detecting a movement of the
object, conforming to an arc-shaped gesture partially
circumscribing the housing, in the open space, wherein,
responsive to said proximity sensors detecting the move- 15
ment, said processor adjusts tempo, volume, bass or
treble for a song currently being played by said music
player, and wherein said display renders a turntable con-
trol, and wherein said processor advances the current
song responsive to glide gestures on the turntable con- 20
trol.

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