before the cursor reaches a desired destination in that direction, then the user can simply move his or her finger off the touchpad, reposition the finger away from the edge, and continue moving the cursor. This is an "indexing" function similar to lifting a mouse off a surface to change the offset between mouse position and cursor. Furthermore, many touchpads can be provided with particular regions that are each assigned to particular functions that can be unrelated to cursor positioning. Such an embodiment is described in greater detail below with respect to **FIG. 7**. In some embodiments the touchpad **16** may also allow a user to "tap" the touchpad (rapidly touch and remove the object from the pad) in a particular location to provide a command. For example, the user can tap or "double tap" the pad with a finger while the controlled cursor is over an icon to select that icon.

[**0026**] In the present invention, the touchpad **16** is provided with the ability to output haptic feedback such as tactile sensations to the user who is physically contacting the touchpad **16**. Various embodiments detailing the structure of the haptic feedback touchpad are described in greater detail below. Preferably, the forces output on the touchpad are linear (or approximately linear) and oriented along the z-axis, approximately perpendicular to the surface of the touchpad **16** and the top surface of computer **10**. In a different embodiment, forces can be applied to the touchpad **16** to cause side-to-side (e.g., x-y) motion of the pad in the plane of its surface in addition to or instead of z-axis motion, although such motion is not preferred.

[**0027**] Using one or more actuators coupled to the touchpad **16**, a variety of haptic sensations can be output to the user who is contacting the pad. For example, jolts, vibrations (varying or constant amplitude), and textures can be output. Forces output on the pad can be at least in part based on the location of the finger on the pad or the state of a controlled object in the graphical environment of the host computer **10**, and/or independent of finger position or object state. Such forces output on the touchpad **16** are considered "computer-controlled" since a microprocessor or other electronic controller is controlling the magnitude and/or direction of the force output of the actuator(s) using electronic signals. Preferably, the entire pad **16** is provided with haptic sensations as a single unitary member; in other embodiments, individually-moving portions of the pad can each be provided with its own haptic feedback actuator and related transmissions so that haptic sensations can be provided for only a particular portion. For example, some embodiments may include a touchpad having different portions that may be flexed or otherwise moved with respect to other portions of the pad.

[**0028**] In other embodiments, the touchpad **16** can be provided in a separate housing that is connected to a port of the computer **10** via a cable or via wireless transmission and which receives force information from and sends position information to the computer **10**. For example, Universal Serial Bus (USB), Firewire, or a standard serial bus can connect such a touchpad to the computer **10**. In such an embodiment, the computer **10** can be any desktop or stationary computer or device and need not be a portable device.

[**0029**] One or more buttons **26** can also be provided on the housing of the computer **10** to be used in conjunction with the touchpad **16**. The user's hands have easy access to the buttons, each of which may be pressed by the user to provide a distinct input signal to the host computer **12**. Typically, each button **26** corresponds to a similar button found on a mouse input device, so that a left button can be used to select a graphical object (click or double click), a right button can bring up a context menu, etc. In some embodiments, one or more of the buttons **26** can be provided with tactile feedback as described in copending patent application Ser. Nos. 09/156,802 and 09/_____ , entitled, "Haptic Feedback for Directional Control Pads," filed Dec. 17, 1999, and both incorporated herein by reference. Other features of these disclosures may also be used with the present invention.

[**0030**] Furthermore, in some embodiments, one or more moveable portions **28** of the housing of the computer device **10** can be included which is contacted by the user when the user operates the touchpad **16** and which can provide haptic feedback. Having a moveable portion of a housing for haptic feedback is described in copending patent application Ser. No. 09/156,802 and application Ser. No. 09/103,281, both incorporated herein by reference. Thus, both the housing can provide haptic feedback (e.g., through the use of an eccentric rotating mass on a motor coupled to the housing) and the touchpad **16** can provide separate haptic feedback. This allows the host to control two different tactile sensations simultaneously to the user; for example, a vibration of a low frequency can be conveyed through the housing to the user and a higher frequency vibration can be conveyed to the user through the touchpad **16**. Each other button or other control provided with haptic feedback can also provide tactile feedback independently from the other controls.

[**0031**] The host application program(s) and/or operating system preferably displays graphical images of the environment on display device **12**. The software and environment running on the host computer **12** may be of a wide variety. For example, the host application program can be a word processor, spreadsheet, video or computer game, drawing program, operating system, graphical user interface, simulation, Web page or browser that implements HTML or VRML instructions, scientific analysis program, virtual reality training program or application, or other application program that utilizes input from the touchpad **16** and outputs force feedback commands to the touchpad **16**. For example, many games and other application programs include force feedback functionality and may communicate with the touchpad **16** using a standard protocol/drivers such as I-Force®, FEELit®, or Touchsense™ available from Immersion Corporation of San Jose, Calif.

[**0032**] The touchpad **16** can include circuitry necessary to report control signals to the microprocessor of the host computer **10** and to process command signals from the host's microprocessor. For example, appropriate sensors (and related circuitry) are used to report the position of the user's finger on the touchpad **16**. The touchpad device also includes circuitry that receives signals from the host and outputs tactile sensations in accordance with the host signals using one or more actuators. In some embodiments, a separate, local microprocessor can be provided for the touchpad **16** to both report touchpad sensor data to the host and/or to carry out force commands received from the host, such commands including, for example, the type of haptic sensation and parameters describing the commanded haptic sensation. Alternatively, the touchpad microprocessor can simply pass streamed data from the main processor to the