ger-electrode capacitances. Thus there exists a need in the art for a method to transfer finger capacitance influences through an arbitrarily thick cushion.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0025] It is a primary object of the present invention to provide a system and method for integrating different types of manual input such as typing, multiple degree-of-freedom manipulation, and handwriting on a multi-touch surface.

[0026] It is also an object of the present invention to provide a system and method for distinguishing different types of manual input such as typing, multiple degree-of-freedom manipulation, and handwriting on a multi-touch surface, via different hand configurations which are easy for the user to learn and easy for the system to recognize.

[0027] It is a further object of the present invention to provide an improved capacitance-transducing apparatus that is cheaply implemented near each electrode so that two-dimensional sensor arrays of arbitrary size and resolution can be built without degradation in signal to noise.

[0028] It is a further object of the present invention to provide an electronic system which minimizes the number of sensing electrodes necessary to obtain proximity images with such resolution that a variety of hand configurations can be distinguished.

[0029] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a multi-touch surface apparatus which is compliant and contoured to be comfortable and ergonomic under extended use.

[0030] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide tactile key or hand position feedback without impeding hand resting on the surface or smooth, accurate sliding across the surface.

[0031] It is a further object of the present invention to provide an electronic system which can provide images of flesh proximity to an array of sensors with such resolution that a variety of hand configurations can be distinguished.

[0032] It is another object of the present invention to provide an improved method for invoking cursor motion continuation only when the user wants it by not invoking it when significant deceleration is detected.

[0033] Another object of the present invention is to identify different hand parts as they contact the surface so that a variety of hand configurations can be recognized and used to distinguish different kinds of input activity.

[0034] Yet another object of the present invention is to reliably extract rotation and scaling as well as translation degrees of freedom from the motion of two or more hand contacts to aid in navigation and manipulation of two-dimensional electronic documents.

[0035] It is a further object of the present invention to reliably extract tilt and roll degrees of freedom from hand pressure differences to aid in navigation and manipulation of three-dimensional environments.

[0036] Additional objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

[0037] To achieve the objects and in accordance with the purpose of the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, the invention comprises a sensing device that is sensitive to changes in self-capacitance brought about by changes in proximity of a touch device to the sensing device, the sensing device comprising: two electrical switching means connected together in series having a common node, an input node, and an output node; a dielectric-covered sensing electrode connected to the common node between the two switching means; a power supply providing an approximately constant voltage connected to the input node of the series-connected switching means; an integrating capacitor to accumulate charge transferred during multiple consecutive switchings of the series connected switching means; another switching means connected in parallel across the integrating capacitor to deplete its residual charge; and a voltage-to-voltage translation device connected to the output node of the series-connected switching means which produces a voltage representing the magnitude of the self-capacitance of the sensing device. Alternatively, the sensing device comprises: two electrical switching means connected together in series having a common node, an input node, and an output node; a dielectric-covered sensing electrode connected to the common node between the two switching means; a power supply providing an approximately constant voltage connected to the input node of the series-connected switching means; and an integrating current-to-voltage translation device connected to the output node of the series connected switching means, the current-to-voltage translation device producing a voltage representing the magnitude of the self-capacitance of the sensing device.

[0038] To further achieve the objects, the present invention comprises a multi-touch surface apparatus for detecting a spatial arrangement of multiple touch devices on or near the surface of the multi-touch apparatus, comprising: one of a rigid or flexible surface; a plurality of two-dimensional arrays of one of the sensing devices (recited in the previous paragraph) arranged on the surface in groups wherein the sensing devices within a group have their output nodes connected together and share the same integrating capacitor, charge depletion switch, and voltage-to-voltage translation circuitry; control circuitry for enabling a single sensor device from each two-dimensional array; means for selecting the sensor voltage data from each two-dimensional array; voltage measurement circuitry to convert sensor voltage data to a digital code; and circuitry for communicating the digital code to another electronic device. The sensor voltage data selecting means comprises one of a multiplexing circuitry and a plurality of voltage measurement circuits.

[0039] To still further achieve the objects, the present invention comprises a multi-touch surface apparatus for sensing diverse configurations and activities of touch devices and generating integrated manual input to one of an electronic or electro-mechanical device, the apparatus comprising: an array of one of the proximity sensing devices described above; a dielectric cover having symbols printed thereon that represent action-to-be-taken when engaged by the touch devices; scanning means for forming digital proximity images from the array of sensing devices; calibrating means for removing background offsets from the proximity images; recognition means for interpreting the configurations and activities of the touch devices that make up the proximity images; processing means for generating input signals in response to particular touch device configurations and motions; and communication means for sending the input signals to the electronic or electromechanical device.