range of rotation. Conversely, when moving the portable computer from the tablet configuration to the laptop configuration, the B hinge **30** may rotate initially and the A hinge **32** may begin to rotate only when the B hinge **30** has reached the lower limit of its range of rotation. As with the upper limit applied to the range of rotation of the A hinge **32**, this lower limit may be applied by a physical stop on an external or an internal surface of the B hinge **30** and/or a surface of the display unit **10** or the base unit **12**.

[**0051**] The keyboard **18**, pointing device **20** or other primary input device(s) may not be utilizable in the tablet mode and the user may input data using the display screen **14** as a touchscreen. The user may use an electronic stylus or a similar device in conjunction with the touchscreen. In embodiments of the invention, a software lockout may prevent the keyboard **18** and pointing device **20** from being utilized when the portable computer is in the tablet mode. In alternative embodiments of the invention, the keyboard **18**, pointing device **20** and other primary input device(s) may be in a recessed region of the base unit **12** so that these input devices do not rest on the support surface. The latter embodiment may be additionally beneficial insofar as it protects the primary input devices from damage during use of the portable computer in the tablet configuration.

[**0052**] FIGS. **6**(*a*)-**6**(*c*) illustrate a latching assembly **60** according to an embodiment of the present invention. In embodiments of the invention (including those described in the subsections above), the portable computer may be secured in the closed configuration, the tablet configuration or both by the latching assembly **60**. The latching assembly **60** may include a latching arm **68** having a projection that fits within a cavity (**72**, **74**) in a latching block **78** when the latching assembly is in a closed state. In the embodiment shown, the latching arm **68** may be mounted on an upper latch body **62** connected to the display unit **10**, and the latching block **78** may be mounted on a lower latch body **64** connected to the base unit **12**. However, in alternative embodiments the locations of the upper latch body **62** and lower latch body **64** may be switched.

[**0053**] In embodiments of the invention (such as the one shown in FIGS. **6**(*a*)-**6**(*e*)), the latching arm **68** may have more than one projection **69** and **71** and/or the latching block **78** may have more than one cavity **72** and **74**. The multiple projections **69** and **71** and/or cavities **72** and **74** may be used to maintain the portable computer in different configurations. For example, in the illustrated embodiment, which may be used with embodiments of the invention of the type shown in FIGS. **1-5**, the latching arm **68** may have projections **69** and **71** on opposite sides. In particular embodiments, the latching arm may have substantially identical projections **69** and **71** so that the latching arm **68** is substantially symmetric. The first projection **69** of the latching arm **68** may be inserted into the first cavity **72** of the latching block **78** to maintain the portable computer in the closed configuration. When the portable computer is to be maintained in the tablet configuration, the latching arm **68** may be pivoted approximately 180° and the second projection **71** of the latching arm **68** may be inserted into the second cavity **74** of the latching block **78**. In alternative embodiments, either projection **69** and **71** of the latching arm **68** may fit into a single cavity of the latching block **78** or a single projection of the latching arm **68** may fit into one of two cavities **72** and **74** of the latching block.

[**0054**] In embodiments of the invention, the latching block may be disposed on the front surface of the base unit **12** and the latching arm **68** may be disposed on the front surface of the display unit **10**, or vice versa. The latching arm **68** may be coupled to the base unit **12** or display unit **10** using a arm spring **66** that is pre-biased to exert a force on the latching arm **68** to press a projection **69**, **71** of the latching arm **68** into a cavity **72**, **74** of the latching block **78**.

[**0055**] The latching block may be supported on a release spring **70** that may exert a counter-force when the user pushes the latching block toward the base unit **12** or display unit **10**. When a projection **69** (or **71**) of the latching arm **68** is inserted into a cavity **72** (or **74**) of the latching block **78**, pushing the latching block **78** to compress the release spring **66** may cause a portion of the latching arm **68** to interfere with a physical stop (e.g., a portion of the front surface of the display unit **10**, base unit **12**, upper latch body **62** or lower latch body **64**). As a result, the projection **69** (or **71**) of the latching arm **68** may be forced out of the cavity **72** (or **74**), releasing the latching assembly so that the display unit **10** is free to rotate relative to the base unit **12**. In embodiments of the invention, the arm spring **66** and the release spring **70** may be compression springs, tension springs, torsion springs or the like. Moreover, although the arm spring **66** and the release spring **70** are described as "springs," it should be understood that any elastic element may be used.

[**0056**] Embodiments of Type Shown in FIGS. **7-9**

[**0057**] An alternative embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in FIGS. **7-9**. The portable computer may include a display unit **10**, a cover unit **52**, and a base unit **12** having a keyboard **18** or other primary input device. The display unit **10** may include a display screen **16**. The display unit **10**, base unit **12** or both may include a central processing unit (not shown) and a memory (not shown). The location of the central processor and/or the memory may depend upon weight, heat, space and signal processing constraints. The cover unit **52** may connect the base unit **12** to the display unit **10**. The cover unit **52** may be fixedly or removeably attached to the display unit **10** and the base unit **12** via fasteners (screws, snaps, etc.), adhesives (glue, Velcro, etc.) or the like. In embodiments of the invention, the cover unit **52** may be integrated with the display unit **10** and/or the base unit **12**. For example, in an embodiment of the invention, the base unit **12** (including the keyboard **18** or other primary input device) and cover unit **52** may be joined so that the base unit **12** is located above a front portion **64** of the cover unit bottom section **62**.

[**0058**] The display unit **10** may be electronically connected to the base unit **12** via a communication cable. In one embodiment of the invention, the communication cable may be a Universal Serial Bus cable. In embodiments of the invention, the communication cable may be embedded within or attached to a surface of the cover unit **52**.

[**0059**] In the illustrated embodiment, when the portable computer is in closed configuration, as shown in **FIG. 7**, the display unit **10** may lie face down on the top surface **55** of the base unit **12**. The cover unit **52** may be attached to the top rear surface **58** of the display unit **10** and provide protection to the display unit **10** and the base unit **12** during storage or transportation of the portable computer.

[**0060**] When the portable computer is placed in laptop configuration, as illustrated in FIGS. **8**(*a*) and **8**(*b*), the